

CONGO RESEARCH
GROUP



GROUPE D'ÉTUDE
SUR LE CONGO

FOR THE ARMY WITH THE ARMY LIKE THE ARMY?

The Rise of Guidon Shimiray and the NDC-Rénové in Eastern Congo



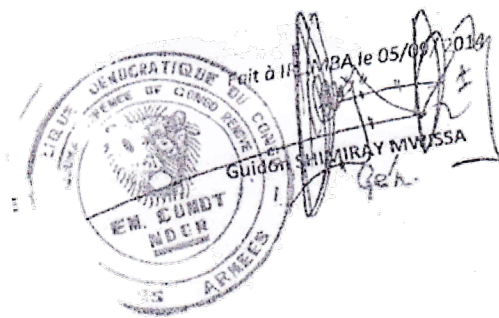


Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary..... | 2 |
| Glossary of Terms and Acronyms..... | 3 |
| 1. Negotiating Violence in the Congo: The Case of the NDC–Rénové..... | 6 |
| 2. The Backdrop: Violent Politics in North Kivu..... | 9 |
| 3. The Trajectory of the NDC–Rénové..... | 12 |
| 4. Lubero to Masisi: Military Operations and the Escalation of Conflict..... | 19 |
| 4.1 From Proxy to Prey: Sukola II Operations and the Fate of the FDLR..... | 19 |
| 4.2 The NDC–Rénové’s Expansion Into Southern Lubero..... | 21 |
| 4.3 Mai–Mai Mazembe and the Fragmentation of Armed Politics in Lubero..... | 23 |
| 4.4 The NDC–Rénové as a Proxy for the Congolese Army..... | 32 |
| 4.5 The NDC–Rénové in Masisi: Endgame for the FDLR?..... | 38 |
| 5. Analysis: Proxy Warfare, Governance Experiments & Extractive Authority..... | 44 |
| 5.1 Proxy warfare and Alliance Formation: Deals, Co-Optation and Parallel Operations..... | 44 |
| 5.2 Governance, Legitimacy and Ideology in the NDC–Rénové..... | 47 |
| 5.3 Business, Taxation and Monopolies: “a chaque repas, on exige la sauce de la poule”..... | 50 |
| Conclusion..... | 58 |
| Endnotes..... | 60 |

Executive Summary

The Nduma Defence of Congo (NDC) – including its splinter faction, the NDC-Rénové (NDC-R) – is one of eastern Congo’s oldest and most important armed groups. Based in North Kivu province, it has grown from a ragtag village militia in 2008 to control more area than any other Congolese belligerent group today. In this report, the Congo Research Group offers the first in-depth account of its origins, internal dynamics, and sources of support. We argue that studying the NDC(-R) provides critical insights into armed conflict dynamics in the eastern Congo, and in particular into the relationship between the state and armed groups. We make three points:

First, we highlight the extent to which the Congolese army relies on proxy forces in furthering its objectives. The NDC-R has become a critical partner for the government in Kinshasa – and indirectly for Rwanda, as well – in its operations against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), one of the oldest and most important foreign armed groups in eastern Congo. In a broader context of military operations against armed groups, violence is used as an instrument of governance, and is often the object of negotiation between the army and rebel groups acting as its proxies, carrying out the bulk of frontline fighting.¹ This outsourcing of security, although often successful in defeating enemies, has perverse side-effects, ratcheting up communal tensions, leading to violent abuses, and undermining state legitimacy.

Second, we show how the NDC-R has been relatively successful in setting up governance structures in order to control local populations and win “hearts and minds.” These hybrid systems are no longer temporary gaps in state sovereignty: hundreds of thousands of Congolese have now lived under such arrangements for decades. This report offers a window into how this form of outsourced military governance affects their political and social lives.² In this sense, the NDC-R in its current form offers a counterpoint to other armed groups in eastern Congo, which often dwindle into insignificance following leadership struggles and splits.

Finally, we provide an analysis of the extractive enterprise set up by the NDC-R. Launched as an attempt to defend the population’s access to mining revenues, the NDC-R diversified and now invests in numerous economic sectors. This racketeering, which involves local chiefs, powerful businesspeople, and Congolese army officers, shows how militarized the economy of the region has become, significantly complicating outside efforts to stimulate development.³

One year after Congo’s first ever peaceful transition of power, this report suggests that President Félix Tshisekedi will have to do more to stabilize the country than just launch military operations against Congo’s enemies. At the same time as his government has launched a large and costly offensive against the Ugandan Allied Democratic Front (ADF) rebels in Beni area, it has collaborated with the NDC-R in Lubero, Walikale and Masisi. Moreover, Guidon’s group is one of over a hundred armed groups in the eastern Congo; the Congolese army’s continued cooperation with the NDC-R and its inability to dismantle the many others shows that the problem is as much with a weak and factionalized army as with localized conflicts. Transforming security governance in the Congo will require profound changes to “purge” corrupt commanders and root out entrenched patronage networks.

