

March 2020



Intelyse

SOUTHERN AFRICAN JIHAD

The Cabo Delgado Insurgency Part II of III

Cabo Delgado Ignites, October 2017 - 31 January 2020

- Insurgents by the end of 2019 and continuing into January 2020 had launched multiple successful attacks on hardened military targets – including successful raids on barracks in Mocimboa da Praia in December 2019 and January 2020. Increasingly sophisticated tactics utilized in insurgent attacks, as well as an improving insurgent arsenal, have also been noted throughout 2019 and through January 2020, and factor into the group’s increasingly aggressive posture.
- Insurgent attacks from 01 May – 31 January 2020 also made travelling by road from Pemba to Palma increasingly perilous. These attacks combined with poor weather-related damage to road routes have increasingly forced O&G majors active in the Afungi Peninsula to either utilize local flights into the area or to look increasingly towards shipping equipment and personnel into the area via small local port facilities.
- 7 insurgency-related incidents were tracked by Intelyse in Palma District (the district in which O&G activity is concentrated on the Afungi Peninsula) from 01 November 2019 to 31 January 2020. While this is a relatively small number of incidents vs. Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia, and Muidumbe Districts over this period, insurgent activity continues in the area despite heavy security force deployments around Palma and the Afungi Peninsula.

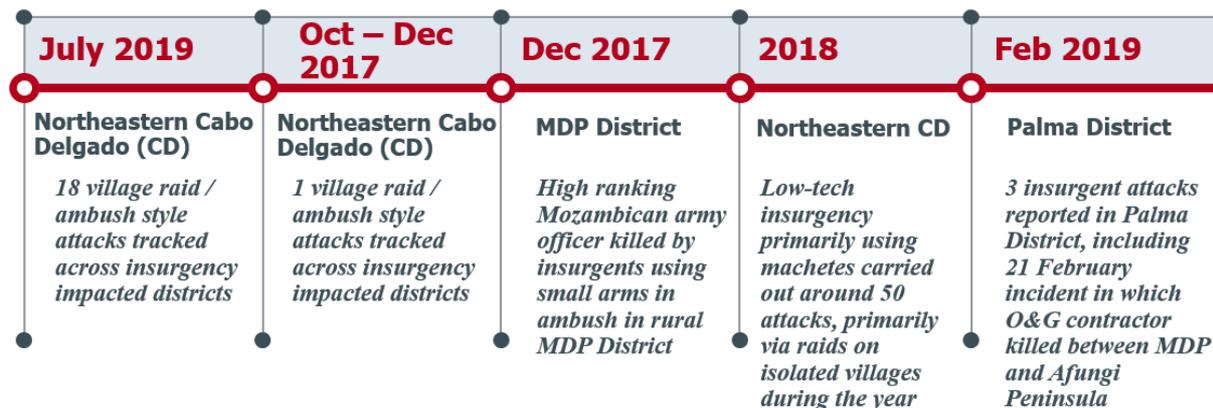
CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
A MATURING AND ESCALATING INSURGENCY: JULY – AUGUST 2019	3
THE IMPACT OF CYCLONE KENNETH AND ISLAMIC STATE: 01 MAY – 30 JUNE 2019.....	4
BRIEF: ISLAMIC STATE IN MOZAMBIQUE	5
THE INSURGENCY INTENSIFIES: 01 JULY – 31 AUGUST 2019	6
THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS: 01 SEPTEMBER – 27 OCTOBER 2019	7
CABO DELGADO ON FIRE: 27 OCTOBER 2019 – 31 JANUARY 2020	8

A MATURING AND ESCALATING INSURGENCY: JULY – AUGUST 2019

Following events from 2012 to 2017 that prepared the ground for an explosion of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, by late 2017 militants in the province were ready to strike. AAS/ASWJ members had now merged with radicals from the Kibiti group fleeing Tanzania to form a new insurgent group which will now be referred to as “the insurgents” or “the insurgency”.

Key events in the early insurgency are detailed in the timeline below. Insurgents initially operated in small, loosely connected groups primarily across Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia, and Palma Districts, utilizing machetes and a limited number of small arms during this time.



By late 2018, the insurgency had escalated dangerously, buildings towards an even more significant escalation in mid-2019. Approximately 30 insurgent related incidents were reported from December 2018 – February 2019, compared to just 40 incidents from January – November 2018. This improvement in the insurgency’s capabilities and escalation in its activity was due to several factors:

