



CENTRO DE INTEGRIDADE PÚBLICA  
Anticorrupção - Transparência - Integridade

# Resort to private military companies to fight the insurgency in Cabo Delgado: without transparency and with disastrous results

## Introduction

The Mozambican Government is going to prolong, for the second time, its contract with the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), a South African private military company (PMC), which, since April of this year, has been assisting the Defence and Security Forces in combatting the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. In addition to extending the contract with DAG, the government has hired another South African PMC, Paramount, according to reports in the international press this week<sup>1</sup>.

Under the cover of State secrets, the Government has been resorting, since September 2019, to hiring PMCs to help fight the insurgency in Cabo Delgado, without accountability to Mozambican citizens, either in terms of expenditure or of the benefits obtained by resorting to private soldiers.

While information is scarce about how much the Government has spent on the PMCs, the performance of these companies on the ground is visibly disastrous. Since the government began to resort to private military to assist the Mozambican Armed Forces (FADM) and police in fighting the insurgents, the power of the latter has grown visibly. They have attacked district capitals and inflicted heavy losses on the government forces. The government has hidden from the public information about the soldiers killed in combat in Cabo Delgado.

## Obscure contracts: from Russians to South Africans

Under cover of the law which defines direct awarding of contracts as the applicable regime, “if the object of the contract concerns defence and national security”<sup>2</sup>, the Government has, since September 2019, resorted to hiring foreign private military companies, without informing Mozambicans about the purpose of the contracts, the sums involved and other contract conditions. Although we recognize the need to protect sensitive information such as that concerning defence and security, this does not mean that the government is exempt from accountability. But the Government has not provided any account about these contracts, and in a context where defence expenditure has increased significantly, by about 80% between 2017 and 2020, from 8.304 billion meticaais in 2017 to 14.957 billion by September 2020<sup>3</sup>.

The first private military company hired by the government was the Wagner Group, of Russia. Russian soldiers linked to this company arrived in Mozambique in September 2019 and began to operate in Cabo Delgado. The Government never said anything about the role of the Wagner soldiers operating on Mozambican soil, much less about what they would receive for their services.

Specialist publications say that the Mozambican government

<sup>1</sup> DW (2020), Moçambique adquire apoio militar privado para combater terrorismo – imprensa, available at [https://amp.dw.com/pt-002/moçambique-adquire-apoio-militar-privado-para-combater-terrorismo-imprensa/a-55894478?\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://amp.dw.com/pt-002/moçambique-adquire-apoio-militar-privado-para-combater-terrorismo-imprensa/a-55894478?_twitter_impression=true) [consulted on 11 December 2020];  
<sup>2</sup> Cf. Article 94, line e), of Decree no. 5/2016 of 8 March.

<sup>3</sup> MEF, Reports on Budgetary Execution, January-December 2017 – 2019 and REO January-September 2020.

agreed to pay the private Russian troops with natural gas from the Rovuma Basin<sup>4</sup>, but this information was never confirmed by the Government which always refused to answer questions about the use of private military companies, on the grounds that these were questions of military strategy.

Without success in Cabo Delgado, the Russian private troops withdrew from combat, while the press published reports of losses among their members and of supposed tensions with the Government forces<sup>5</sup>.

After the failure of the private Russian troops, in April 2020, the Government hired another private military company, this time the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), led by the Zimbabwean veteran Leonel Dyck<sup>6</sup>. The South African private military company brought in aircraft and armament to help combat the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. The Government never revealed the terms of the contract, such as its duration, the amount paid, and the obligations of the DAG, which is general information without great implications for the operations. However, members of the FADM questioned the capacity of the aircraft hired by the Government, saying that these are civilian helicopters adapted for combat, and so not effective for the type of combat required in Cabo Delgado.

Due to their technical limitations for combat, the helicopters brought and operated by the DAG in Cabo Delgado are not able to fly at night, and specialists say that their flying range is very limited. They cannot spend many hours in combat in the air, without returning to base, in Pemba, to refuel.

According to information in the media, never commented on by the Government, the DAG initial contract in Moçambique was for three months, from April to June. However, in July it was reported that the Government had extended the contract until at least the end of 2020, and it now included a component of training members of the defence and security forces<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, the renewal of the DAG contract and the hiring of Paramount are the third wave of hiring private military companies, always following patterns of secrecy, although in the long run the private soldiers are seen operating in Mozambique.

## Disastrous Results: from the problematic relations with the FADM to the loss of ground to the insurgents

Although the government has never revealed the purpose of hiring the military companies, the basis of resorting to the services of private military companies is the need to support Government troops, with technical assistance in matters of fighting against complex enemies, including intelligence services, and support with more effective means of combat.

But in Mozambique the private military companies are failing, so far, in this mission. To the contrary of what was expected from hiring these companies, the unfolding of events in the theatre of operations shows that the military power of the insurgents has increased significantly since the government began resorting to the services of private military companies. This may be an indicator that the Government's option to hire PMCs is proving counter-productive in combatting the insurgency.

The insurgent attacks against the district capitals of Quissanga (March 2020) Mocimboa da Praia (March, June and August 2020), Macomia (May 2020) Namacande - Muidumbe (April and November 2020), happened after the Government had hired the services of the private military companies.

Both the Russians and the South African private military force were unable to prevent the attacks against district capitals, and the destruction of their infrastructure by the insurgents. In all the district capitals, the insurgents attacked and stayed for days, destroying public and private buildings and looting property, before withdrawing on their own initiative<sup>8</sup>.

In the Quissanga district capital, the insurgents stayed for more than a month, and in the town of Mocimboa da Praia they have stayed to the present, four months after the attack<sup>9</sup>.