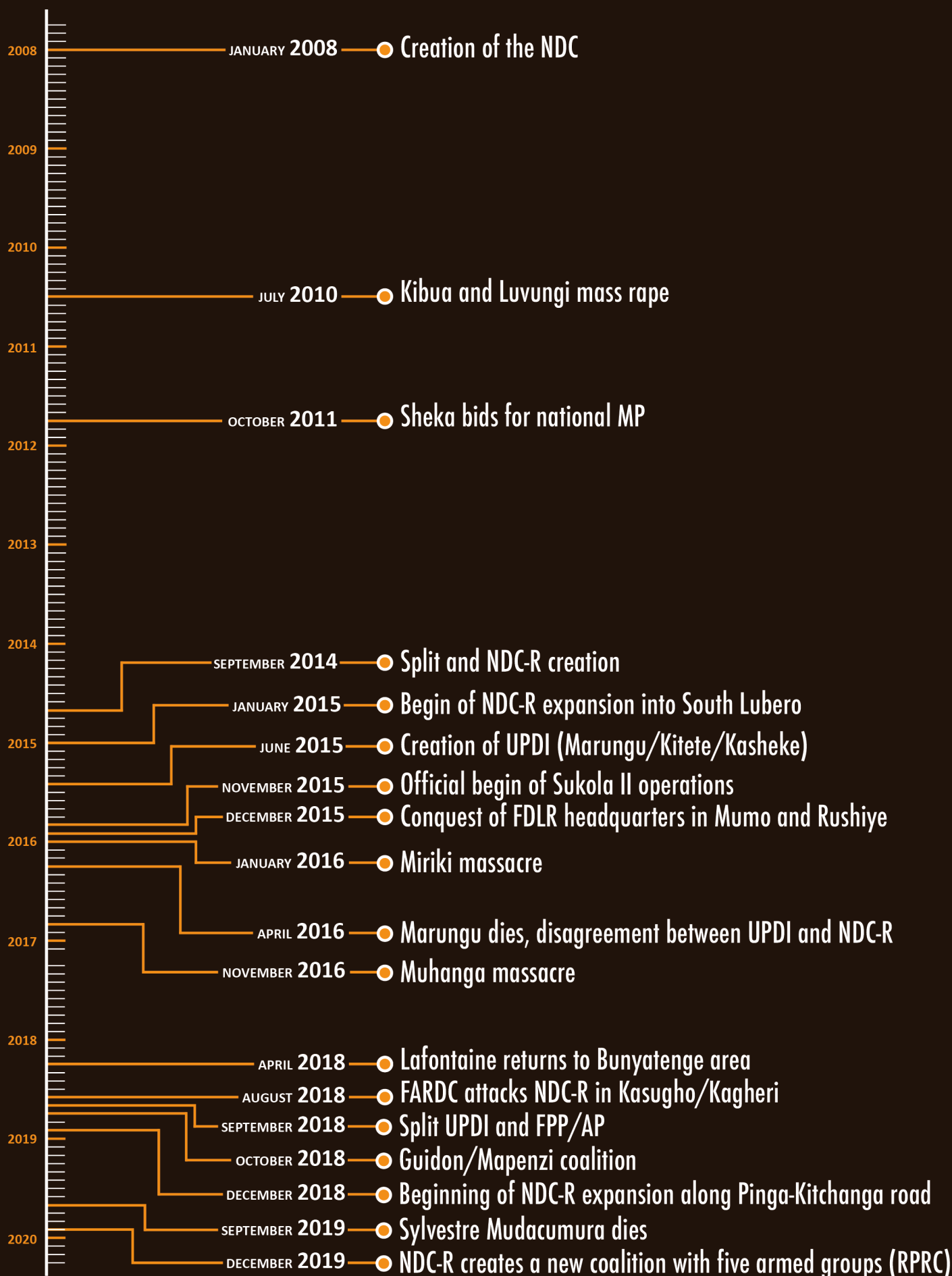
Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ADF | The Allied Democratic Forces is a Ugandan-originating armed group |
| AGENOKI | A mutualité mainly regrouping Congolese Tutsi in Masisi and Rutshuru |
| AFDL | Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre |
| APCLS(–R) | Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain(–Rénové) |
| Batiri | The Batiri were a Tembo- and Nyanga-based militia in the 1993 Masisi war |
| Bangilima | The Bangilima were a Nande-based militia in Lubero in the 1990s |
| CMC | Collectif des mouvements pour le changement |
| CNDP | Congrès national pour la défense du peuple |
| CNRD | Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie |
| COMIMPA | Coopérative Minière de Mpama/Bisie |
| Commissionnaire | A type of intermediate mineral trader or négociant |
| Corps de Christ | A Mai-Mai group that briefly operated near Butembo in 2016 |
| Dawa | Medicines (liquid or powder) and amulets used by combatants during combat |
| FAP | Forces d’Autodéfense Populaire / Mai-Mai Vita Kitambala |
| FAR | The Rwandan national army until 1994 |
| FARDC | Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo |
| FDLR | Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda |
| FDC | Forces de défense du Congo |
| FPP–AP | Front patriotique pour la paix–Armée du peuple |
| FRPL–L | Front de Résistance Populaire de Lubwe–Rwenzori / Mai-Mai Mudoghu |
| GMB | Groupe Minier Bangandula |
| Grand Nord | The cities of Beni and Butembo and the territories of Beni and Lubero in North Kivu |
| Hunde | The Hunde are a community living mainly in Masisi area |
| Hutu | The Hutu are a community living mainly in Masisi, Rutshuru and Kalehe areas and are a demographic majority of Petit Nord area |
| Jeton | Receipts for often illegally perceived headtaxes or taxes for passage or goods |
| Kano | The Kano are a community living mainly in southern Walikale area |
| Katuko | The Katuko were a Tembo-based militia in the 1993 Masisi war |
| Kasindiens | The Kasindiens were an umbrella term for numerous loosely connected Mai-Mai groups among the Nande and Hunde communities during the 1990s |
| Kyaghandanda Yira | Nande cultural association organized in local-to-international sections |
| Kobo | The Kobo are a community living in northern Walikale and southern Lubero |
| Kumu | The Kumu are a community living in Walikale |
| LNC | Logistique non-conventionnelle |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| M23 | The Mouvement du 23 mars was an armed group rooted in the previous RCD and CNDP rebellion. It conquered Goma late 2012 and was defeated in 2013 |
| Mai-Mai | Umbrella term for Congolese nationalist militia |
| MAC | Mouvement acquis au changement |
| MAGRIVI | Mutuelle des agriculteurs de Virunga |
| Mazembe | Umbrella term for Nande militia fighting the FDLR since 2015 |
| MC45 | Mouvement contre les 45,000 familles tutsi |
| MONUSCO | United Nations Organization Mission for the Stabilization of the Congo |
| MPC | Mining and Processing Congo |
| Mukongoro | War fund, collections requested from civilians be armed groups |
| Nande | The Nande are a community representing the demographic majority of Beni and Lubero areas and close to the neighbouring Ugandan Konjo community |
| NDC(-R) | Nduma Defence of Congo(-Rénové) |
| Nyanga | The Nyanga are a community predominantly living in Walikale area. The NDC(-R) is primarily rooted in Nyanga-led rebellion |
| Nyatura | Umbrella term and label for Congolese Hutu militia in Masisi and Rutshuru |
| PARECO | Patriotes résistants congolais |
| Parlement Furu | An urban vigilante organisation based in Butembo |
| Petit Nord | The city of Goma and Walikale, Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo territories of North Kivu |
| Raia Mutomboki | Umbrella term for Congolese militia recruiting from Rega, Kano and Tembo |
| RCD(-Goma) | Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma |
| RCD(-K/ML) | RCD-Kisangani-Mouvement de libération |
| RDF | Rwanda Defense Forces, the Rwandan national army since 2000 |
| Rega | The Rega are a community mainly living in Shabunda and Mwenga area |
| RPF/A | Rwandan Patriotic Front/Army, the Rwandan national army 1994-2000 |
| RPRC | Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais |
| RNL | Résistants nationalistes Lumumbistes / Mai-Mai Vurondo |
| RUD-Urunana | Rassemblement unité et démocratie-Urunana |
| Tembo | The Tembo are a community living primarily in Kalehe and southern Masisi |
| Tutsi | The Tutsi are a community living mainly in Masisi, Rutshuru and Kalehe areas |
| UPCP | Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix |
| UPDI | Union des patriotes pour la défense des innocents |
| UPLC | Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo |
| Veranda Mutsanga | An urban vigilante organization based in Butembo |

TIMELINE

OF KEY EVENTS



1. Negotiating Violence in the Congo: The Case of the NDC-Rénové

Early October 2019, somewhere in Walikale territory. Dressed in Congolese military fatigues and carrying a black-and-white version of the national flag, a man ceremoniously marches through a crowd of curious villagers as a military trumpeter plays a fanfare. He approaches another man dressed in a blue suit and hands over the flag. Journalists clad in bulletproof vests film him. Women in colorful dresses join the scene as another man shows up in an army uniform. A minute later, the first man is named the new commander of the 114th brigade of the Nduma Defence of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) [see box 1].⁴

This video scene is one of many disseminated on social media across the eastern Congo. The man in the blue suit is Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, commander of the NDC-R. Videos such as this one are emblematic not only of his importance, but also his self-fashioning as a new kind of rebel.

Eshewing images of ragtag commanders with magical amulets, Guidon Shimiray embodies a new hybrid: the statesman-businessman-rebel in a suit, receiving military honors and respect from the local population. At the same time, he faces an arrest warrant issued in June 2019 by Congolese military justice and has been sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council in 2018.

How he got here is a story that involves international mining companies, the politics of identity and land, Congolese government complicity, intrigue among rebel leaders, and brutal violence.

This report traces the trajectory of the NDC-R, its historical roots and its dramatic expansion. Zooming in on the group's evolution, this report sheds light on how entrenched conflict dynamics rotating around land, ethnic politics, and broader regional conflict are being reconfigured: the NDC-R's expansion has broken the dominance of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), long the most important armed actor in southern Lubero and northern Masisi territories. It covers roughly three decades, from the precursors of the NDC to January 2020.

Objet : Exécution mandat d'arrêt

J'ai l'honneur de vous saluer et vous informer qu'un dossier judiciaire est ouvert et instruit à mon office à charge du Colonel autoproclamé **SHIMIRAYI MWISHA Guidon**, fondateur et commandant du groupe rebelle **NDUMA Defens of Congo rénové (NDCR)** et consort.