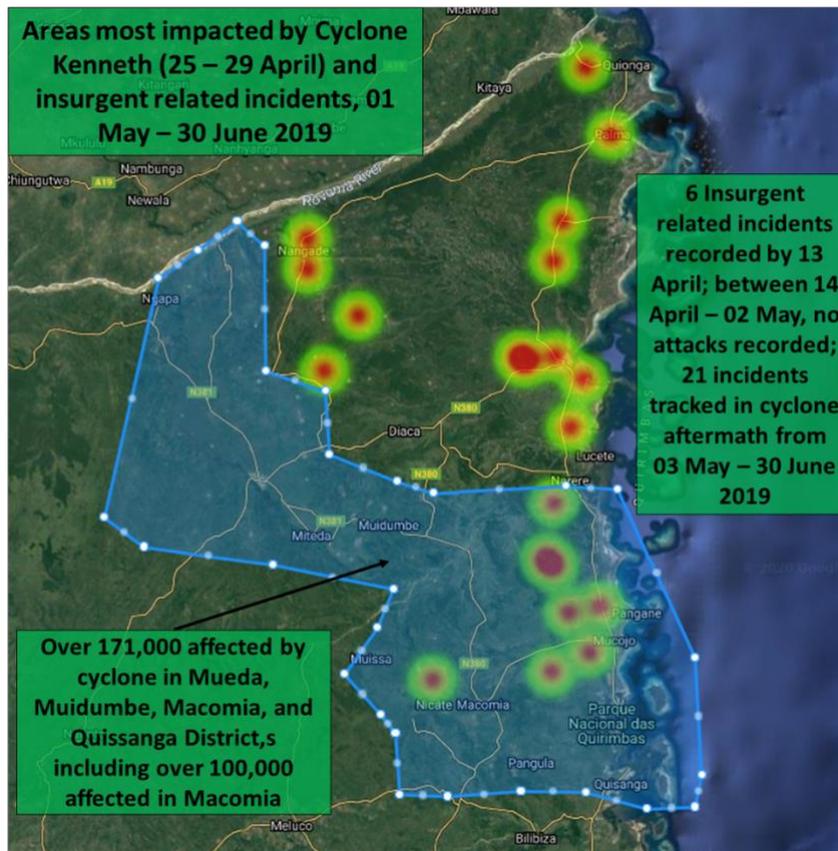
- A favourable recruiting environment due to historical and socio-economic factors discussed in Part I of this series ([Link to Part I](#))
- The gradual improvement in militant weaponry and supplies due to raids on villages, isolated military posts, and purchases on the black market.
- An inadequate security response in which initially indiscriminate army operations on villages suspected to be harboring militants killed multiple civilians; military operations would quickly settle into static, defensive tactics around major towns and cities.
 - This allowed militants to move with relative freedom across Northeastern Cabo Delgado’s rural jungle areas.
 - The army’s defensive posture also allowed the establishment of jungle safe-haven camps by the militants, and the establishment of “no man’s land” areas where militants were known to be present but did not attempt to hold territory; in these areas civilians in general evacuated or were forced to provide some form of support for the militants, while Mozambican army units could expect to be attacked if they entered these areas.

This consolidation ultimately left the insurgency better equipped, with strong recruiting capabilities and established bases by the end of 2018. Adapting classic guerrilla/insurgency style techniques, the militant’s command structure also appeared to have become significantly more capable over time, adapting new and advanced tactics. **This was particularly**

highlighted by the 21 February 2019 incident highlighted in our timeline in which insurgents in a roadside ambush killed a contractor attached to O&G developments on the Afungi Peninsula.

THE IMPACT OF CYCLONE KENNETH AND ISLAMIC STATE:

01 MAY – 30 JUNE 2019



From 21-29 April, Cabo Delgado was hit by Cyclone Kenneth, causing widespread destruction and displacement across much of the province; some of those districts hit hardest by the cyclone lay in the northern half of Cabo Delgado, which were also the districts in which insurgents were operating, as can be seen in the above graphic. No attacks were reported from 14 April when warnings of the cyclone were initially reported to 03 May, a deceiving respite for the province that would prove to be the calm before the storm.

Amid the chaos and displacement caused by the cyclone, crops across much of the province were also destroyed, depriving both the local population and insurgent bands of food, and triggering more aggressive action. As previously discussed, insurgents had significantly improved their capabilities from Oct 2017 – Apr 2019 and now significantly increased their attacks.

Whereas only 6 different insurgent related incidents had been tracked by Intelyse in April, 13 insurgent related clashes and attacks were recorded in May, beginning with a 03 May attack near Macomia town.

- This surge in incidents appeared to have been partially a result of insurgents taking advantage of vulnerabilities of a chaotic situation after the cyclone.
- Militants raided villages to replace their depleted food stocks – forcing the insurgents into a more aggressive stance at least partially by necessity. As can be seen in the above image, the areas in which attacks were reported dramatically expanded, with parts of Palma, Nangade, Mocimboa da Praia, and Macomia all impacted. In June, 9 militant related incidents were reported; this included 7 different incidents in which insurgents attacked unguarded villages in the province.
- Attacks during this period also began occurring along significant road routes, including between Palma and Mocimboa da Praia, a key route for O&G companies and their contractors travelling between the Afungi Peninsula and the provincial capital of

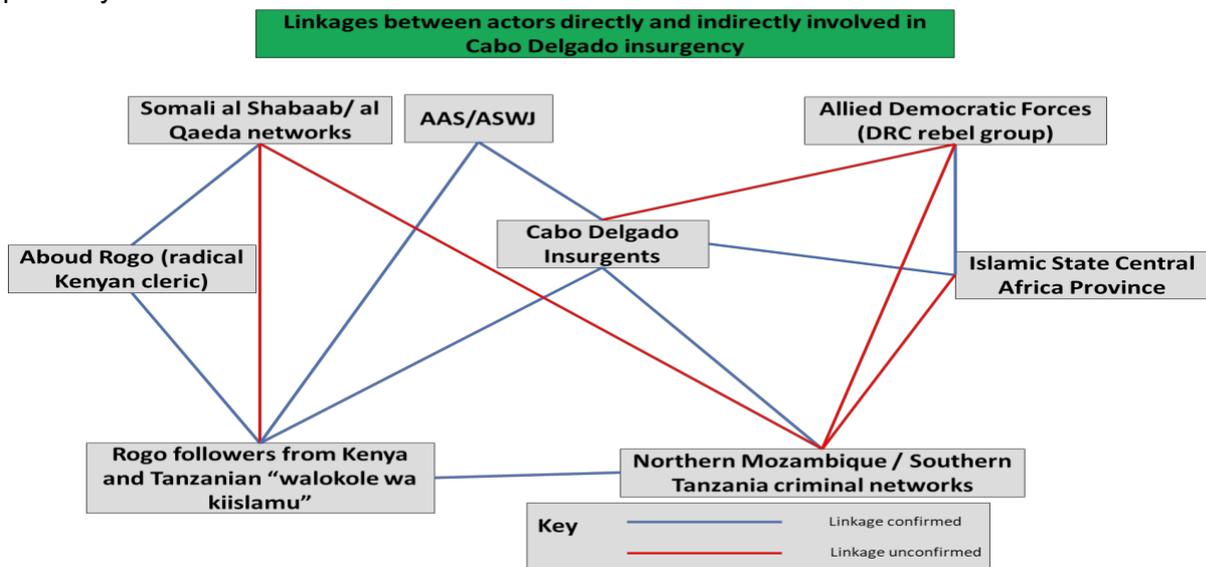
Pemba. These road routes presented a tempting target for militants, who at this time were demonstrating their own newfound capabilities while also fully exploiting the military’s limited ability to fully secure these routes. The insurgents at this time seem to have finally fully comprehended these limitations, and were increasingly prepared to directly challenge the Mozambican military.

