



PLATAFORMA DE PAZ E SEGURANÇA DE CABO DELGÁDO

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Rwanda refreshes command and personnel in Cabo Delgado and signals a longer presence than SADC



Credits: Ministério da Defesa do Ruanda

● While the SADC military mission (SAMIM) in Cabo Delgado seems to be coming to an end, the Rwandan mission is moving in the opposite direction. Mozambique is preparing an action plan to be implemented after the withdrawal of SAMIM, probably in July 2024. But regarding Rwanda's military presence, the Government seems to be relaxed. There is still no talk of the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from Cabo Delgado. Last week, new troops arrived to replace the approximately 2,500 men who were in Cabo Delgado a year ago. The generals appointed by Paul Kagame in June this year to refresh the command in Cabo Delgado were also presented in the final week at the Mocímboa da Praia base. One question: It is not known whether the arrival of new troops in Cabo Delgado has the support promised by the European Union – which conditioned the disbursement of 20 million euros to the cessation of all actions promoted by the Kigali regime to destabilize the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including support for the M23 rebel group.

A month ago, SADC extended SAMIM's mandate for 12 months, starting on July 16, 2023. The objective of this, which seems to be the last extension, is to consolidate the achievements achieved since the deployment of the regional force, reinforce stabilization and facilitate the safe return of displaced people to their areas of origin. At the same virtual meeting, Mozambique reported that it was already developing strategies aimed at consolidating the reconquered territories and an action plan to be implemented after the withdrawal of SAMIM.¹

Before SADC extended SAMIM's mandate on 11 July, the Rwandan President had already announced profound changes in the Rwandan Armed Forces, including the change of commanders who direct the operations of Rwandan troops in Cabo Delgado. Paul Kagame appointed Major General Alex Kagame to command Rwandan forces in Cabo Delgado, replacing Major General Eugene Nkubito, who had held the position since August 2022. Paul Kagame also appointed Colonel Bahizi Theodomir as commander of combat operations for the Rwandan

Army in Mozambique.²

Three weeks after announcing changes to the Armed Forces, Paul Kagame sent his senior defense and security adviser (General James Kabarebe) to investigate the situation of the Rwandan troops stationed in Cabo Delgado. And the new commanders appointed in June only arrived in Cabo Delgado in the first days of this month. It was last Friday, August 4th, that Major General Alex Kagame assumed command of the Rwandan troops (Joint Task Force), replacing also Major General Eugene Nkubito, who returns to Rwanda to command the 3rd Division. Colonel Bahizi Theodomir also assumed leadership of combat operations in Cabo Delgado (Task Force battle group commander), a position previously occupied by Brigadier General F. Mutembe.

The change of command coincided with the arrival of new personnel from the Rwandan Armed Forces who will replace the approximately 2,500 men who had been in Cabo Delgado since mid-2022. Contrary to what the Mozambican press reported, the new deployment is not intended to increase the manpower but replace the troops who were in Cabo Delgado a year

¹ PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC (2023). *SADC extends SAMIM's mandate for another twelve months*. Available at <https://www.presidencia.gov.mz/por/Atualidade/SADC-prorroga-mandato-da-SAMIM-por-mais-doze-meses>, accessed at 3:30 pm on August 8, 2023.

² CDD (2023). *Kagame sends his senior defense and security adviser to investigate the situation in Cabo Delgado*. Available at <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kagame-manda-seu-conselheiro-senior-de-defesa-e-seguranca-para-averiguar-a-situacao-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf>, accessed at 5:00 pm on August 8, 2023.



Credits: Ministério da Defesa do Ruanda

ago. Major General Alex Kagame has already visited the area of responsibility of the Rwandan troops in Cabo Delgado, namely the districts of Mocímboa da Praia and Palma. In addition to the village of Mocímboa da Praia, Alex Kagame visited Rwandan troop positions in Pundanhur, Afungi, Palma and Mbau.

CDD was unable to determine whether the costs of sending new staff to Cabo Delgado are being borne with Rwanda's funds or through the support promised by the European Union (EU). After several negotiations, in December 2022 the EU promised to finance the operations of Rwandan troops in Cabo Delgado with 20 million euros. But in March of this year, Paul Kagame made it known that the EU was making the disbursement of 20 million euros conditional on the cessation of all actions promoted by the Kigali regime to destabilize the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including support for the rebel group M23.³

Rwanda is one of the African States most committed to peace and security missions but, paradoxically, the same country is accused by its neighbors in Central Africa of destabilizing the region through various actions that include the violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the exploitation of natural resources outside its borders and support for rebel groups operating in the DRC⁴. When the European bloc announced its support in December 2022, the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation reacted with satisfaction and noted that the 20 million euros would be important to "ensure that Rwandan troops continue to have the equipment and necessary logistics to combat armed terrorists in Cabo Delgado, restore peace and security, allowing the safe return of displaced populations to their homes"⁵