Consécutivement à ce fait, j'ai décerné le mandat d'arrêt que je vous transmets en annexe pour exécution contre le précité.

Les Chefs des bureaux MONUSCO/GOMA et BENI qui me lisent en copie sont aussi, chacun en ce qui le concerne, priés de mettre en contribution les différents services et sections de la MONUSCO pour l'exécution de ce mandat d'arrêt.

Sentiments patriotiques.

L'Auditeur Militaire Supérieur
Opérationnel du Nord-Kivu
NDAKA MBWEDI Hippolyte
Colonel Magistrat



- Vu la loi n° 023/2002 du 18 Novembre portant code judiciaire Militaire ;
 - Vu la loi n°15/022 du 31 Décembre 2015 modifiant et complétant le décret du 30 Janvier 1940 portant Code Pénal Congolais ;
 - Vu l'Ordonnance n°16/025 du 1 Mars 2016 portant nomination des Magistrats Militaires du Ministère Public ;
 - Vu la décision n°AG/007/2016 du Août 2016 portant affectation de l'Auditeur Militaire Supérieur près la Cour Militaire Opérationnelle du Nord-Kivu ;
- I. **Dossier Judiciaire RMP 1185/NDM/018.**
II. A charge de **SHIMIRAYI MWISHA Guidon**.
III. **Prévenu de :**
- Participation à un mouvement insurrectionnel ;
 - Crime de guerre par recrutement d'enfants ;
 - Crime contre l'humanité par viol.

Fait à Goma, le 07/06/2019

Officier du Ministère Public



(Screenshots of the arrest warrant Congolese military justice issued against Guidon Shimiray)

PROMOTING & PERFORMING IN THE NDC-R

SCREENSHOTS OF A VIDEO CLIP CIRCULATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Troops with
army uniforms



Local journalists
covering the event



Guidon Shimiray with the
NDC-R's trademark flag

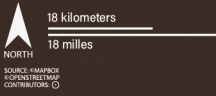


Naming of a new
battalion commander



NORTH KIVU PROVINCE

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF TERRITORIES AND CITIES



TERRITORY



PROVINCIAL CAPITAL



ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER OF A TERRITORY



CITIES



OTHER LOCALITIES

2. The Backdrop: Violent Politics in North Kivu

In interviews, NDC–R combatants often paint their struggle as communal self-defense against “outsiders.” This is a reference to the long-standing conflicts between so-called indigenous and non-native populations in the eastern Congo that can be largely traced back to the colonial period, when the Belgian colonial administration forced hundreds of thousands of people to leave present-day Rwanda and settle in the eastern Congo. These antagonisms played a critical role in a 1960s outburst of violence known as the “Kinyarwanda war,” then again during the recent Congo wars that began in 1993.⁵ Since then, the Kivu region has featured almost uninterrupted armed mobilization.⁶ In North Kivu, three territories have borne the brunt of much of the violence: Walikale, where the origins of the NDC lie, Masisi and Lubero, into which the NDC–R expanded between 2015 and 2019.⁷ This section outlines key patterns of armed mobilization in these three territories, analyzing the recent history of the mobilization of ethnic identity in the Kivus, and how violent conflict over land rights and local power there has been intertwined with national and regional politics.

Disorder in the Kivus has often been created and kindled by outside forces. This was certainly the case in the early 1990s, when Mobutu Sese Seko encouraged ethnic divisionism at the periphery of the state in an effort to hold onto power. As the economy fell apart, his Cold War allies abandoned him, and he was forced to allow multiparty competition. During the National Sovereign Conference in 1992, which was organized to draft a new constitution and direction for the country, politicians from the Kivus began to stoke ethnic tensions, seeking to bolster their local power bases in view of a turbulent political transition. Mai-Mai groups emerged and issued a call to arms to protect their kin against the threat they assigned to Kinyarwanda-speaking populations. Many of the current armed group commanders got their first experience on the battlefield during this period (see table 2). In 1994, the arrival of the then-Rwandan army and militias that had just carried out a genocide, camouflaged amongst over a million refugees, reshaped the ethnic and military balance in favor of the Hutu community and further aggravated communal tensions. When the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) coalition—backed by Rwanda and Uganda—invaded to break up the refugee camps in 1996, the tide shifted once again as some Mai-Mai joined the AFDL, and many Rwandan Hutu—former génocidaires but also thousands of civilians—were killed or fled.⁸

After overthrowing Mobutu in 1997, the AFDL leader and new president, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, fell out with his Rwandan and Ugandan allies, triggering new rebellions in 1998. North Kivu ended up being divided between the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma (RCD–Goma), backed by Rwanda, and the RCD/Kisangani-Mouvement de libération, backed by Uganda. In response to this new aggression, Kabila struck up an alliance with both Hutu militia and Mai-Mai to mount a new insurgency in the Kivus. Realizing that it would be impossible to control the lower half of North Kivu, Kigali co-opted local militias and helped place Hutu Governor Eugène Serufuli in power. This reshaped ethnic alliances and rekindled ethnically-tinged violence between the Kinyarwanda-speaking communities and the so-called indigenous Hunde, Nande, Nyanga, Kano, Kumu, Kobo, and Tembo people.

Started in 1999, a peace process – after a series of deals and agreements – led to a democratic transition that unified the country by 2004 and, by 2006, produced its first free multiparty election in over forty years. However, new rebellions led by RCD deserters—the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) between 2006 and 2009 and the M23 in 2012-2013—entrenched the rhetoric of belonging, pitting Kinyarwanda-speakers against “indigenous” communities. While the former have dominated the Petit Nord (Walikale, Masisi, Nyiragongo, Rutshuru, and Goma), since the AFDL war, a Nande majority has prevailed in the Grand Nord (Beni, Lubero, and Butembo).⁹

The transition handed the Nande the demographic majority in the province as a whole; since 2006, the governor has been a Nande and the president of the provincial assembly a Hutu.

Feuding politicians from both sides have often used ethnic populism to bolster their support base, at times encouraging or supporting armed groups that claim to defend their communities.

Walikale and Masisi: Cradles of Rebellion in Eastern Congo

In the Petit Nord there have been tensions between Banyarwanda (Hutu and Tutsi) and other communities since the colonial period. As elsewhere, these antagonisms exploded into violence in 1993.¹⁰ Initially, the underlying armed mobilization revolved mostly around Hutu militia, opposing “autochthonous” groups.¹¹ With the invasion of the AFDL in 1996, better organized armed groups emerged, often backed by regional countries, intensifying the violence – especially in Masisi.

Many local self-defense groups evolved into more structured Mai-Mai outfits around 2000.¹² Hutu groups persisted as well, split between those backed by and those opposing the Rwandan government. Many of these groups positioned themselves in the various bouts of proxy warfare between the Congolese and Rwandan government between 2003 and 2013, when the M23 was defeated. Since then, the landscape of armed groups has become more fragmented in the Kivus. A new generation of armed groups anchored in the Hutu community—the so-called Nyatura (“hit hard”)—was popping up, while Raia Mutomboki (“outraged citizens”) self-defense groups emerged in the Tembo and Rega communities, and the Hunde commander Janvier Karairi was creating the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS). This is the period during which Sheka’s NDC emerged in Walikale.