The most significant development related to the insurgency in June was the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) in Mozambique, as the group’s Central Africa Province (ISCAP) claimed an attack on 04 June in Mocimboa da Praia, saying it had killed a number of soldiers. The group likely made the choice to claim this first attack at this time as the insurgency was experiencing increasing rates of success and publicity while IS itself was in the midst of a propaganda campaign to demonstrate the group’s continued capabilities worldwide despite the loss of the physical caliphate in Syria and Iraq. At the time of the writing of this report in early March 2020, 25+ attacks have been claimed by ISCAP in Mozambique since June 2019.

BRIEF: ISLAMIC STATE IN MOZAMBIQUE

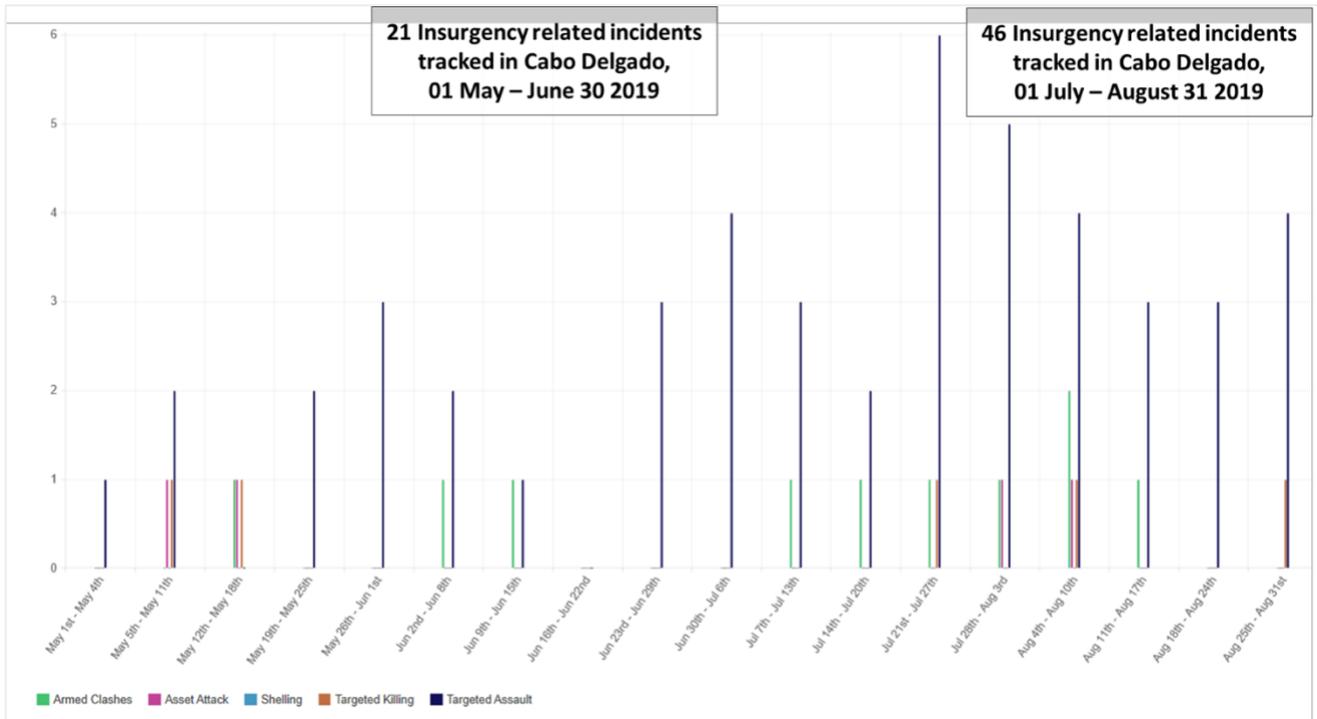
IS’s involvement and presence in Mozambique had been suggested in several unverified reports prior to this incident, but no attack had ever been claimed by the group prior to 04 June 2020. The claiming of this and future attacks by the group’s ISCAP franchise is significant, as this is the same regional franchise that claims attacks in the northeastern DRC, where ISCAP began claiming attacks just 2 months prior to the first claimed attacks in Cabo Delgado.