On July 27, 2023, the Armed Forces of the DRC accused the Rwandan Army of carrying out an incursion into the Congolese province of North

3 CDD (2023). *FINANCING RWANDAN TROOPS IN CAPE DELGADO: Nyusi and Kagame spoke in London, but it is not known whether the EU requirement to disburse the 20 million euros has already been exceeded*. Available at <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Nyusi-e-Kagame-conversaram-em-Londres-mas-nao-se-sabe-se-a-exigencia-da-UE-para-desbursar-os-20-milhoes-de-eus-ja-foi-ultrapassada.pdf>, accessed at 12:18 pm on August 9, 2023.

4 CDD (2023). *FINANCING RWANDAN TROOPS IN CAPE DELGADO: Nyusi and Kagame spoke in London, but it is not known whether the EU requirement to disburse the 20 million euros has already been exceeded*. Available at <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Nyusi-e-Kagame-conversaram-em-Londres-mas-nao-se-sabe-se-a-exigencia-da-UE-para-desbursar-os-20-milhoes-de-eus-ja-foi-ultrapassada.pdf>, accessed at 12:18 pm on August 9, 2023.

5 MINAFFET (2023). *Rwanda welcomes support from European peace facility to joint operations in Cabo Delgado*. Available at <https://www.minaffet.gov.rw/updates/news-details/rwanda-welcomes-support-of-european-peace-facility-to-joint-operations-in-cabo-delgado>, accessed at 2:40 pm on the 9th August 2023.

Kivu. In reaction, the Kigali regime stated that the accusations are unfounded and “are part of a long-standing pattern of disinformation and propaganda by the DRC leadership to divert attention from its internal failures to maintain peace and security within its borders while continuing to support, arm and fight alongside the genocidal militia FDLR (Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda)”. Rwanda expressed fear that “the continuous trend of false accusations” could serve as a pretext for an attack planned by the Armed Forces of the DRC and FDLR in Rwandan territory.⁶

Regardless of whether the support promised by the European Union is disbursed, the Rwandan military presence in Cabo Delgado will last for a long time, not least because of the interest shown by TotalEnergies in having Kagame’s troops in the security perimeter of the gas liquefaction project Rovuma Basin Area 1 - Mozambique LNG. Hiring Rwandan companies to provide services in Afungi (where the project will be developed) is one of the ways to offset the costs of military intervention in Rwanda. In the first quarter of the year, Paul Kagame confirmed the presence of ISCO Security, a Rwandan company positioned in Cabo Delgado to provide security services to the natural gas industry, whose main project – Mozambique LNG is due to resume in 2024. “They were hired for a job that both the Rwandan and Mozambican Police and Army, working together, have no mandate to perform. I don’t know who hired them. They may have

been hired by the Government”, said Paul Kagame, in an interview with journalists in Kigali in March 2023.

ISCO was created by the Rwandan Macefield Ventures, described as the international arm of Crystal Ventures, linked to the Patriotic Front of Rwanda, Paul Kagame’s party. According to the newspaper Zitamar News, ISCO is made up mostly of former members of the Rwandan police and military. In March 2022, Africa Intelligence reported that the Rwandan construction company NPD joined, at the last minute, the list of companies that were bidding to carry out preparatory work on the Mozambique LNG project, led by the French company TotalEnergies. Described as being close to the Rwandan President, NPD is one of the largest construction companies in Rwanda, standing out in large-scale works such as dams, roads and bridges. Also in December 2022, RADAR SCAPE, a Rwandan civil construction company, won a contract worth US\$800,000 to rehabilitate 76 houses in the resettlement village of Quitupo, where families were removed from the site where the gas from the Rovuma Basin projects will be implemented. The houses undergoing rehabilitation were damaged after being occupied by thousands of displaced people who fled the attacks in the town of Palma in March 2021. RADAR SCAPE has partnered with the Institute of Professional Training and Labor Studies Alberto Cassimo (IFPELAC) and the contract value was assumed by TotalEnergies.⁷

⁶ MOD – RWANDA DEFENCE FORCE. *Press Release –REF: RDF/MPR/A/08/10/2023*. Available at <https://www.mod.gov.rw/news-detail/press-release-7>, accessed at 3:02 pm on August 9, 2023.

⁷ CDD. (2023). *Paul Kagame confirms the presence of the Rwandan company ISCO Security in Cabo Delgado*. Available at <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Paul-Kagame-confirma-presenca-da-empresa-ruandesa-ISCO-Security-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf>, accessed at 4:55 pm on the 9th of August 2023.



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