Lubero: Land, Ethnic Politics, and Layers of Armed Mobilization

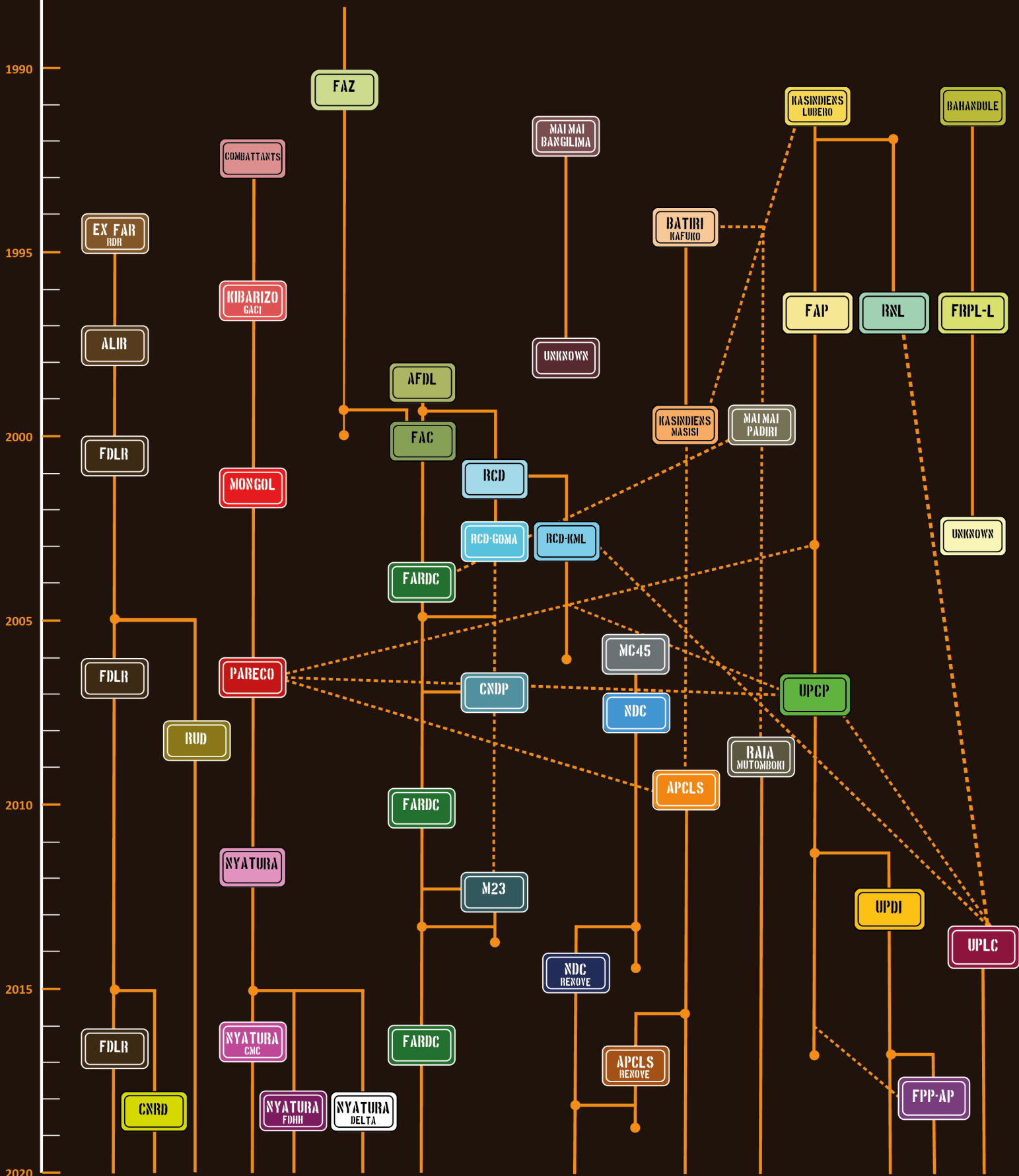
Much of the conflict in Lubero draws on similar tensions. The southern reaches of Lubero—in particular the chieftaincies of Batangi and Bamate—used to be ethnically mixed, with large numbers of Rwandans relocated there by the Belgian colonial administration or moving there from Masisi or Rutshuru territories at a later date. The first armed groups appeared shortly after the 1992 National Sovereign Conference as the Mai-Mai Bangilima emerged around the Semuliki Valley close to Uganda. Another key group were the Mai-Mai Kasindiens.¹³ Recruiting from the Nande community, these groups touted hostility toward Kinyarwanda-speakers, blending a rhetoric of popular resistance with territorial claims of belonging.

Land was a key driver behind these confrontations. As with other communities, traditional Nande thought views land as a collective property, managed by customary chiefs on behalf of the community. Between the 1960s and 1990s most Hutu in southern Lubero had to go through Nande chiefs to access land.¹⁴ While tensions persisted, they tapered off considerably after the tumultuous independence period, exemplified in part by Hutu parents living in Lubero giving their children Nande names. During the 1993 violence, however, Nande chased many Hutu out of Lubero into the Petit Nord. The subsequent turmoil of the two Congo wars prompted further displacement.

After years of displacement, many Hutu peasants only returned to southern Lubero around 2011. However, these returnees were accompanied by Hutu families that were unknown to local chiefs. In addition, shifting security dynamics further south pushed FDLR troops into Lubero.¹⁵ Their dependents, as well as Congolese Hutu civilians, relied on FDLR and other Hutu militia for their security, including for getting access to farmland. These new arrivals triggered suspicion and fear among Nande, leading youth to mobilize and form their respective armed groups.

GENEALOGY OF BELLIGERENTS

LIMITED TO ACTORS RELEVANT TO THIS REPORT



3. The Trajectory of the NDC–Rénové

As its hyphenated name suggests, the NDC–R emerged as a splinter faction of the NDC in 2014. This section analyzes the context in which the NDC was formed in 2008 and traces the origin of the tensions that ended up splitting the group, with the NDC–R emerging as the dominant wing. It describes how tensions within the NDC over revenue sharing and leadership led Guidon to break away and form his own group – a feat he was able to achieve, in part, due to Sheka’s weakness and unpopularity among the rank-and-file as well as Guidon’s inroads in various political and army networks.

Sheka’s Path: From Commerce to Command (2002–2007)

The origins of the NDC lie in the the Bisie area in Walikale, a sparsely populated area in the Kivutian lowlands marked by thick forest canopies and some of the largest tin mines in the region. Between 2005 and 2009, this area was controlled by the army’s 85th brigade, under the command of Colonel Samy Matumo, a former local Mai-Mai commander. This brigade was “non-integrated,” meaning it was made up of former Mai-Mai that had been hastily subsumed into the national army in 2003 without mixing them with other former belligerents.¹⁶ Bisie was largely a peripheral backwater, with few armed groups and little attention paid to it by provincial politicians. This changed with the discovery of a large tin deposit by local artisanal miners in 2002. By 2004 Walikale had become the focus of military and political competition as global tin prices climbed dramatically, more than tripling in value by 2008.¹⁷ During this period, the 85th brigade established itself as the main powerbroker around Bisie, controlling access to the mine and cohabitating with armed groups.¹⁸

Ntaberi Sheka ([see box 2](#)) began his career as a mineral trader around Bisie, co-founding a trade association, the Groupe Minier Bangandula (GMB) in the mid-2000s.¹⁹ As Sheka came to set up shop around Bisie, he built a relationship with Colonel Samy Matumo—also a native of Walikale who was taxing local miners but lacked connections to sell minerals beyond the area. Matumo would provide protection, while Sheka contributed his connections both with local miners and regional traders.