In the DRC, IS had been previously linked to a rebel group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (see below image), a group with Ugandan origins that in recent years has transformed from a group opposed to Yoweri Museveni’s Kampala government to a Salafist extremist group operating primarily in the DRC’s North Kivu Province.

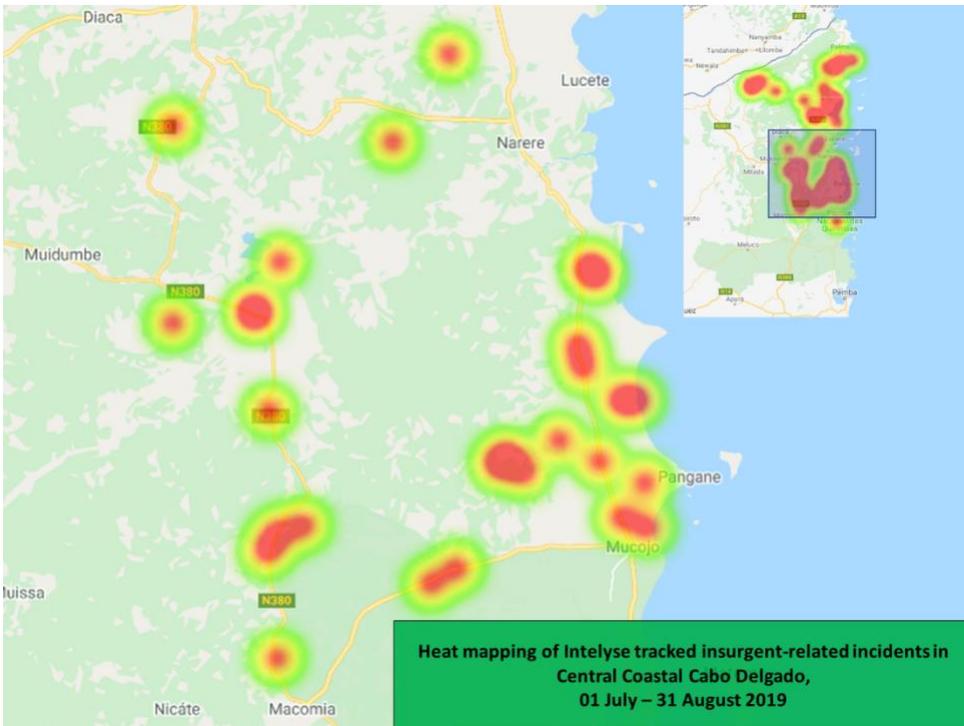


The depth of ties between the ADF and IS remain, though the US and Ugandan governments have both confirmed that IS has provided some funding to the ADF, and IS since April 2019 has claimed responsibility for attacks believed to be launched by ADF militants. Links between the ADF and the Cabo Delgado insurgents are not fully understood, though the Mozambican and Ugandan governments have both asserted the groups are linked, and several Ugandan nationals arrested in Cabo Delgado in 2018 and 2019 on charges of involvement in the insurgency are reportedly linked to the ADF. A UN report in January of 2020 also claimed that IS’s Somalia franchise was directing operations in both the DRC and Mozambique; other reports have suggested that the ADF/ISCAP cell in North Kivu is directing ISCAP operations in Cabo Delgado.

THE INSURGENCY INTENSIFIES: 01 JULY – 31 AUGUST 2019



While insurgent attacks had surged in May and June 2019 in the aftermath of the cyclone to levels previously unseen in the province, more significant escalations would occur in July and August. Village raid and ambush-style incidents in which insurgents attacked primarily



civilians significantly increased in July, with 18 such incidents tracked, while August saw only a slight drop-off with 16 such incidents tracked. 46 insurgency-related incidents were tracked during these 2 months—compared to just 21 such incidents over the previous two months.

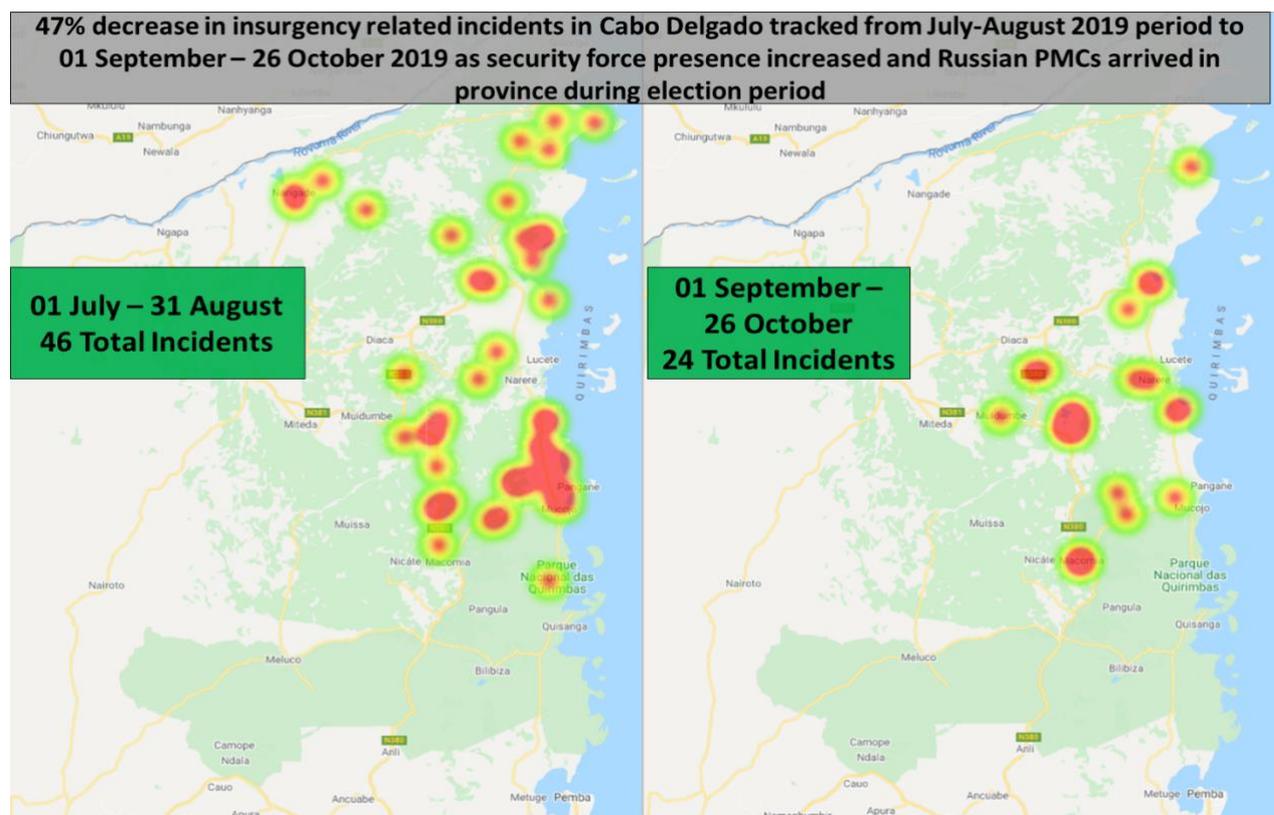
- Emboldened insurgents during this period launched attacks in Palma, Nangade, Mocimboa da Praia, Muidumba, Macomia, and Quissanga Districts, demonstrating the group’s ability to operate simultaneously in multiple locations and that a tipping point

