Spot Report; DRC

29TH JANUARY 2025

M23 Rebels Capture Goma, North Kivu with Alleged Rwandan Support

Overview

On January 28, 2025, the M23 rebel group, with alleged support from Rwanda, claimed control over Goma, the largest city in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This event marks a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict in the region, affecting the city's population of approximately 2 million.

The rebels have taken control of key infrastructure including Goma's airport, which has severely impacted humanitarian aid efforts and the movement of people. There have been reports of intense fighting, with civilian casualties and widespread displacement as residents flee the conflict zone.

Cause

The capture of Goma by M23 is part of a broader conflict that has roots in the fallout from the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the subsequent struggle for control over the mineral-rich eastern DRC. M23, primarily composed of ethnic Tutsis, claims to protect its community's interests against discrimination and has accused the Congolese government of not adhering to previous peace agreements.

The involvement of Rwanda, as suggested by various reports and UN statements, indicates a continuation of regional power dynamics and interests in controlling resource-rich areas.

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Outlook

The capture of Goma by M23 rebels has drastically increased the security risks for travelers and staff in the region. The city is now a conflict zone with active combat, leading to a high risk of violence, looting, and potential human rights abuses.

Movement is restricted, with Goma's airport being closed, severely limiting evacuation options. Essential services like power and water are disrupted, and there is a significant humanitarian crisis with overcrowded conditions in displacement camps, increasing health and safety risks

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Advice

- **Immediate Evacuation:** If possible, travelers and staff should evacuate Goma immediately via available routes, considering the airport is under rebel control. Check for safe land or water routes to neighbouring regions or countries.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep updated via reliable news sources and official channels. Monitor statements from the UN, local government, and international advisories.
- **Security Measures:** If evacuation isn't possible, secure your location. Stay indoors, away from windows, and avoid areas of known conflict. Fortify your shelter if necessary.
- **Communication:** Maintain communication with your embassy or consulate. Register with them if you haven't already, to ensure they are aware of your location for potential evacuation or assistance

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Risk Mitigation

- **Avoid Crowds:** Stay away from large gatherings or protests, as these could turn violent or be targeted by combatants.
- **Travel in Groups:** If movement is necessary, travel in groups for safety, and ensure someone knows your itinerary.
- **Supplies:** Stock up on food, water, medical supplies, and fuel, as services might be disrupted for extended periods.
- **Health Precautions:** Be prepared for limited medical facilities. Keep first aid kits and necessary medications handy. Avoid tap water due to potential contamination from disrupted services.
- **Local Contacts:** Establish contact with local trusted individuals or organizations for real-time updates and assistance.
- **Long-term Considerations:** For those with long-term commitments in the area, consider relocating operations temporarily until the situation stabilizes. Ensure business continuity plans account for such disruptions, focusing on remote operations if possible.
- **Legal and Diplomatic Awareness:** Be aware of the legal implications of staying in a conflict zone. Understand your rights and the diplomatic support available.
- Remember, the situation is fluid, and personal safety should be the top priority. Always follow the latest security advisories and consider the potential for sudden changes in the conflict dynamics.

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