



PLATAFORMA DE PAZ E SEGURANÇA DE CABO DELGÁDO



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RESPONSE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

Northern Operational Theatre without food while the Rwandan Army buys food – and minds – in Cabo Delgado

- The acceptance that the Rwandan army assigned to the fight against violent extremism enjoys among the population of the province of Cabo Delgado is plainly evident. In contrast, the way the Mozambican army treated the population at the beginning of the conflict caused revulsion towards them, especially in Mocímboa da Praia. Careful examination shows the abysmal difference in levels of organisation and moralisation of the two forces. On the one hand, the Mozambican army is struggling with salary delays, including back pay and lack of food in barracks; on the other hand, Rwandan troops are well organised and often choose to shop in local markets, which allows them to have greater involvement in communities, consequently strengthening their status as “saviours” of the province.



Source: Folha de Maputo



Source: Radio News - TSF

After the entry of the Rwandan Forces (RF) and the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) into the Northern Operational Theatre (TON), the conditions for combating violent extremism in the military component improved significantly. Nonetheless, they have left their mark through the abusive way in which the Forces of Defence and Security (FDS) treated the population of Mocímboa da Praia and other districts directly affected by the conflict.

However, it is necessary to bear in mind that the entry of Rwandan troops to support the Mozambican state in the fight against violent extremism is far from consensual. Despite having helped to liberate areas that before their entry had been taken over by violent extremists, the still unknown costs that citizens have incurred or are yet to incur worries a significant section of society.

This is not surprising. The precise details of the entry of Rwandan troops are not known even by

the Assembly of the Republic, as the talks were and continue to be conducted directly by the President of the Republic of Mozambique and his Rwandan counterpart.

However, in a context worsened by the imminent departure of SAMIM, the Mozambican army is still struggling with basic problems such as the lack of food supply to the barracks and parts of the TON, which contrasts starkly with the financial strength and organisation that the Rwandan army presents. As a result of these, the RF are able to make purchases, support the population in the reconstruction process and create ties at the local level, mainly in the northern districts of Cabo Delgado.

This article aims to show how the Rwandan army is taking advantage of the weaknesses of national troops in order to consolidate its presence and influence in a territory where the majority speak the Swahili language, in which the Rwandans are fluent.

How does the Rwandan army take advantage of the weaknesses of the Mozambican forces to consolidate itself in Cabo Delgado? Mozambique's weaknesses

This week, Integrity Magazine reported that almost all national barracks and even the military units present in the TON, in the province of Cabo Delgado, have a food deficit, as the result of suppliers withholding deliveries due to large debts owed to them; some have not received payments in over six months. The publication also noted that the matter may be related to an internal sabotage strategy against the leadership of the Mozambican Army owing to its engagement in the development and revitalisation of the Armed Defence Forces of Mozambique (FADM).

However, this is only a recent issue. Since the beginning of the conflict, the difficulties experienced by the Mozambican army meant that violent extremists occupied villages in districts such as Mocímboa da Praia, Palma, Quissanga and Macomia, as a result of which, they resorted first to bringing in mercenary companies, and later, SAMIM and the Rwandan army.

Last year, a proof of life revealed approximately 7,000 phantom soldiers were discovered in the ranks of the FADM. The outcome of this scandal, involving senior FADM officials, has not yet

been made public. The discovery of the phantom soldiers on the army's payroll took place at a critical moment for the FADM: when they were receiving support from other troops to combat violent extremism. This demonstrated, in some way, a lack of commitment to the ongoing conflict from senior officials. This is evidenced by the fact that the investigation into the salaries of those 7,000 phantom soldiers showed that the amounts were channeled to senior FADM officials. The purpose of the proof of life administered to the soldiers who helped to implement the scheme was to verify the reasons behind the shortage of personnel, at the time of the surrender of the TON sub-units.

