



North Kivu

MONUC begins reinforcing its troops in North Kivu

The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo has begun reinforcing its troops in North Kivu and in Goma in particular. The Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping, Alain LeRoy said during a news conference in Goma today at the end of a three day visit to the area.



Photo by Marie Frechon/MONUC

The objective of reinforcing MONUC forces in North Kivu is to lift the threat of armed groups from local populations, explained Mr. LeRoy who jointly hosted the event at MONUC's base in Goma, with Alan Doss, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the DRC.

Alain LeRoy reaffirmed the determination of the UN to make protecting civilian populations and legally established institutions a priority. He also called on all armed groups to cease fire.

Alan Doss made a similar call

while calling for an end to hostilities in Rutshuru. *"We are currently in contact with all armed groups here and have demanded the withdrawal of all armed groups from Rutshuru and its vicinity so that MONUC can guarantee the protection of civilians there."*

To tackle the crisis, Mr. Leroy declared that MONUC, while it has 17,000 soldiers, needs supplementary troops to deliver its mandate. Some additional troops would allow the Mission to protect Goma, but also to continue its work in Ituri, in other areas of the north and in the province

of South Kivu.

On Tuesday, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, asked the UN Security Council to consider the possibility of an extra 3000 peacekeepers in DRC. Giving the details of this request, MONUC's Military Spokesman said this would include two infantry battalions, two Special Forces' companies, 18 helicopters, and two C130 transporter planes. But MONUC would also require more engineers, information specialists, trainers for the Congolese Army and police.



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MONUC condemns the resumption of fighting in Rutshuru

The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) has condemned the return of fighting in Rutshuru since Tuesday between CNDP forces and elements of PARECO and other Mayi Mayi groups who are confronting each other with heavy weapons near Rutshuru. Fighting continued intermittently this morning, according to a MONUC spokesman at a press conference in Kinshasa on Wednesday.

Some fighting broke out yesterday between PARECO elements and CNDP combatants in Kiwanja, 5 kilometres to the north of Rutshuru, 300 metres away from the MONUC base in Rutshuru. During the fighting, MONUC was caught in the crossfire between the two groups. 15 members of humanitarian organisations working in Rutshuru and in Kiwanja were evacuated toward Rugari, MONUC's Military Spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Paul Dietrich said.

He added that MONUC sent an armoured vehicle patrol to the north and north-west of Kiwanja to repel PARECO elements. The MONUC patrol attacked PARECO positions with light weapons but didn't use heavy weapons to avoid collateral damage. About a hundred combatants hid in houses and escaped to the south later.

MONUC says these outbreaks of fighting constitute a violation of the cease fire agreement and that they seriously threaten the safety of civilian populations. They also risk aggravating an already serious humanitarian situation and could derail intense efforts on the diplomatic front to end the fighting.

This is why MONUC contacted all belligerents to demand an immediate end to hostilities. The immediate withdrawal from all of Rutshuru and the surrounding area would allow the UN Mission to guarantee the protection of civil populations there.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian agencies describe as "desperate", the situation of people displaced following fighting last week in North Kivu. In the last two months, 250,000 people were forced to flee their homes,



Photo by Marie Frechon/MONUC

meaning the total number of displaced people stands at a million, or 20% of the population of North-Kivu.

UNICEF reported that 60,000 children fled recent fighting between armed groups in North-Kivu. Hundreds of children were separated from their families and had to fend for themselves.

Thousands of displaced people have had very little to eat since they fled. Their access to drinking water and to health care is at the most basic level.

The World Health Organization said that increasing quantities of medicines had been provided by foreign governments to save lives in the East of the DRC and it called for more assistance to respond to the most urgent needs. The World Food Programme said it was going to begin distributing ten days of rations for

135,000 people in six camps around Goma, the provincial capital of North-Kivu. The distribution will take place the same day to avoid rioting. WFP transported food from Uganda and Zambia to DRC and had some emergency supplies in Bukavu. But the United Nations as a whole says better guarantees need to be put in place to provide safe passage of humanitarian goods and security for staff.

UNHCR fears that three camps for displaced people close to Rutshuru have been destroyed and emptied of their inhabitants. The agency is trying to find out where the thousands of people who were in these camps are. Since the cease-fire declared a week ago by the rebels under the command of Laurent Nkunda, it is the first time that UNHCR has had access to the area controlled by these rebels to the north of Goma.