

Rwanda consolidates its presence in Mozambique amidst deteriorating relations with neighbors DRC and Uganda

- Through agreements on judicial assistance and extradition, protocols of parliamentary cooperation and manifestation of economic and business interests, Rwanda is consolidating its presence in Mozambique, at a time when its relations with the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda have deteriorated again due to new political-military tensions.



And it was exactly through the military component Rwanda inaugurated its presence in Mozambique, when in July 2021 the Kigali regime began the deployment of a contingent of 1,000 men to support the Mozambican forces in the fight against violent extremism in Cabo Delgado¹. Three months after the first deployment, President Paul Kagame stated that the number of Rwandan troops fighting in Cabo Delgado had increased to 2,000 men².

As the military front continues, Kigali is opening new doors. This week, the Rwandan High Commissioner to Mozambique announced that starting in August the Rwandair Express flag carrier will start direct flights between Kigali and Maputo.

"I would like to say that our Rwandan airline will start direct Maputo - Kigali flights, which will boost the movement of people and goods and stimulate trade. In principle, it will be in the first week of August. Mozambicans who have normal passports can travel without needing a visa. We are discussing with the counterpart, to see if we can have the same facility for the Rwandans"³.

On the same occasion, the Rwandan diplomat expressed Kigali's interest in exploring the Port of Nacala, in northern Mozambique. "We believe that that port with deep waters, can help in this cooperation. We believe that trade between African countries can generate employment for African people, particularly Mozambicans, and contribute to the countries' economies"⁴.

But the signs on the economic-business front began in March this year, when Africa Intelligence reported that Rwandan construction company NPD joined, at the last minute, the list of companies bidding for preparatory work on the LNG project in Mozambique. Described as being close to the Rwandan President, NPD is one of Rwanda's largest construction companies, excelling in major projects such as dams, roads and bridges⁵.

In late May, a business mission consisting of 50 Rwandan businessmen was in Maputo, where they participated in the Mozambique - Rwanda Business Forum. Led by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Habyarimana Uwamaliza Béata, the Rwandan businessmen expressed interest in exploring business opportunities in the areas of agriculture,



agro-processing, information and communication technologies, tourism, renewable energy, oil & gas, infrastructure, logistics, transport, textile industry and clothing⁶.

In early June, the President of the House of Representatives of Rwanda, Donatille Mukabalisa, was also in Maputo, where she signed with the President of the Assembly of the Republic, Esperança Bias, a Cooperation Protocol that will enable the exchange of experiences and knowledge on parliamentary activities through the organization of technical missions and the development of other forms of cooperation.

One of the interesting points of the protocol is the need for the two parliaments to commit to "regularly exchange views and agree on positions on international issues, especially those related to common geographical areas and on matters of common interest in international forums where they are represented"⁷.

While in Maputo the cooperation protocol between the Parliaments of Mozambique and Rwanda was signed, in Kigali the Governments of the two countries signed an extradition treaty and an agreement on legal assistance in criminal matters. On the Mozambican side, the two instruments were signed by the Minister of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, Helena Mateus Kida, and on the Rwandan side, the Minister of State responsible for Constitutional and Legal Affairs at the Ministry

of Justice, Soline Nyirahabimana⁸.

The agreements (extradition and legal assistance) cover all types of crimes, including those related to the Rwandan genocide that occurred in 1994. The Rwandan Minister praised the agreement saying that it shows an increase in security for the states. "These agreements mean that Rwanda and Mozambique are now safe from criminals, which means that our citizens will feel safe"⁹.

The signing of the extradition treaty is of more interest to Rwanda than Mozambique. It is an agreement that will allow the extradition of Rwandan citizens who are refugees in Mozambique and who have long been wanted by the Rwandan authorities because of their political views. They are, in fact, Rwandans critical of Paul Kagame's regime and who have found in Mozambique a safe place to escape political persecution.

Even before the signing of the extradition treaty, the Mozambican government had been facilitating the assassination and/or forced disappearance of opponents and critics of Paul Kagame on national territory. For example, on September 13, 2021, Revocant Karemangingo, a businessman and vice-president of the Association of Rwandan Refugees in Mozambique (ARRM), was shot to death near his residence in the Liberdade neighborhood, Matola City.

