

Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis (CPRA) –Pretoria



CPRA Daily Briefings

Week 26

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The **CPRA Daily Briefings** are held weekday mornings in the CPRA Pretoria's Situation Room and the Briefing Notes are the minutes of this meeting during which each regional expert of the Programme reports on the latest human security developments in his/her region, followed by general discussions around the table. An intern then compiles a summary of the meeting, which is reviewed by the respective researchers, and a senior researcher edits the report and provides quality control before returning it to the intern to prepare it for dispatch to the mailing list to which you have subscribed.

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**Today's Briefings
Compilation**
Ms Naomi Kok

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Summary of Briefings

Central Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo: As the M23 gains ground, the situation in North Kivu is becoming increasingly dangerous for civilians

In April 2012 the former Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) rebels started defecting from the Congolese army. They had been integrated into the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) under the 2009 peace deal. The subsequent clashes between the mutineers and the FARDC have caused over 200 000 civilians to flee the region.

Last weekend, however, the situation started changing dramatically, with the mutinous group, now known as the M23 taking control of numerous strategic towns, including Bunagana, Rutshuru, Ntamungenga and Rubare, which is 10km from the provincial capital Goma. An estimated 600 FARDC troops fled to neighbouring Uganda. Although the leader of the battalion that fled described the move as a tactical withdrawal, the soldiers left their weapons behind and these have now been captured by the M23.

These latest developments are reminiscent of the events in 2008, when the CNDP came very close to taking control of Goma. While the M23 leader, Col. Sultani Makenga is calling for negotiations with DRC President Joseph Kabila to discuss better treatment of troops in the FARDC, it is doubtful whether the M23 will once again be integrated into the army.

Kinshasa is extremely concerned about the possibility that rebels could take over Goma. Indications are that the confrontation could be deadly, and also contribute to the fragility of the region and the country as a whole. Plans are also underway to send more troops to Goma to dissuade rebels from attempting attacks on the town.

The fact that the M23 has said that it would evacuate all the towns it has taken, except for Bunagana, indicates that the group is increasingly interested in gaining control over mineral trade in the region, as Bunagana is a strategic mineral transit town on the border with Uganda.

It has to be remembered that the former CNDP members, who make up a large component of the M23, were interested in protecting the Banyamulenge population (Tutsi Congolese who migrated to the DRC in the 1880's); fighting the former Hutu rebels of the Forces Démocratiques de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) and gaining what they could in the process. If the M23 manages to take control of Goma, it will effectively be controlling the North Kivu, and would thus be better able to protect the Banyamulenge and keep the FDLR weak.

It is of great concern that while the M23 is interested in protecting certain parts of the population, its members are also notorious human rights abusers. Their leaders, Bosco Ntaganda and Sultani Makenga have both been involved in various massacres, rape and recruitment of child soldiers.

Having the M23 in control of Eastern DRC may be in the interest of Rwanda, and of the Tutsi population in the East, but for the rest of the civilian population, it will mean that their lives will become more insecure than ever before.

Unfortunately the United Nations peacekeepers mandated to protect civilians, even if force is required, have not been very successful in enforcing their mandate. Thus, it has now become critical for President Kabila and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda to discuss the situation. So

far, the mutiny has only been discussed by the military and by foreign ministers of the two countries, but given Rwanda's alleged involvement in supplying weapons and recruits for the M23, this situation requires urgent discussion at the highest level.

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