

DRC

Security, Army...

- Kivu

([RDC_6](#)) New York Times – 16/12

Witnesses reported that truckloads of Rwandan soldiers recently crossed the border and were camped within 20 miles of Goma, which was captured last month and briefly occupied by a rebel force called the M23 movement. United Nations officials confirmed a sudden military buildup around Goma but said that they did not know the identities of the various groups of soldiers.

“It feels a bit like a boiling kettle, about to blow up,” said Thierry Goffeau, the leader of the mission in Goma for the aid organization Doctors Without Borders.

Aid workers in Goma said the Congolese Army had been reinforcing its positions in the last few days with tanks, heavy artillery and allies from some very unscrupulous militias.

Several Goma residents said that while businesses were open during the day, the city had become lawless at night, especially after hundreds of criminals, including militia leaders, escaped from a hole punched through the back wall of Goma’s central prison last month.

Mr. Goffeau said the situation in Masisi, a highly fertile area north of Goma, where the M23 and other armed groups have been mobilizing, was becoming “very, very, tense.”

“You have hundreds of tiny armed groups plying the countryside, making havoc,” said Jay Drosin, the director for the International Medical Corps’s program in Congo. Mr. Drosin said the situation was “constantly fluid and extremely unpredictable” and “more uncontrollable than it’s ever been.”

Many aid workers said ethnic tensions in the Goma area were increasing and could set off bloodletting between Hutus and Tutsis and other ethnic groups that may align themselves with either side.

Analysts said that Rwanda might sweep into Congo again if the Hutu militants around Goma actually mounted a serious incursion into Rwanda. But they also noted that Rwanda would be reluctant to go on the offensive while peace talks were under way in Uganda, which has been hosting representatives of the Congolese government and the M23 rebel group in the hopes of brokering some sort of truce. “We will be here if it takes a day, or a week, or a year,” Bertrand Bisimwa, a rebel spokesman, said Thursday from a hotel room in Kampala, Uganda.

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<http://africanarguments.org/2012/12/17/meanwhile-in-goma%E2%80%A6withdrawal-of-m23-and-kampala-%E2%80%98negotiations%E2%80%99-by-kris-berwouts/>

External Relations

(RDC_28) IRIN – 18/12

Even as they continue to work toward a negotiated solution to the crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the leaders of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) are planning to deploy a 4,000-strong "neutral force" to the region to improve its security. Yet regional analysts and stakeholders are at odds over the force's composition and mandate.

Even as they continue to work toward a negotiated solution to the crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the leaders of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) are planning to deploy a 4,000-strong "neutral force" to the region to improve its security. Yet regional analysts and stakeholders are at odds over the force's composition and mandate.

Angelo Izama, a political affairs analyst at the US-based Open Society Foundation, cautioned that the political process must not be abandoned. "A regional force must come out of a political agenda for the east of Congo, not simply out of a response to the security situation there. Unless political imperatives are relied upon to design an intelligent use of external force in the east, it will backfire. This has been the problem behind the episodic outbreaks of violence in that area, where force has been traded by local militias, regional armies and the international UN-mandated deployments," he said.

"Military intervention is costly in blood and treasure, more volatile and therefore less sustainable, and attracts negative gains in relations with Congo and its neighbours and the international community," he added. "DRC's stability should remain an issue for its domestic political actors and that of its immediate neighbours. Other countries can act as interested observers and underwrite a negotiated settlement that arises out of the principled engagement of the most affected stakeholders."

The entry of a neutral force will also have implications for the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), which has been criticized for failing to prevent M23's capture of Goma and for perceived failures in protecting civilians. "This [neutral] force will have to demonstrate that it can do better than MONUSCO as a deterrent for the armed groups," said ICG's Vircoulon.

"We call for the change of MONUSCO's mandate from peacekeeping to enforcement. We call for the amendment of chapter seven of the UN charter so that MONUSCO can support the neutral force to fight and eliminate the negative forces," ICGLR's Mwachofi told IRIN. "A regional force must come out of a political agenda for the east of Congo, not simply out of a response to the security situation there. Unless political imperatives are relied upon to design an intelligent use of external force in the east, it will backfire". "It would be good to demarcate clearly what its [MONUSCO's] role and mandate are as opposed to those of the neutral force," said Makerere's Golooba-Mutebi.

Read the whole story under :

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97075/Analysis-Seeking-civilian-and-military-solutions-in-the-DRC>

(RDC_30) Reuters – 19/12

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed alarm on Wednesday at the crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and said he had discussed a plan to bring stability to the region with leaders of Rwanda, Uganda and other African states.

U.N. officials defended the force's approach as necessary to avoid putting Goma's civilians at risk. The world body launched a "strategic review" of MONUSCO to see how its mandate might be beefed up, though U.N. officials say any changes to it would be meaningless without improvements in the Congolese army and an end of meddling by Rwanda and Uganda.

"The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains the scene of instability, including sexual violence committed by combatants on all sides," Ban told reporters. "The time has come for the international community to rethink its approach to the DRC (Congo) and the Great Lakes region," he said. "The underlying causes of the conflict in the region must be addressed in a comprehensive manner."

Ban described the situation in eastern Congo as being of "grave concern," adding that he was "trying to find some broader political framework" to end the crisis. "We have a certain broader political framework on the basis of which we can really resolve this one as soon as possible," he said, without disclosing details.

Ban said he had spoken with the presidents of a number of African countries, including Congo's Joseph Kabila, Rwanda's Paul Kagame and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, as well as the leaders of Tanzania, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola and South Africa about his "political framework" plan.

The plan would include some changes in the U.N. mission in Congo, said Ban, who added that the world body was looking at ways to "enhance the capacity of MONUSCO." U.N. officials told Reuters privately that Ban hoped an agreement would soon be signed and that he might travel to Africa to be present for the signing. The plan would involve a commitment by Kabila to improve the Congolese army and pledges from Uganda and Rwanda not to interfere in eastern Congo.

While M23 rebels have been accused of atrocities in eastern Congo, Congolese government forces routinely face accusations of rape and other war crimes.

U.N. officials said Kabila's announcement on Saturday that he was planning an initiative for Congo aimed at uniting the vast Central African country, which has been torn by an eastern rebellion and a furious political opposition, was related to Ban's "political framework" idea.