As it happened in other murders and forced disappearances of Rwandan refugees in Mo-

¹ https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MILITARIZACAO-DE-CABO-DELGADO_-880-militares-e-120-policias-do-Ruanda-3.000-militares-da-SADC_-E-agora-Senhor-Presidente-isto-nao-e-uma-salada-de-intervencoes.pdf

² <https://www.africa-press.net/mozambique/video/nearly-2000-rwandan-troops-fighting-insurgency-in-mozambique>

³ <https://www.opais.co.mz/voos-directos-maputo-kigali-a-partir-de-agosto/>

⁴ <https://www.opais.co.mz/voos-directos-maputo-kigali-a-partir-de-agosto/>

⁵ <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/cabo-delgado-empresa-ruandesa-pretas-a-entrar-no-neg%C3%B3cio-do-g%C3%A1s/a-61042170>

⁶ <https://evidencias.co.mz/2022/06/01/access-bank-apoia-camara-de-comercio-no-acolhimento-de-missao-empresarial-do-ruanda/>

⁷ <https://www.parlamento.mz/?p=2991>

⁸ <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/rwanda-mozambique-sign-agreements-reinforce-justice>

⁹ <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/rwanda-mozambique-sign-agreements-reinforce-justice>

zambique, the case of the ARRM's vice-president was not investigated by the Mozambican authorities and the material authors will never be known¹⁰. A few days after the mur-

der of Revocant karemangingo, the Rwandan community in Mozambique denounced the existence of a list of 20 Rwandan refugees identified as targets to be eliminated by Paul

Kagame's government death squads. The list was drawn up by the Kigali regime and includes Rwandan refugees who are in Mozambique and other African countries.

Rwanda receives about 171 million dollars from the United Nations in reimbursements for the costs of peacekeeping operations

The main source of funding for the Rwandan troops' intervention in Cabo Delgado has not yet been officially revealed. In September 2021, during the celebrations for the Mozambican Armed Forces Day, Paul Kagame and Filipe Nyusi reiterated that the presence of Rwandan troops comes in the context of good bilateral relations between the two states, and that it is financed by the Rwandan government, and does not imply future costs for Mozambique¹¹.

But the truth is that Rwanda is not investing millions of dollars in the military intervention in Cabo Delgado without a cost-benefit perspective, even if it is in the medium or long term. In fact, the agreements it is making on various fronts in Mozambique may be part of the bill Maputo must pay for the military support in Cabo Delgado.

With a highly prepared army to deal with insurgency and violent extremism, Rwanda is one of the main states contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions. Prior to the deployment of 1,000 men to Mozambique, there were about 6,550 Rwandan troops serving with the United Nations, mostly in hot spots such as South Sudan, the Darfur region (Sudan) and the Central African Republic¹². For its part, the Rwandan National Police has participated in peace and securi-



ty restoration missions in Ivory Coast, Mali, Liberia, South Sudan, and Haiti, and has deployments at the United Nations headquarters in New York¹³.

Rwanda's participation in various peace missions is funded by the United Nations, and the

government in Kigali uses some of the funds to modernize its armed forces and police. For example, in the current year, 2022, Rwanda will receive the equivalent of USD 171 million from the United Nations in reimbursements for the costs of peacekeeping operations¹⁴.

¹⁰ <https://cddmoz.org/refugiados-ruandeses-denunciam-lista-com-alvos-do-regime-de-kigali-e-pedem-intervencao-do-estado-mocambicano-2/>

¹¹ <https://cddmoz.org/governo-deve-informar-os-mocambicanos-sobre-acordos-assinados-com-regime-de-kigali-durante-a-visita-de-paul-kagame-2/>

¹² <https://www.opais.co.mz/as-tropas-de-ruanda-transcendem-blocos-para-unir-a-africa/>

¹³ <https://www.opais.co.mz/as-tropas-de-ruanda-transcendem-blocos-para-unir-a-africa/>

¹⁴ <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/how-20212022-budget-will-be-financed>

Deterioration of relations between Rwanda and its neighbors (DRC and Uganda)

While consolidating its presence in Mozambique, the Kigali regime is witnessing deteriorating relations with its neighbors, mainly the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda. The new wave of politico-military tensions erupted in November 2021, when the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels attacked military positions of the DRC Armed Forces in northern Kivu province, near the border with Uganda and Rwanda.