The GMB worked in Bisie, buying minerals through pre-financing arrangements with Goma-based businesspeople. Given the importance of artisanal mining in generating employment for tens of thousands of people, tax revenues, and business profits, mining cooperatives play a key role in the local political economy.²⁰ Sheka was also instrumental in creating the Coopérative Minière de Mpama/Bisie (COMIMPA).²¹ While GMB was made up of local traders, COMIMPA was a cooperative of artisanal miners operating on the same sites. Shortly afterwards, Sheka left the cooperative to focus on GMB after the latter received authorization to prospect pits in Bisie in May 2006.²² Four months later, Mining and Processing Congo (MPC) – an international trading house with industrial ambitions – received exploration permits for the area around Bisie.²³ Meanwhile, COMIMPA obtained its official registration by the end of 2006 and asked Sheka to return and mediate in the struggle over mining permits.²⁴ Despite an agreement between all stakeholders, MPC began to encroach upon local mines and markets, drawing support from Goma-based traders with whom Sheka had debts.²⁵

This struggle over the control of tin mining, along with a debt of 40,000 USD, pushed Sheka into rebellion.²⁶ Drawing on ties with Mai-Mai combatants from the area, he framed his movement in locally appealing terms – as that of a local opposing Banyarwanda encroachment.²⁷ He seized on a rumor that Tutsi families were going to be resettled in Walikale, creating the Mouvement contre les 45,000 familles tutsi (Movement Against 45,000 Tutsi Families, MC45) in April 2007. A critical moment in his ascendancy was the marginalization of Walikale at the 2008 Goma peace conference, leading the area’s customary and political leaders to throw their weight behind the MC45.²⁸

NTABO NTABERI SHEKA

“GENERAL” AND LEADER OF THE NDC



NDC

Who is Sheka Ntabo Ntaberi?⁴⁶

Born 1976 in Binyampuri in the Wanianga sector of Walikale, Sheka has a high school diploma in pedagogy from Institut Wema in Walikale town and is married to several wives with whom he has children. People close to him say he is a keen football player interested in martial arts and also “a turbulent man.”⁴⁷ Sheka is from the Munyambe clan of the Nyanga community and serves as a pastor in his local Neno church. For most of his adult life, Sheka has worked as a local mineral trader (négociant) in the Bisie area. He co-founded GMB and the COMIMPA cooperative. In 2007, he launched the MC45 rebellion that eventually transformed into the Nduma Defense of Congo (NDC) in 2008 and became its overall commander.

Colonel Samy Matumo – who, despite the 85th brigade’s protection rackets, was generally on good terms with the population in Bisie – collaborated with Sheka and provided him guidance until his brigade left the area in 2009.²⁹ Politicians and customary leaders also backed their native son, fearing that MPC would cut them out of profits of the tin mines. Sheka’s slogan at the time was “the minerals of Walikale shall first serve Walikale, before serving elsewhere,” and he was able to rally demobilized combatants to this cause.³⁰ With a few guns and – according to the militia’s own founding legend – just a dozen collaborators, Sheka went to Obaye forest and launched the MC45, which began carrying out attacks against MPC and local FARDC units.³¹

Testimonies differ with respect to the creation of the Nduma Defense of Congo (NDC). “Nduma” means “a profound whole in a river where everything disappears” in Kinyanga and was used in colonial times to describe the Walikale area.³² Some witnesses date the movement’s beginning to April 2007, when a Mai-Mai group led by a commander named Sengi surrendered, with whom Sheka had close links.³³ Others contend that Sheka launched the MC45 in April 2007, but that the NDC’s formal creation only took place in January 2008 in a locality known as Bujumbura/Ngereza. However, interlocutors agreed that at that time, Sheka allegedly received an influx of seasoned commanders from other armed groups: Guidon Shimiray and some other combatants from the Mai-Mai Simba, and Gilbert Bwira coming from PARECO.³⁴ Even though the NDC has always been a fairly mobile group, its headquarters during this period was in Irumba and later moved westward to Irameso, where the NDC–R would celebrate its ten-year anniversary in 2018.³⁵

Building the NDC: Violence, Indigeneity, and Mining (2008–2013)

Out of a handful of combatants, Sheka was able to build an impressive armed group that came to dominate much of Walikale territory. His ability to extract substantial profit from local mines was crucial for building up his forces, as was his backing by local and provincial political and military leaders. From its early years, much like the 85th brigade before, the NDC imposed taxes on people involved in the local mining economy. These taxes made up its main source of revenue besides local monopolies on consumer goods. They did this primarily by forcing miners to pay for jetons (a type of paper receipt for taxes paid) to guarantee their protection.³⁶ This focus on mining became the overriding imperative of the organization; one interlocutor pointed out that “even the NDC’s headquarters was basically a mining pit.”³⁷ Between 2008 and 2013, the NDC’s local intermediaries shipped minerals to regional traders, most of whom were based in Goma, by air and land.³⁸ Similarly, arms and ammunition purchased outside of Walikale were funnelled back through these intermediaries, while the NDC also raided arms and ammunition from other armed groups.³⁹ Nonetheless, the NDC had diverse sources of revenue: Sheka organized a tax on alcohol sales, while his deputy Guidon was in charge of taxing cigarettes.⁴⁰ The NDC even had a bank account in the now-bankrupt Imara savings and credit cooperative based in Goma.

Despite their abuses and illegal taxation, the NDC retained a degree of popularity. Customary chiefs and notables were a source of legitimacy and consulted for any “relevant decision.”⁴¹ The NDC also worked to repair and maintain roads and health centers in its area of influence.⁴² Perhaps most importantly, the NDC framed its struggle in popular terms, professing to fight for Walikale against outsiders, especially against perceived encroachment by Kinyarwanda speakers, in particular Tutsi.

However, despite this diatribe, the NDC entered an alliance with the FDLR, an almost exclusively Hutu group, between 2009 and 2011, and even with Tutsi-led ex-CNDP networks later on, revealing an ideological flexibility typical of many Congolese armed groups.⁴³ During this period, the NDC and FDLR units coordinated operations against FARDC or CNDP positions, which often allowed them to seize military equipment and supplies.⁴⁴ Map two approximates the areas of influence of all these groups around 2009.⁴⁵