had occurred in which militants were now fully aware and confident of the strength they had built since October 2017

- During this period, there were only a handful of reported incidents in which the insurgents clashed with troops, as the army remained largely in static positions, allowing insurgents freedom of movement and operations, thus giving the militants the definitive upper hand
- During this period, insurgents were particularly active in Macomia District, with notable spill over into Muidumbe and Mocimboa da Praia Districts. **The highlighted area during July and August saw 28 insurgency-related violent incidents, including 22 Targeted Assault incidents, or 64% of all targeted assault incidents during this period.**
- This spike in attacks during this period was likely caused by the group’s possibly unexpected successes in May and June, with insurgent bands now confident in attacking isolated villages and military posts, knowing that the military response to their activities was likely to be limited.

THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS: 01 SEPTEMBER – 27 OCTOBER

2019



After extremely active months in July and August, insurgent-related noticeably declined over September and October comparatively, dropping down to frequency levels comparable to May and June.

- This drop was partially due to increased security force deployments into Cabo Delgado in the leadup to the 15 October election; the Maputo government placed a high premium on countrywide stability during this time, and strongly desired to avoid a situation in which voting would be disrupted by insurgent activity. **Ultimately, only a small number of polling places were unable to open due to insecurity while no**

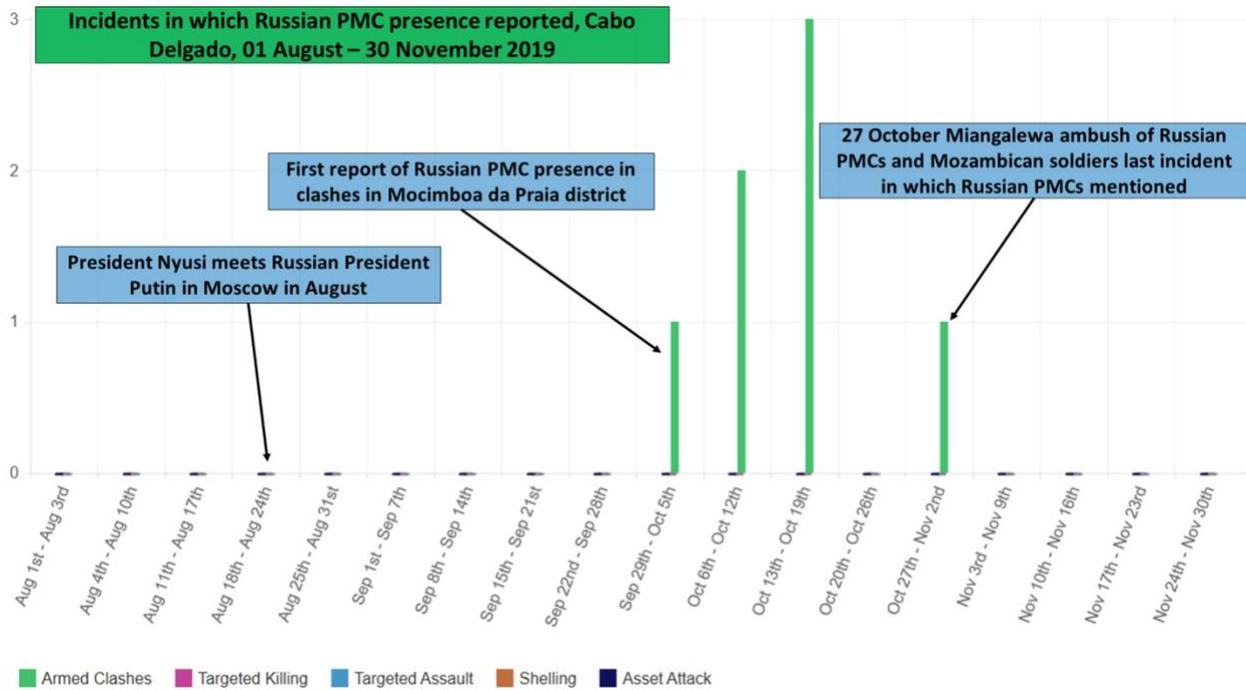
major disruptions or headline-grabbing attacks occurred during this time – a significant success for the government.

