

PROTECTION OF MOZAMBIQUE LNG PROJECT

Security Memorandum between the Government and Total jeopardizes national sovereignty



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On Monday, August 24, the French company Total E&P Mozambique Area 1 announced that it has signed a new memorandum of understanding with the Government of Mozambique regarding the safety of oil operations of the Mozambique LNG project under construction in the Afungi peninsula, Palma district, in the extreme north of Cabo Delgado.

In light of the memorandum, the government will deploy troops, called "Joint Task Force", from the Defence and Security

Forces (FDS), which will ensure the security of the Mozambique LNG project activities in Afungi and the wider area of operations. Total made has made it clear that the Mozambican staff of the "Joint Task Force" should act in accordance with the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR).

In return, the Mozambique LNG project will provide logistical support to the Joint Task Force. In the communiqué, Total does not specify the type of logistical support,

but it is known that it should include equipment and money that should be used by the Government to pay subsidies to the FDS troops deployed to protect oil operations in Afungi.

Quoted in the communiqué, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Ernesto Max Tonela described the memorandum of understanding as an instrument that "reinforces security measures and efforts to create a safe operating environment for partners such as Total, allowing for its con-



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tinued investment in Mozambican industry, and in small and medium companies and communities.

The General Manager of Total in Mozambique, Ronan Bescond, said that “recognizing the benefits that the Mozambique LNG project will bring to local communities, the country and all parties involved in the project, Total and the Government of Mozambique are committed to ensuring continued progress towards the successful delivery of the project. Given the security situation in Cabo Delgado province, our priority is to ensure the safety of our workers, many of whom live in the surrounding communities, and the security of project operations”.

In fact, the new memorandum of understanding between the Government and Total replaces the agreement that existed between the Ministries of National Defence and Interior and the multinational Anadarko (now Total) and Eni (now Mozambique Rovuma Venture - MRV), aimed at protecting oil operations in the Rovuma basin in Cabo Delgado. In a report published in March, the Mozambique Channel reported that the contractual agreement was not approved by the Administrative Court; that the money paid by the oil companies was not going to the Treasury, as it was channelled to an account opened

for this purpose by the Ministry of National Defense; and that the deployed troops were not receiving the promised additional remuneration.

Despite recognizing the need to protect oil operations from terrorist attacks, the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) believes that the model adopted for providing security is problematic because it basically means privatizing Mozambique’s sovereignty. The Government has the duty to ensure, with its human, logistic and financial resources, political, economic and military stability throughout the national territory. By allowing the deployment of FDS troops to protect private interests in exchange for monetary payments, the government is privatizing the FDS services and, consequently, violating the Defense and Security Policy, approved by Law 17/97 of 1 October.

In its article 7, the Defense and Security Policy defines the National Defense as “an activity developed by the State and the citizens that aims at ensuring independence and national unity, preserving the sovereignty, integrity and inviolability of the country, and guaranteeing the normal functioning of the institutions and the security of citizens against any threat or armed aggression”. And one of the fundamental objectives of the Defense and Security Policy

is to defend the property and the vital and strategic national interests - paragraph d) of Article 3 of the Constitution.

There is no doubt that LNG projects in the Rovuma basin are vital and strategic interests that deserve protection by the FDS, especially in a context where Cabo Delgado is experiencing terrorist attacks. But the protection should not be done within a commercial logic, where the Mozambique LNG project remunerates the security services provided by the FDS, as if they were a private company.

This model also has the risk of creating problems within the FDS itself: the personnel providing protection services to oil operations will have, in addition to normal salaries paid by the state, subsidies transferred by the Mozambique LNG project. This means that the staff assigned to Afungi will have better wage and working conditions than those who will be fighting terrorism elsewhere in the same province of Cabo Delgado. This may demoralize the troops deployed to protect the civilian population and other national interests without the right to subsidies. The government should find another way to ensure the protection of LNG projects, such as using part of the revenue collected from natural gas exploitation to improve security throughout Cabo Delgado province.

Where is Tunamar?

Tunamar is a legal Mozambican company created in 2017 as a result of the partnership between EMATUM and Frontier Services Group, owned by Erik Prince, a former US Navy officer. Officially, Tunamar was registered as a tuna fishing company that would use the EMATUM vessels purchased with the money from the hidden debts. But tuna fishing was just a pretext for Frontier Services Group to enter into a partnership with a company owned by the State Information and Security Service (SISE) and pursue its true interest: providing maritime security services to oil operations in the Rovuma Basin.

It is not coincidental that the Mozambican government, very obedient to major international investors, this time took a different stance and made it difficult at most to start the activities of Tunamar,

making unusual demands for a company wishing to operate in the fishing sector. For example, the government conditioned the concession of a port space for Tunamar's activities to the opening of a public tender. This requirement was placed after the company obtained fishing licenses for the first five vessels. In 2019, the government said it was preparing the specifications for the launch of the public tender for the concession of port space, but until today the tender has never been launched.

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In fact, the government made it difficult and delayed the start of Tunamar's activities as a way to make it impossible for Erik Prince to enter the business of providing security services to oil operations through Frontier Services Group, a security, aviation and logistics company. Today, the government controls the security business through the paid troops of the FDS to protect oil operations.



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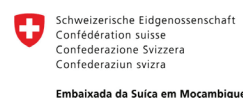
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