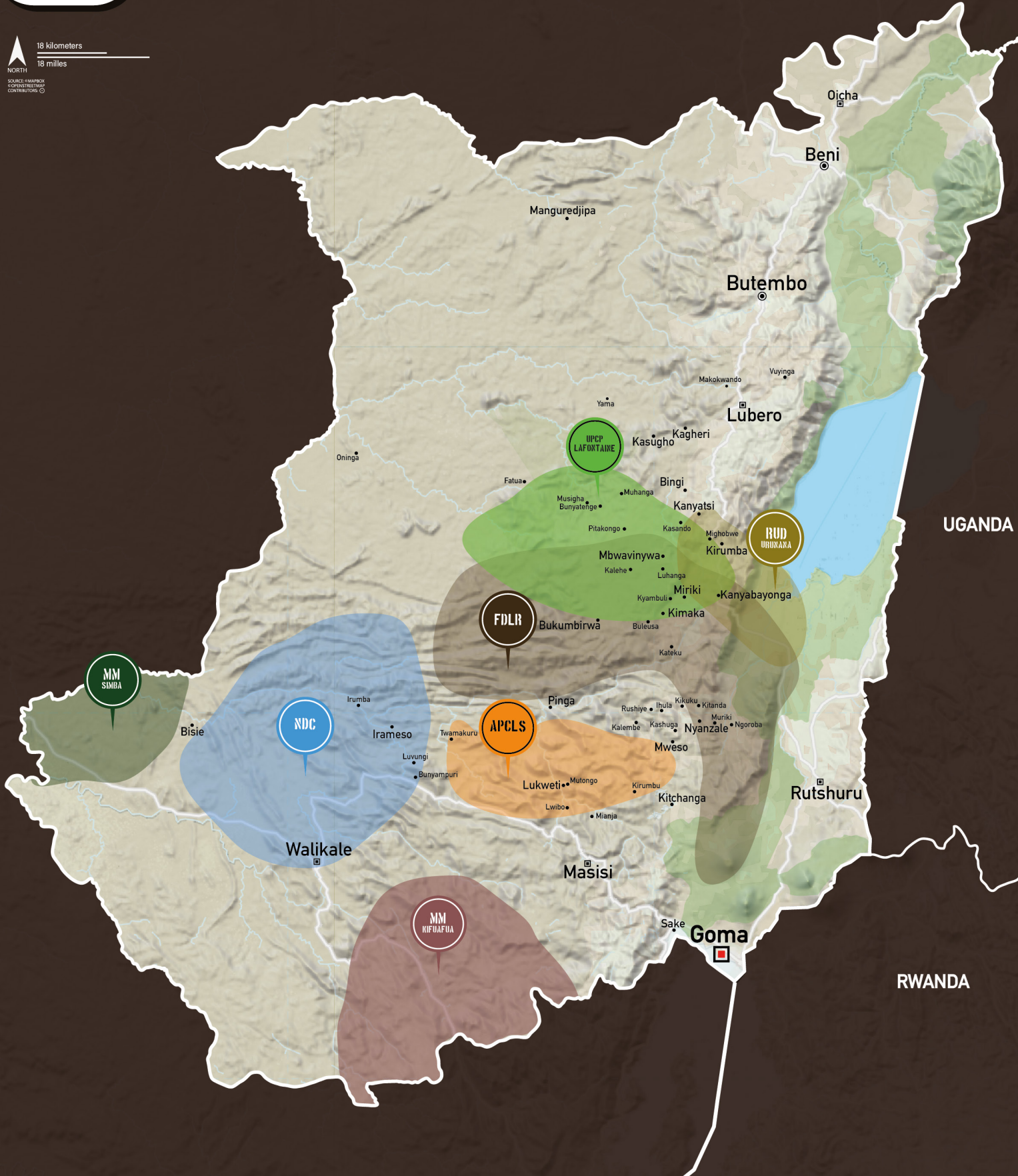
MAP OF ARMED GROUPS IN 2009

RECONSTRUCTION OF ZONES OF INFLUENCE



18 kilometers
18 miles

NORTH
SOURCE: IMAPROK
POPENATREEMAP
CONTRIBUTORS ©



UGANDA

RWANDA

- NDC**
Ndunda Defense of Congo
- APCLS**
Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain
- RUD-URUNANA**
Rassemblement unité et démocratie
- FDLR**
Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
- MM KIFUFUA**
- UPCP LAFONTAINE**
- MM SIMBA**

In July and August 2010, a joint NDC and FDLR force carried out attacks against the FARDC around Kibua and Luvungi, along the main Masisi-Walikale road, during which they raped and killed dozens of civilians.⁴⁸ These abuses, for which the NDC blamed the FDLR, precipitated the NDC's fallout with the Rwandan rebels. Sheka arrested his own chief of staff, Sadoc Kikunda Mayele, and transferred him to a government court, where he died awaiting trial.⁴⁹ These atrocities tarnished the NDC's reputation and reinforced hostility among locals against the FDLR, whom they considered to have uprooted customary order in Walikale.⁵⁰

Adding to this, shifting power dynamics in the region prompted a reconfiguration of alliances for Sheka. In 2009, the Rwandan-backed CNDP rebellion was dismantled through a deal between governments in Kigali and Kinshasa; CNDP commanders were integrated into the FARDC in the Kivus, taking up prominent positions throughout the region, including in Walikale. In addition, Rwandan special forces launched operations against the FDLR in this area in the first half of 2009, in coordination with the FARDC. As frustrations against the CNDP grew within the FARDC, Kinshasa ordered a restructuring of its troops in 2011, called "regimentation." This led many of them to leave their positions and produced a temporary power vacuum. It was in this context—eager to dissociate himself from the FDLR and courted by ex-CNDP networks who were looking for local allies—that Sheka began turning to businesspeople in Goma with whom he had relationships. The latter connected him with networks around General Bosco Ntaganda, the former Chief of Staff of the CNDP who had become deputy commander of FARDC operations in the Kivus. In November 2011, Sheka carried out an ambush against the FDLR in collaboration with these new allies, killing the influential commander Colonel Sadiki Soleil.⁵¹ From that moment onwards, the movement framed its struggle as one directed against the FDLR.⁵²

Over the following years, Sheka proved to be extremely pragmatic and opportunistic in his alliances. When an array of Raia Mutomboki militia – motivated by their opposition to Kinyarwanda-speakers and inspired by their counterparts in South Kivu – began sweeping through the area, he worked with their commanders Shebitembe and Ngowa, as well as with the Mai-Mai Simba of Mando Mazeri and the Mouvement acquis au changement (MAC).⁵³ At the same time, Sheka continued his ad hoc collaboration with ex-CNDP officers and groups close to them, such as Butu Luanda's Forces de défense du Congo (FDC).

Sheka's "Deviant Behavior" and the Creation of the NDC-Rénové in 2014⁵⁴

Eventually, internal disagreements over the sharing of revenues and leadership led to a decisive splitting of the NDC. Sheka's associates began to chafe over his alleged tendency to take sole credit for their exploits and over the uneven sharing of funds.⁵⁵ Unwittingly, Sheka had further weakened his position by not paying the rank-and-file – making it easier for his deputy Guidon Shimiray (see box 3) and other co-conspirators to bring most of them into their new group. The split also reflected internal Nyanga cleavages between Sheka's Munyambe clan and a Kobo mutualité called Bindundani close to Guidon, who was supported by a range of customary leaders.⁵⁶ It did not help that Sheka, who had failed in his candidacy for a seat in parliament in 2011, had been indicted by a Congolese military tribunal and sanctioned by the UN Security Council for his role in the 2010 Luvungi rapes.

Just as FARDC officers played a critical role in the NDC's creation, they also helped bring about its split. Disillusioned with Sheka, Guidon sought out advice from local FARDC commanders, including Nyanga, Tembo, and Hunde colonels César Nkoyo, Dodet Kamanda, Damiano Mbaenda, and Akilimali Shemondo.⁵⁷ While relationships between Guidon and the FARDC were discrete at the time, one NDC-R leader says they have "become more concrete" since then.⁵⁸ A former Walikale-based intelligence agent explained how the FARDC often operates such situations:

GUIDON SHIMIRAY MWISSA

"GENERAL" AND LEADER OF THE NDC-R

NDC
RENOVE

Who is Guidon Shimiray Mwissa?⁵⁹

A Nyanga (though his mother is Kumu from the Batiri clan), Guidon was born in 1980 in Kigoma, near Mpofi in Walikale. He grew up with his mother and aunt, went to school in Binyampuri and claims to have earned a bachelor's degree in political and administrative science at the Université libre des pays des grands lacs (ULPGL) in Goma [CRG could not verify this degree exists]. After participating in the Mai-Mai group led by She Kasikila in the 1990s, Guidon was integrated with the rank of captain into the 14th brigade of the FARDC deployed in former Orientale province. He also underwent special forces training with the FARDC. He defected in 2007 – because of “bad politics” in the army and allegedly after having been wounded in combat – to join the Mai-Mai group of Mando Mazeri operating between western Walikale and Tshopo province.⁶⁰ He joined Sheka's NDC around a year later as second-in-command. In 2014, he launched his dissidence against Sheka, becoming the overall commander of NDC-R. Guidon identifies as a Muslim.⁶¹

The FARDC see these situations as business opportunities, using army stocks as capital. Walikale is considered an “operational area,” yet there are never operations against armed groups. Hence, there are operational funds [accorded only to units in “operation”] but they are eaten up by senior officers and their hierarchy.⁶²