- Between 01 September – 27 October, just 7 insurgent raids were reported across the province, compared to 16 such attacks in just August. In October, there was a significant increase in tracked armed clashes incidents, including several reports by the government itself of operations carried out targeting insurgents in the province. **The government’s reporting of operations was significant, demonstrating during this period apparent growing government confidence in launching offensives against the insurgents.**
- This uptick in government offensive operations against the militants coincided with Russian private military contractors’ (PMCs) appearance in Cabo Delgado providing support to Mozambican military units. This followed a deal that was struck between the Mozambican and Russian governments in August 2019. Russia has inked similar deals with other governments, such as the Syrian regime of Bashar al Assad, in which Russian PMCs provide support to the military of a country typically in return for a stake in natural resource deposits in a country. Russia also prizes the influence in a given country these agreements give to Moscow. Intelyse tracked 6 different incidents from 01-26 October in which Russian PMCs were present at clashes with insurgents. These joint operations for most of October appeared to be successful, with government reports indicating militant bases destroyed and large numbers of insurgents killed or driven out of areas of Mocimboa da Praia, Palma, Macomia, and other districts. Russian PMCs ceased to provide this direct support to the Mozambican military after the 27 October Miangalewa area ambush, detailed below.

CABO DELGADO ON FIRE: 27 OCTOBER 2019 – 31 JANUARY 2020

Any sense of the government having gained the upper hand would be completely shattered within weeks of the relatively quiet election period. This swift deterioration of the situation in Cabo Delgado began on 27 October when a joint patrol of Mozambican troops and Russian PMCs was ambushed in the Miangalewa area; Intelyse reported the incident as follows:

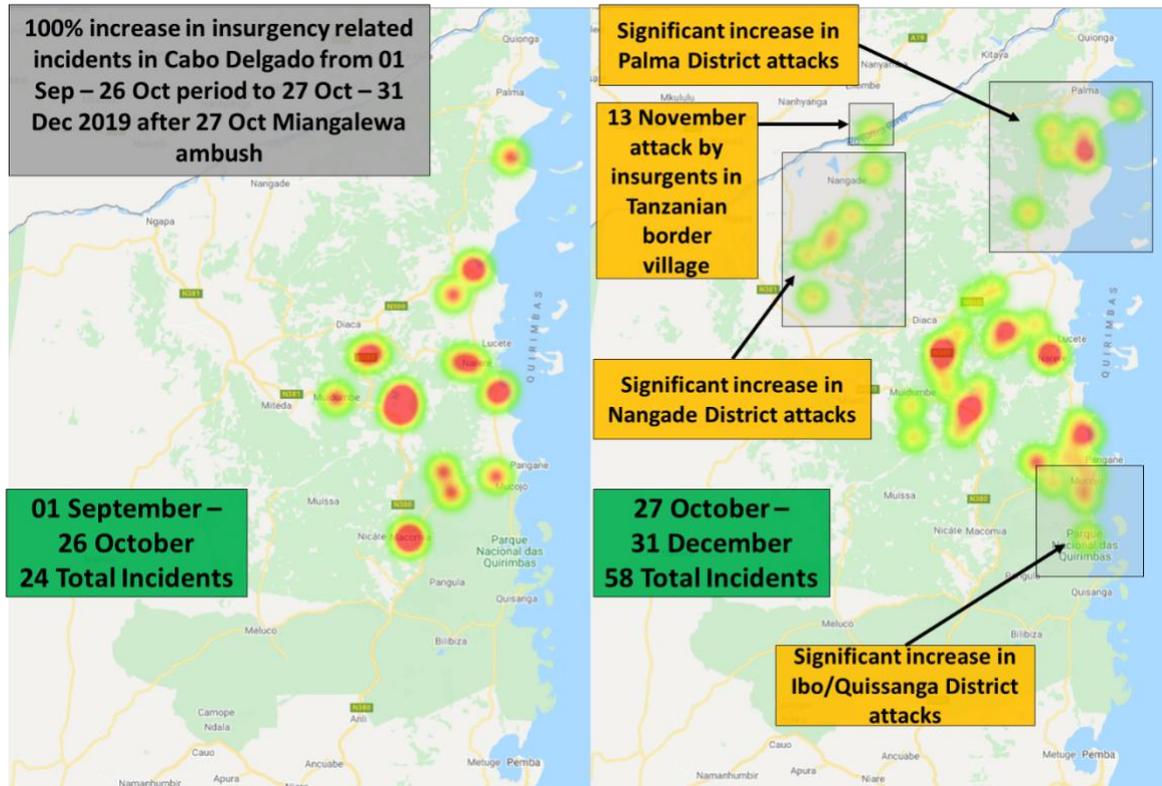
27 October: Reports have indicated that a convoy of Mozambican army troops and Russian private military contractors were ambushed on the afternoon of 27 October in the Namala region of the Miangalewa area in Cabo Delgado by insurgents. Insurgents allegedly erected barricades along an area of the road, and opened fire on the convoy. Sources said that 20 soldiers, along with 5 Russian military contractors, were killed in the attack; sources also said at least 3 military vehicles were set on fire by the insurgents. By the morning of 30 October, multiple sources had reported this incident though exact casualty counts and the presence of Russian personnel during the clashes remain unconfirmed. Other sources later confirmed the clashes but reported just 4 Mozambican soldiers killed, though also reporting a large number of soldiers fled from the ambush. Multiple sources, including Russian media, would later confirm at least 5 Russian PMCs killed in this incident – included 4 Russian PMCs who were reportedly beheaded.



