

Mozambique Alert: Palma

26 March 2021, 0900 GMT

Reports of gunfire in the vicinity of Palma town will see increasing numbers of IDPs, and likely further targeting of aid and commercial projects



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OVERVIEW

Mozambique's government has reported that the town of Palma has seen two days of fighting since a 25 March three pronged attack by reportedly IS-linked fighters, though no claims have been made by Islamic State's Central Africa Province (ISCAP) so far. The attack occurred after the French company Total had stated that it would resume work gradually at its gas project in the area. Palma is situated about 10 km (6.2 miles) from the gas project (worth around \$20 billion). The government is seeking to secure the town, including use of helicopters to provide air support, leading many civilians to leave the area. Currently, communications have been interrupted, with no verified information on casualties.

ANALYSIS

In our **Mozambique: Vigil InSight Situation Report** we had predicted that although the "scale of attacks in Cabo Delgado had dropped" it still remained the "most significant high-threat area", with Palma remaining a focus for the Mozambique government for targeted military action, including air strikes, though this had widened throughout the area. The attack is the first major tactical operation against Palma in six months by armed gunmen, and occurred after Total's announcement to resume operations. The area adjacent to the town, holds a number of gas projects, led by Total, worth \$60 billion.

PREDICTION

- Further attacks are likely over the next two months IVO Palma, and also Nangade town (see **Mozambique: Vigil InSight Situation Report**) as armed groups, especially ISCAP, focus on continuing to disrupt both commercial activities and aid work in the area.
- A re-focus by militant groups in the Palma area is highly likely, in particular if Total increases production at the site.
- The number of IDPs will continue to rise, increasing with further attacks.

MITIGATION

- Continue to vary routes in the area, especially IVO R762 and R775 which lead into / out of Palma and through to the border area including IVO the towns of Quionga and Namurianga (closest main towns to Palma on the R775).
- Restrict circle of knowledge of travel. Restrict social media postage in relation to travel or movement.
- Use PPE where possible.
- Ensure first aid kits are up to date.