At the same time, Guidon also obtained support from mining entrepreneurs in the CEMIKA cooperative in Walikale and among local politicians who were increasingly concerned that Sheka’s arrest warrant and notoriety would become a stumbling block to defending Walikale’s interests.⁶³

In late 2014, Guidon split from Sheka and created a rival faction called NDC–Rénové (also referred to as NDC–Guidon, Mai-Mai Guidon or Ndime Ndime by local media and populations) along with other NDC commanders, in particular the movement’s head of intelligence, Gilbert Bwira Chuo, who became his deputy. Guidon then began attacking Sheka’s positions around Misau, receiving backing from FARDC officers in the 802nd and 804th regiments in Pinga and Walikale town, respectively.⁶⁴

Several factors appear to have motivated the involvement of these army officers: they were alleged to be Guidon’s partners in the gold trade, and they were angered by Sheka’s skirmishes with the FARDC in the area. Sheka himself probably triggered the series of events that led to his own downfall when he publicly disparaged North Kivu Governor Julien Paluku Kahongya in Binyampuri in April 2014. According to sources in the NDC–R, the governor then encouraged the FARDC’s backing of Guidon. In the words of an NDC-R commander:

The army did not push us to split from the NDC at the beginning but after the Binyampuri meeting, Governor Julien Paluku Kahongya called upon FARDC leaders to support Guidon against Sheka.⁶⁵

CRG contacted Paluku, now a national minister, with regards to the allegations but has not received a reply. In late July 2014, Guidon organized a meeting in a village called Twamakuru, where he publicly announced his new movement; in September 2014, he formalized its structure and named it NDC–Rénové.⁶⁶ He managed to convince a majority of combatants to follow him, securing the bulk of the NDC’s arms and ammunition stocks. What followed was a string of internecine battles that further strengthened Guidon, and – much later, after significant crackdown on the NDC by the FARDC – eventually triggered Sheka’s surrender to MONUSCO in July 2017. Ever since, the original branch of the NDC is led by Mandaima, but continues to face military pressure from NDC–R. By late 2014, the NDC–R had established control over the Ihana groupement, Sheka’s historical stronghold, and the Kisimba II groupement in northeast Walikale. Guidon outlined a set of priorities, including the fight against the FDLR, ensuring that the indigenous population could control its land and resources, and the increased representation of Nyanga in the Congolese government and army.⁶⁷

4. Lubero to Masisi: Military Operations & the Escalation of Conflict

While the NDC was breaking apart, the Congolese government launched a new wave of operations against the FDLR in late 2015. Dubbed Sukola II, these operations became critical for the NDC–R’s trajectory – as the group received significant support from the national army – and played an important role in its dramatic expansion. These FARDC operations also altered the security landscape around the area where Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero, and Walikale territories come together in North Kivu, the FDLR’s long-term heartland. As the NDC-R advanced into Lubero territory, the local Nande community also launched a new wave of armed mobilization.⁶⁸

This chapter outlines the security dynamics, local politics, and economic relations during this period, from 2015 until 2019. These developments occurred in parallel and mutually influenced one another. However, for the sake of clarity they will be discussed in five parts: the Sukola II operations, Guidon’s expansion into Lubero, the Mazembe militia in Lubero, the entrenchment of the FARDC/NDC–R collaboration, and Guidon’s most recent foray into Masisi and Rutshuru.

4.1 Sukola II Operations and the Fate of the FDLR

For the past two decades, the FDLR have been the pivot of armed politics in large parts of Lubero, Rutshuru, Masisi, and Walikale territories. Their units maintained a heavy-handed presence around the area’s gold mines and main roads, stitching together a network of alliances with other armed groups – the RUD–Urunana, different Nyatura groups, and the Mai-Mai led by Kakule Sikuli “Lafontaine” (see box 4) – that cemented their dominance in the area.⁶⁹ Moreover, their off-and-on alliance with FARDC units, rooted in their common fight against the CNDP between 2004 and 2009 and the M23 in 2012 and 2013, had further bolstered the FDLR. Ever since the Umoja Wetu (Our Unity) operations carried out by the FARDC and the Rwandan army in 2009, however, the FDLR’s grip over large parts of North Kivu has been broken. The setbacks produced by Umoja Wetu were compounded by the emergence of a new cluster of armed groups, the Raia Mutomboki.⁷⁰ The Raia Mutomboki targeted the FDLR throughout 2012 and 2013, forcing them to leave Walikale and Shabunda territories to concentrate in northern Masisi, southern Lubero, and western Rutshuru.⁷¹ These developments also engendered significant population movements by Rwandan refugees as well as Congolese Hutu, who arrived in southern Lubero alongside the FDLR, aggravating existing tensions between the Hutu and the Nande populations there and triggered the mobilization of a local militia, called the Mai-Mai Mazembe.⁷² While it is unclear how large this returning Hutu population was and where it came from, CRG has found that as opposed to previous periods, the returnees preferred settling outside local communities, creating friction with local farmers.

Driven by international pressure on the Congolese government, the FARDC began a new series of military operations focused on this area, aimed at capturing key FDLR positions and leaders. Dubbed Sukola II, these operations geared up in late 2015 after lengthy delays due to reluctance from the FARDC and a row between the Congolese army and UN troops.⁷³ The Congolese army pushed from northern Masisi into the villages of Mumo, Ihula, and Rushiye – three of the FDLR’s main strongholds in 2015.

KAKULE SIKULI VASAKA “LAFONTAINE”

LONG-STANDING ARMED GROUP LEADER IN LUBERO AREA

FPP-AP

Kakule Sikuli Lafontaine, Puppet Master Behind the Scenes?

Kakule Sikuli Lafontaine began his rebel career around 1993 when he joined early Nande Mai-Mai groups in Lubero, which would be absorbed into the AFDL in 1996. Around 2000, he emerged as leader of a local Mai-Mai group that began a lengthy on-and-off collaboration with the FDLR shortly thereafter.

In 2002, he was integrated into the national army, but then defected again two years later. Lafontaine’s group was part of PARECO between 2005 and 2008, before he created the UPCP. One of the most long-standing rebel commanders in eastern Congo, Lafontaine was arrested and released several times by the government over the years, and recently went into exile as the NDC–R progressed into Lubero in 2015, leaving troops and gold mines behind.

When he returned in early 2018, he found southern Lubero under the control of the NDC–R, diverse Mazembe factions, and FARDC units.

His return shook up local alliances once again. While he has few troops, Lafontaine continues to be one of the best-connected military entrepreneurs of Lubero, maintaining a key role behind the scenes within FPP–AP.⁷⁴ Yet he has been cautious to make an overt bid for leadership as many Nande are critical of his former alliance with the FDLR and such a bid may put him at risk of reprisals by former FDLR allies.⁷⁵ Lafontaine surrendered to the government in early May 2020.



Working in tandem with the NDC–R (see next section), the Sukola II operations also pushed Hutu refugees and civilians further into southern Lubero. As the FDLR came under increasing pressure, the group split in mid-2016, when a dissident wing under Wilson Irategeka “Lumbago” created the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD).⁷⁶ This group then also supported the FARDC in their offensive against the FDLR throughout the second half of 2016.⁷⁷

4.2 The NDC–Rénové’s Expansion into Southern Lubero

Guidon’s NDC–R became another key partner in the series of recent FARDC counterinsurgency campaigns. As we saw above, his connections within the FARDC, both with Nyanga officers and ex-CNDP networks, had been critical in allowing him to split from Sheka in 2014; the Sukola II operations further boosted his influence and stature.