This incident represented a true watershed moment as Russian PMCs withdrew, the Mozambican military reverted to its defensive posture, and militant attacks exploded across the province in November.

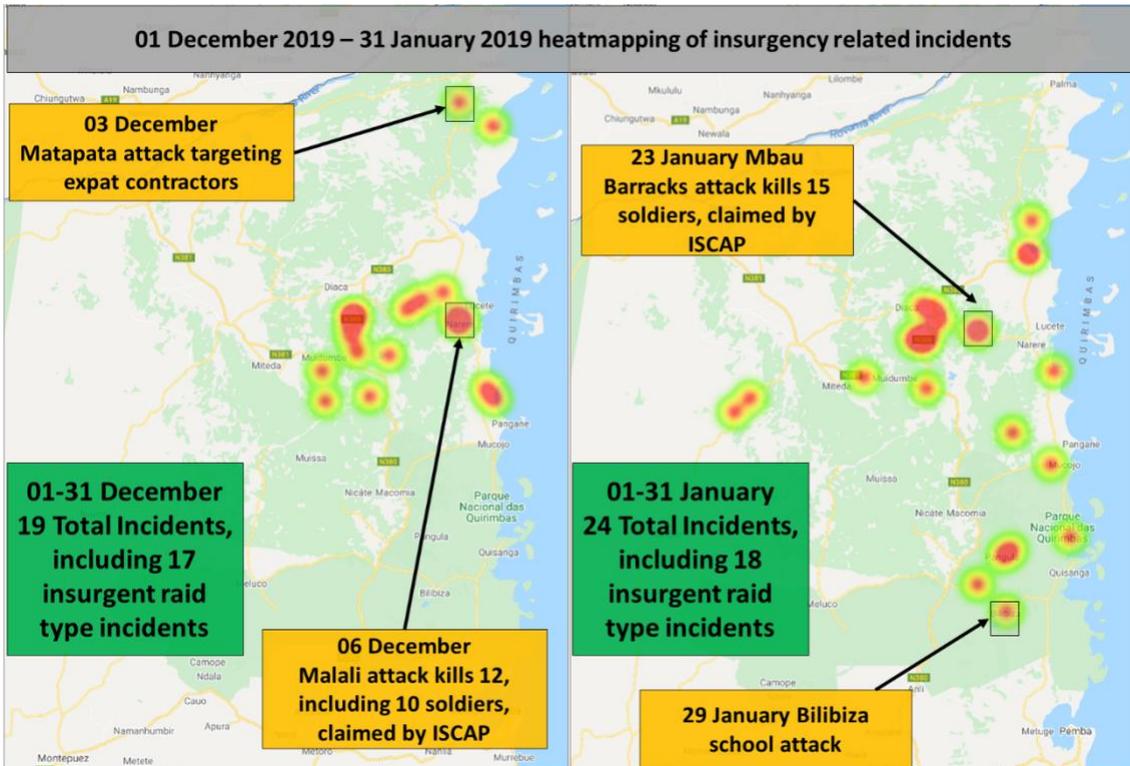
- The incident badly damaged the Russian PMC – Mozambican military relationship as Russian PMCs immediately withdrew from the field after this attack. Reports also indicated at this time that Russian PMC personnel had come to believe that elements within the Mozambican army had colluded with the insurgents, facilitating the 27 October ambush.
- Government bulletins on military operations ceased immediately after this incident and army patrols in areas where insurgents were known to operate also appear to have been halted at this time. The military, which had been doubly bolstered in September – October with additional reinforcements and Russian support, now withdrew back to major towns and bases almost immediately, allowing insurgents greatly increased freedom of operations.

- Insurgents in the weeks after 27 October redoubled their attacks across the core insurgent territories in Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia and Muidumbe District while Nangade, Quissanga, and Palma Districts also saw a flurry of incidents. November would see the highest number of insurgency-related incidents yet recorded at 36, compared to just 27 incidents during the whole of September and October.



- Insurgents also further escalated their activities in a 12 November attack, crossing the Rovuma River into Tanzania and attacking the village of Ngongo, killing at least 6 people in the first ever attack by the group in Tanzania.

