



Five years later, violent extremists hit Montepuez and threatens the million-dollar ruby business

- The violent extremism that has affected Cabo Delgado since October 2017 reached, in the early hours of this Thursday (October 20), the district of Montepuez, scene of the largest reserves of rubies discovered in the last 10 years. The attack targeted the camp of Gemrock, a subsidiary of the Indian group Diacolor International DMCC, which in 2019 acquired the entirety of the Regius Group's assets in Mozambique, which include six licenses to prospect rubies in Montepuez.





Gemrock evacuated the camp and some workers fled to the headquarters of the administrative post of Namanhumbir and others to the municipal village of Montepuez. Images from surveillance cameras that the CDD had access to, show a group of soldiers arriving at the Gemrock camp after the attackers had withdrawn, who left a burning vehicle.

The incursion by violent extremists against one of Cabo Delgado's main sources of wealth comes two weeks after Gemrock held its first auction of raw rubies mined in Montepuez. In the session that took place from 3 to 7 October in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, 56 buyers participated, and companies placed 442 purchase offers.

Despite claiming that the auction in Thailand was carried out under the supervision of Mo-

zambican authorities, including officials from the Tax Authority and the Kimberley Process Management Unit (UGPK), as a way of ensuring transparency, Gemrock does not even disclose the amount of rubies sold, let alone the amount collected.

"Buyers showed great interest in the raw inventory that was on offer and requested larger quantities in future auctions. These exceptional rubies, the intense color and saturation, of gem quality, were extracted from the district of Montepuez", reads the statement from Gemrock. The company was planning to hold the second auction in the first quarter of 2023, but this Thursday's attack that forced the suspension of operations could force a change in sales plans.

The attack on Gemrock set off alarm bells in Mon-

tepuez, where more than 10 companies hold concessions for the extraction of rubies. Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM), a subsidiary of British Gemfields, withdrew all its personnel and suspended operations at its mines, which are 12 kilometers from the Gemrock concession. Elements of private security and the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) remain in Namanhumbir to protect the facilities of MRM and other companies that mine rubies¹.

MRM is the main company that mines rubies in Montepuez and annually holds at least two auctions in Singapore. The most recent took place in the first half of this year, in which the company sold 96 kilos of rubies. Another company that held an auction in the first half of this year is Canadian Fura Mining, which sold 82 kilos of rubies in Thailand².

In September, Fura Mining announced the extraction of a 101-carat ruby, one of the finest gemstones ever mined in Montepuez. Baptized with the name Estrela de Fura, the stone was put up for private auction in Dubai. Fura Mining is the second largest company that mines rubies in Montepuez, after having acquired, in 2018, nine ruby mining licenses from Mustang and Regius for 9.5 million euros. A year earlier, Fura Mining had completed the purchase of Cobadale Lda, a company that holds 80% of four ruby exploration licenses³.

Also in September, the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy announced that another

company would enter the lucrative ruby business in Montepuez this month. This is Moza Minerais, which expects to start production later this year.

Thursday's attack is the second recorded during the week. On Monday, violent extremists attacked villages in the Mesa administrative post in Ancuabe district. At least seven civilian bodies were found in the woods of the villages of Chiúte and Necuaja, in addition to the three deaths that had already been reported⁴.

The new wave of attacks in the southern districts of Cabo Delgado is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the province, with thousands of families fleeing their communities in search of refuge. Pressured by the military offensive of the joint forces of Mozambique, Rwanda, and SADC in the north of Cabo Delgado, the violent extremists seem to concentrate their actions in the southern districts of the province, threatening the ruby (Montepuez) and graphite (Ancuabe mining projects, and Balama).

In Palma and Mocímboa da Praia, districts that were once epicenters of the insurgency, now register the return, albeit timidly, of families who had abandoned their areas of origin due to the conflict. Security in the two districts is ensured by Rwandan troops, whose main mission is to create conditions for the return of the French multinational Total Energies to Afungi and protect the LNG projects paralyzed since April 2021 following the attack on the town of Palma.

¹ https://www.miningreview.com/diamonds-gems/cabo-delgado-insurgency-montepuez-ruby-mining-limitada-initiates-evacuation/?utm_campaign=MRA22%20-%20Weekly%20newsletters%20-%20Friday&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=65124358&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--a8EzozgGi18EZjCfqBVQKZ_YNww4y_eT_-Fp4Q8uAiiyyIPCvi4d3f13qulW2EyHSClZjMHZRYHi-Lji79Fq0eXF5Yw&utm_content=65124508&utm_source=hs_email

² <https://profile.co.mz/mireme-aponta-mais-uma-mineradora-no-negocio-de-rubis/>

³ <https://e-global.pt/noticias/lusofonia/mocambique/mocambique-empresa-canadiana-detem-maior-area-de-exploracao-de-rubis-no-norte-adquirindo-mais-9-licencas-de-exploracao/>

⁴ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/sociedade/item/12124-ancuabe-localizados-mais-corpos-sem-vida-em-aldeias-do-posto-administrativo-de-meza-atacadas-pelos-terroristas>



EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Centro para Democracia e Desenvolvimento
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: Emídio Beula
Author: Emídio Beúla
Team: Emídio Beúla, Dimas Sinoa, Américo Maluana
Layout: CDD

Address:
Rua Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.
Telephone: +258 21 085 797

 CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: <http://www.cddmoz.org>

FINANCING PARTNERS