Even more serious was the way the FADM treated the population at the beginning of the conflict. Serious cases of the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law involving the Mozambican army have been reported. These behaviors led to a small section of the population of Mocímboa da Praia, for example, appearing to support violent extremists, and later, to prefer that the defence of the territory be carried out by Rwandan troops.



Source: Notícias ao Minuto

Penetration and consolidation of Rwandan troops amid weaknesses

Since the entry of the Rwandan army, the conflict in Cabo Delgado has taken a different turn. Rwandan troops have not only recovered the territories previously taken by extremists, but they have also improved the relationship between the population and security actors, as well as succeeded in reducing the attacks by violent extremists within the areas in which they are stationed.

In addition to mastering the Swahili language, spoken by a significant section of the population in the north of Cabo Delgado, Rwandans quickly gained ground among the population by becoming involved in their daily lives, including supporting the reconstruction of social infrastructures such as the Mocímboa da Praia Municipal Market. In addition, Rwandan troops buy supplies at local markets, which facilitates interaction and the creation of emotional bonds with sellers and local communities.

Through interviews carried out by the CDD, it was discovered that there is a widespread belief among the people of Mueda that if the communities had not organised themselves and created the Local Force, the village of Mueda would have been invaded by terrorists, alluding to the weaknesses of the FADM. As a member of the Local Force highlighted, "Here (Mueda) they

could have entered, but they were unable to do so due to the efforts of the local communities who resisted, organised themselves and created the Local Force and asked for weapons to defend themselves." Similarly, another member of the Local Force reported that "we captured people who we discovered and sent them to the FADM barracks. If we had not created the Local Force, the village of Mueda would have been destroyed. Without the Local Force, no one would be alive in Mueda. Local Force is Mueda's defender. Even the Rwandans said Mueda was safe because they saw our work."

To the same extent, it is believed that the arrival of Rwandan troops also contributed to the security of Mueda. Local perceptions reveal that, without the presence of the Rwandan military, the situation would be worse. "Terrorists are afraid of Rwandans. Those from the FADM, when they see the terrorists, they throw down their weapons and run away."

The lack of trust in the FADM is such that the Local Force coordinates its operations with Rwandan troops. "We are working well with them. The operations are not joint, each group goes out to carry out operations, but we maintain communication. There is just no communication with the FADM. Even at gates, we do not work with FADM.



Source: Radio News - TSF

There is no trust. They want to steal the population's assets. We are defending the population."

In Mocímboa da Praia, some interviewees even stated that if Rwandan troops leave the district, they will mobilise to leave immediately. This is due to the traumas that are still "fresh" from the actions of Mozambican troops in the period between the conflict and the beginning of the return of the displaced population to their areas of origin.

In June of this year, the FDS, specifically the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR), was accused of serious human rights violations in Mocímboa da Praia. Local residents accused UIR agents stationed in the Pamunda barracks of having executed three

civilians. UIR agents questioned the victims in the Pamunda neighborhood at approximately 7 p.m. and demanded their cell phones, a request that was refused. In reaction, UIR agents shot the three civilians at close range.

The victims include a teacher (a state employee) and agents forced to return to Mocímboa da Praia on orders from the district government, which threatened to take action against anyone who did not report to their workplace on the previously established dates. The situation led some local leaders to present their concerns related to insecurity to the District Administrator of Mocímboa da Praia.

Final considerations

This article sought to show some of the ways in which the Rwandan army, who arrived to help Mozambique, have ended up gaining a prominent role in the response to violent extremism in Cabo Delgado. The prominence of the Rwandan army is more valued when contrasted with the Mozambican troops, who face major organisational and logistical problems, weakening their action in the districts affected by the conflict.

Furthermore, the human rights abuses carried

out in Mocímboa da Praia by Mozambican troops led the population to choose to be defended by Rwandan troops, who have the trust of the populace. Furthermore, in logistical terms, the Mozambican army is currently experiencing a food crisis in the positions of the TON and throughout the barracks, while Rwandan troops shop in local markets where they interact with the population, creating opportunities to buy not only goods but the thoughts and opinions of the people.




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