4 SIXTO, D (2020), Russian Mercenaries: A String of Failures in Africa, available at <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/russian-mercenaries-a-string-of-failures-in-africa/> [consulted on 11 December 2020];

5 Carta de Moçambique (2019) Cabo Delgado: Mercenários do Wagner Group regressam ao teatro de operações, available at <https://cartamz.com/index.php/crime/item/3801-cabo-delgado-mercenarios-do-wagner-group-regressam-ao-teatro-de-operacoes> [consulted on 11 December 2020];

6 Ndllovu, M. (2020) Mozambican government hires Zimbabwe retired Colonel?, in Bulawayo24 News of 20 April 2020

7 Zitamar (2020), Mozambique extends DAG mercenary contract for Cabo Delgado War, available at <https://zitamar.com/mozambique-extends-dag-mercenary-contract-for-cabo-delgado-war/> [consulted on 11 December 2020];

8 LUSA (2020) **Autoridades moçambicanas recuperam controlo de Macomia** anúncio governador de Cabo Delgado, available at <https://observador.pt/2020/06/01/autoridades-mocambicanas-recuperam-controlo-de-macomia-anuncia-governador-de-cabo-delgado/> [consulted on 11 December 2020];

9 LUSA, Instituições do Estado no distrito de Quissanga encerradas devido a ataques na provincia, available at <https://observador.pt/2020/07/08/instituicoes-do-estado-no-distrito-de-quissanga-encerradas-devido-a-ataques-na-provincia/> [consulted on 11 December 2020];

## Losses in the FADM

With the presence of private military companies in Mozambique, it was to be expected that the FADM would increase their capacity not only to defend the communities, but also for vigilance and reconnaissance of the manoeuvres of the enemy, and thus avoid ambushes with heavy losses in their ranks. But what is witnessed in Cabo Delgado is the opposite. The insurgents are causing enormous losses in the Mozambican Armed Forces.

The resort to private military companies is always regarded as a high risk decision which can bring negative implications for the survival of the State itself, from the corrosion of the primary function of the state to guarantee security in the territory under its jurisdiction, to the diffusion of the State's military power among various actors, and the weak accountability for security activities, given the difference between the obligations of public and private bodies<sup>10</sup>.

In the case of weak states, such as Mozambique, they often do not have the capacity to deal with the consequences of the privatisation of security. The diffusion of powers resulting from hiring private military companies may weaken rather than consolidate the authority of the State<sup>11</sup>.

Loss of control over the military powers of the State seems to be the path that Mozambique is taking with the use of private military companies. High ranking military officers are claiming leadership in fighting the insurgency in Cabo Delgado and believe that it would be better to train and equip the FADM with combat capacity rather than hire PMCs. There are also reports of a bad relationship between the private troops and the FADM. It is said that DAG was hired by the Police and is under the management of the General Commander of the police, and not the Ministry of Defence<sup>12</sup>.

In the last attack against Mocímboa da Praia, which culminated with the occupation of the town, including the naval base, it is reported that the soldiers ran out of ammunition, because the DAG was unable to bring ammunition from Pemba, in time to resupply the FADM in combat. And when it did bring the ammunition, the DAG left it far from the FADM's position, and the ammunition fell into the hands of the insurgents.

The most recent ambush suffered by the FADM cost the lives of at least 29 soldiers of a company of the Special Operations Forces.

The ambush occurred on Sunday, 29 November, in the village of Matambalane, in Muidumbe district, against a vehicle carrying the soldiers. Attacks of this nature could have been avoided with sophisticated surveillance systems that one would have expected the private military companies to use.

And, as usual, the Government gave no information about the death of almost 30 soldiers at once. The tragedy went unnoticed by society, and the potential result is that the sacrifice of soldiers who fell in defence of the country will be forgotten. CIP has had access to the list of soldiers of the Company of the Special Operations Forces who fell in combat. For ethical reasons, we shall not publish their names.

## Conclusions

The Government's resort to private military companies to combat the insurgency in Cabo Delgado is proving a high risk and ineffective decision. In addition to the lack of transparency and accountability about the contracts with the private military companies, these companies are not managing to halt the advance of the insurgents who have been gaining more ground with the attacks against and occupation of district capitals.

There are also signs of a poor relationship between the private military companies and the FADM, given the fact that the PMCs are working with the police, whose vocation is not to combat the insurgency. One also notes cases of the diffusion of military power between the FADM and the police, the latter with the support of the PMC, which could generate an institutional crisis between the police and the military.

The ambush and deaths of dozens of soldiers shows that the PMC have not made a positive contribution to increasing the capacity of the Armed Forces, in terms of surveillance of the movements of the enemy.

It is recommended that the Government reconsider the resort to the services of the PMC after these have shown that they are not able to hold back the expansion of insurgent attacks. Furthermore, the Assembly of the Republic, through its specialist Commission on Defence, Security and Public Order, should ask the Government about the contracts with the PMCs in Mozambique, to ensure due accountability.

<sup>10</sup> Avant, D. (2004: 155) *The Privatization of Security and Change in the Control of Force*. Blackwell Publishing: MA, USA;

<sup>11</sup> Abrahamsen, R. and Williams Michael C. (2007: 139) *Selling security: Assessing the impact of military privatization*. Routledge: Aberystwyth, UK;

<sup>12</sup> LUSA (2020), *Governo de Moçambique adquire apoio militar privado na África do Sul para combater terrorismo*, available at [https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/governo-de-mocambique-adquire-apoio-militar-privado-na-africa-do-sul-para-combater-terrorismo\\_n1281824](https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/governo-de-mocambique-adquire-apoio-militar-privado-na-africa-do-sul-para-combater-terrorismo_n1281824) [consulted on 11 December 2020]

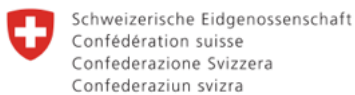
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