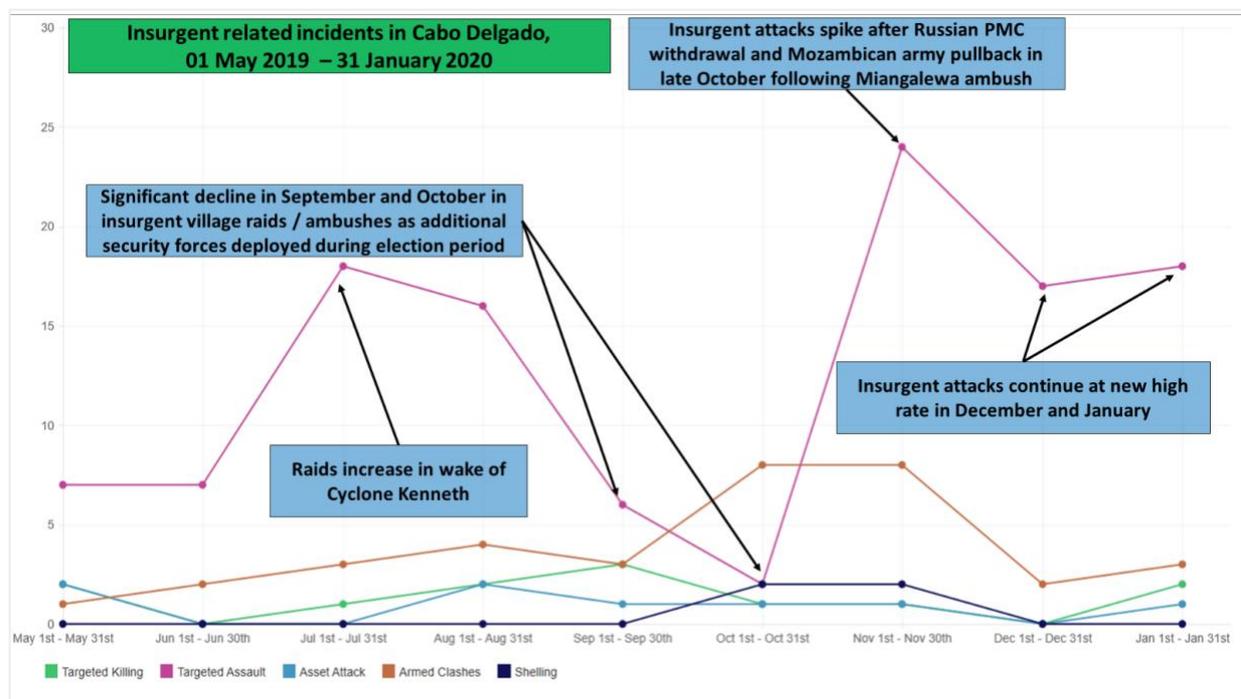
In December, insurgent attacks retracted again, focused across Central Coastal Cabo Delgado, primarily in parts of Muidumbe, Macomia and Mocimboa da Praia Districts, the insurgent’s key territories.



- Insurgents in December launched more attacks in Muidumbe District than in any previous month, with 9 attacks reported in the district, including 5 raids along the Xitaxi-Oasse route as part of an apparent strategy by the militants to create a larger “no man’s land” that they are able to establish secure bases in.



- Within the growing insurgent zone was a notable attack on 06 December in the Malali area, near Narere, in which insurgents killed at least 12 people, including 10 soldiers. ISCAP quickly claimed responsibility for this attack, publishing photos of captured weapons and at least one captured security force vehicle. The ISCAP claim in this case was significant as insurgents' faces were unobscured in photos from the attack, with ISIS flags also clearly visible (See image).
- Meanwhile in Palma District, outside the insurgent safe zone, only 2 incidents were recorded, though one of these attacks was very significant. Militants on 03 December ambushed vehicles in the Matapata area along the Palma – Mocimboa da Praia road, killing 2 people, and injuring at least one expatriate contractor working in the area, demonstrating the militant's continued ability to strike at this highly protected area.
- While insurgent activity declined in December compared to November, incident levels had returned to levels seen in July and August.



January 2020 saw the second-highest one-month total of insurgency-related incidents since the beginning of attacks in 2017, with militants continuing to establish an area of semi-control while also expanding attacks towards Palma.

- Militants in January built on the substantial successes of November and December, with 24 insurgency-related incidents tracked during this period as militants continued to operate with relative freedom even as security forces remained in a defensive posture.
- Whereas December attacks had been primarily concentrated in between Xitaxi and Oasse, other nearby areas of Muidumbe and Macomia Districts, and between Narere and Mucojo, attacks in January took place as far north as countryside north of Mocimboa da Praia town and as far south as Bilibiza in Quissanga District. By the end of January, insurgents were reported to control some isolated stretches of road in Macomia and Muidumbe. Poor weather in December and January made several area roads impassable, and, combined with the threat of insurgents on roads in the affected districts, road travel between Pemba and Palma had become extremely difficult.

- Militants in a 23 January attack killed at least 15 soldiers in a raid on a military barracks in the Mbau area, forcing around 250 soldiers to retreat from the area. ISCAP claimed responsibility for this attack, saying 22 soldiers were killed. This attack took place within the Central Cabo Delgado Coast region where militants are believed to have several jungle bases and are most openly challenging the army for territorial control.
- Over 100kms to the south, insurgents on 29 January attacked the town of Bilibiza in Quissanga District, setting fire to large parts of the town as well as to a technical school run by the Aga Khan Foundation. Insurgents were able to successfully launch this attack despite security forces having at least 6 hours warning that insurgents were marching on Bilibiza. This attack also represented a new escalation by militants, since it occurred less than 100kms from Pemba, and in an area previously considered beyond the bounds of where insurgents could operate. The Bilibiza attack was followed up by insurgent attacks over the following days in which at least 7 people were killed in nearby villages. The Bilibiza raid was one of the insurgency's most high profile demonstrations yet to the people of Cabo Delgado that the military is unable/unwilling to stop escalating militant attacks. This incident would also serve as a recruitment tool and a way to instill fear both in the populations of Quissanga as well as Pemba District to the south.

In part III of Intelyse's reporting series on the Cabo Delgado insurgency, we will look ahead to the rest of 2020 and the insurgency's predicted trajectory, likely government and military actions to counter the militants, and the implications the future of this conflict will for NGOs, businesses, and governments operating in Cabo Delgado in particular, as well as in Mozambique at large.