A research by Africa Center¹⁵, the outbreak of the attacks occurred in the same month that Ugandan forces were sent into Kivu to pursue the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group from Uganda that also operates in that DRC province. In October and November 2021, Uganda was the target of suicide attacks and President Yoweri Museveni attributed it to the ADF.

By March 2022, M23 had occupied some important areas near the border with Uganda and Rwanda. The DRC accuses Rwanda of restructuring and arming the M23 in its latest onslaught. Incidentally, as Africa Center reveals, a UN Security Council expert group on the DRC had already implicated the Kigali government in supporting the M23. Some of the top M23 commanders have served in the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), the ruling party in Rwanda¹⁶.

The deteriorating security in eastern DRC led the East African Community to decide last June to send a regional force under Kenyan command to restore stability. Disputes for political-military influence in the Great Lakes region between Uganda and Rwanda is seen as the main factor of instability in eastern DRC.

The two states are accused of supporting rebel groups fighting for control of the Kivu region over natural resources such as gold, coltan, tantalum and diamonds. Efforts by Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi to allow Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda to operate together in Kivu province under DRC supervision failed due to disputes between Uganda and Rwanda¹⁷.

In addition to the interest for stability in eastern DRC, the disputes between Rwanda and Uganda in alien territory can also be explained by economic interests, namely exclusive access to the rich mining areas of Kivu. There is evidence to suggest that rebel factions supported by Uganda and Rwanda -



RDC had to close the border with Rwanda due to the deterioration of political-military relations



Angola tries to mediate the crisis in neighboring DRC, Rwanda and Uganda

including M23 - control strategic but informal supply chains running from the mines in Kivu to both countries. The insurgents use profits from trafficking gold, diamonds, and coltan to buy weapons, recruit and control artisanal miners, and pay corrupt Congolese customs and border officials¹⁸.

United Nations investigations have found that Uganda and Rwanda export products

they do not produce, suggesting an illicit economy of mined minerals in eastern DRC. Incidentally, in February 2022, the International Court of Justice ordered Uganda to pay USD 325 million to the DRC for its role in the conflicts between 1998 and 2003, which included killing thousands of civilians, financing rebel groups, and looting gold, diamonds and timber¹⁹.

¹⁵ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/rwanda-drc-risk-of-war-new-m23-rebellion-emerges-explainer/>

¹⁶ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/rwanda-drc-risk-of-war-new-m23-rebellion-emerges-explainer/>

¹⁷ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/rwanda-drc-risk-of-war-new-m23-rebellion-emerges-explainer/>

¹⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/29/rwandans-fear-leaving-their-homes-in-congo-as-anger-grows-over-rebel-attacks>

¹⁹ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/rwanda-drc-risk-of-war-new-m23-rebellion-emerges-explainer/>

Rwanda has also been mentioned in UN reports as one of the states that has made profits from minerals smuggled out of the DRC to fund rebel groups and boost its own exports. UN reports show that most of the coltan trafficked from the DRC ends up in Rwanda.

In June 2021, Presidents Kagame and Tshisekedi signed an agreement in light of which Dither Ltd. a company considered close to

the Rwandan military, would refine gold produced by Sakima in eastern DRC as a way to deprive rebel groups of access. The deal put Rwanda in a strategic position to control the entire supply chain - a move that many believe angered Kampala. However, the agreement was suspended in early June 2022 due to allegations from the DRC that Rwanda was supporting the resurgence of M23²⁰.

Just last month, Rwanda and the DRC accused each other of firing rockets across their common border. DRC authorities also alleged that Rwanda sent hundreds of undercover soldiers into Congolese territory. On June 17, the DRC closed its border with Rwanda after a Congolese soldier was shot dead in Rwandan territory following an alleged incident with Rwandan border guards²¹.

²⁰ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/rwanda-drc-risk-of-war-new-m23-rebellion-emerges-explainer/>

²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/29/rwandans-fear-leaving-their-homes-in-congo-as-anger-grows-over-rebel-attacks>



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