When these operations were launched in 2015, the NDC–R coordinated extensively with the national army, moving north and west from its traditional area of operations, into southern Lubero. While the Mai-Mai Mazembe attacked the FDLR in Buleusa in November 2015, the NDC–R captured the village of Bukumbirwa from the FDLR.⁷⁸ These two partners joined forces: Marungu Muliru, the former commander of the Mai-Mai Mazembe, sent a delegation to the NDC–R’s headquarters in Irameso, proposing a joint effort against the FDLR.⁷⁹ Eventually, these negotiations resulted in the integration of most of Marungu’s men, including himself, into the ranks of the NDC–R.

This move far away from their original area of operations was unusual: with a few exceptions, most armed groups in the Kivus recruit from their respective ethnic communities and do not venture much beyond their areas of origin. Doing so means living side-by-side and extracting resources from communities that speak different languages and abide by different customs. In the case of the NDC–R, which at the time was led mostly by Nyanga, they moved many of their senior officers – including Guidon’s headquarters – deep into areas predominantly inhabited by Kobo and Nande communities in Lubero. Initially welcomed by these communities, due to their success against the FDLR, the NDC–R imposed a harsh regime of governance and taxation, eventually leading to them being seen as yet another occupying force by local communities.⁸⁰ Like elsewhere, the NDC–R’s strategy was to first impose a heavy-handed system of rule before winning over the local population.

Meanwhile, other Mazembe factions – led by Kitete Bushu, Albert Kasheke, Safari Buligho, and Kasereka Kabidon – increasingly took the lead in confronting the FDLR in northwestern Rutshuru. Guidon, for his part, pushed northward into Lubero territory, keeping to the west of the Kanyabayonga-Butembo road and reaching as far as Mangurejipa, where an NDC–R colonel known as “Foudre” became known for stealing voter registration kits in early 2017.⁸¹ These moves, too, were alleged to have received backing from the FARDC.⁸²

The NDC–R’s migration northward created friction with armed groups that had been based in the area for many years, in particular the Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (UPCP), led by veteran rebel Kakule Sikuli “Lafontaine”. For around a decade, Lafontaine’s units had controlled the gold-rich hills surrounding Bunyatenge and Pitakongo, and had been a key ally of the FDLR. While Lafontaine had been able to count on the patronage of political and religious leaders in Butembo for years, his short-lived flirtation with the M23 – which most Nande political and military elites opposed – in 2012 and 2013, as well as the emergence of the Mazembe militias, eroded this support.

At the same time, the NDC–R moved into northern Bwito chieftaincy in Rutshuru territory, where the FARDC’s proxy war against the FDLR resulted in tit-for-tat attacks of ethnic communities. The NDC–R partnered with Mazembe militia in attacking Nyatura groups, who had been supported and trained by the FDLR in their groupement des écoles (military training schools) and formed a defensive buffer around the Rwandan rebels. In early July 2016, the NDC–R and Mazembe attacked the Nyatura faction led by Muhawenimana Bunombe “John Love” in Kitanda, a few kilometres from Kikuku. They killed several civilians and displaced local Hutu populations towards the town of Nyanzale. In the ensuing fighting, both sides abused the local population, and numerous villages were burned down.⁸³ According to one Mazembe combatant at the time,

[T]here were two different frontlines, one led by us and the other by Guidon. They were wearing uniforms [...] like the old Rwandan army uniforms, the tâche-tâche [camouflage] ones. They got PKMs, AKs and RPGs [types of weapons]. They tried to recruit us, but we did not want that. Otherwise we had no problems with them.⁸⁴

These operations weakened the FDLR, who were forced to withdraw from some of their most important positions, and led to the collapse of Lafontaine’s UPCP. Some of Lafontaine’s lieutenants, who were disenchanted with his management of gold mines such as Musigha, defected and later resurfaced as key Mazembe leaders. This reshuffling of military control eventually triggered the fragmentation of armed groups in southern Lubero.

While Marungu and some of his combatants were integrated into Guidon’s forces, others continued to operate on their own. Meanwhile, the UPCP disintegrated further, and its combatants joined a variety of new armed groups in Beni and Lubero territories while Lafontaine himself slipped from public view.⁸⁵ A close acquaintance of his reports that he “fell in love with a woman who stole his money, pushing him to broker a ransom negotiation after the kidnapping of priests in Bunyuka to cash in on a percentage” and then worked “mainly as a gold commissioner between Uganda and Congo.”⁸⁶ The few remaining UPCP units were shortly afterwards kicked out of the area by NDC–R.

By 2017, the NDC–R began to extricate itself from the feuding between the Hutu and the Nande, focusing instead on taking over the gold mines and extortion rackets previously run by Lafontaine and the FDLR. As elsewhere, the NDC–R established a relatively violent system of governance, in part because they enjoyed less legitimacy and had fewer connections than in Walikale.⁸⁷ This further antagonized many Mazembe factions, leading to clashes in late 2016 and early 2017. Eventually, the NDC–R took control of most lucrative gold mining areas in southern Lubero, but still suffered a heavy toll. Mazembe units claimed to have killed around 40 NDC–R elements in August 2017, for instance, as they fought over Kateku village.

4.3 Mai–Mai Mazembe and the Fragmentation of Armed Politics in Lubero

This section outlines how a rather unstructured armed movement started as a grassroots self-defense force, then was absorbed by the NDC–R, only to split off again and fragment into an array of decentralized Nande militia. Mazembe – or Mai–Mai Mazembe – is an umbrella term for a militia cluster that emerged within Lubero’s Nande and Kobo communities. Their name refers to Tout Puissant Mazembe, the Congo’s most popular soccer team from the southern city of Lubumbashi, ostensibly a reference to how successful the militia have been. Currently, there are two main factions – the Union des patriotes pour la défense des innocents (UPDI), and the Front patriotique pour la paix–Armée du peuple (FPP–AP). Mazembe militia first emerged mid-2015, as Nande youth mobilized against incoming FDLR who were fleeing Raia Mutomboki groups in Masisi and Walikale. Initially, these youths used the label of Kyaghandanda Yira, a Nande cultural association ([see box 5](#)). They then coalesced into the UPDI in August 2015, led by Marungu Muliro.⁸⁸ Together with the NDC–R, the UPDI engaged in a series of battles with the FDLR and its allies.

The mobilization was enabled by two factors. First, these new armed groups drew on long-standing anti-FDLR and anti-Hutu sentiment following years of FDLR presence in this area.⁸⁹ These grievances were often instrumentalized by politicians eager to mobilize support, such as the late parliamentarian Vénant Tshipasa, certain branches of the Kyaghandanda Yira association, and – to a lesser extent – urban Nande vigilante groups in Butembo, like Veranda Mutsanga and the Parlement Furu.⁹⁰ The mobilization often referenced earlier waves of armed mobilization within the Nande community, including the Bangilima and Kasindien Mai-Mai groups of the 1990s. Second, lucrative income from mining, timber, and taxation provided a strong incentive for unemployed youth and former Mai-Mai combatants to join the ranks of this new militia.

KYAGHANDA YIRA

CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF THE YIRA



Association culturelle
KYAGHANDA asbl
 Obughuma bwaba **YIRA**
MANGINA 2019
 thème central de la conférence
 " LA RESPONSABILITE DE LA COMMUNAUTE YIRA
 ET DE L'ETAT POUR LE BIEN-ETRE DE LA RDC "

What is the Kyaghanda Yira?

The Kyaghanda Yira is a cultural association, based on the idea of a council of elders and a shared “Yira-ness,” that is, cultural traditions found among the Nande in the Congo and the Konjo in Uganda, as well as a common creation myth.⁹¹ Speaking broadly the same language, these communities were divided by colonial demarcations in 1885, but populations on both sides of the border refer to themselves as Yira, represented by a council of elders and a committee led by a secretary-general. Kyaghanda Yira exists at different levels, from local committees to an international federation. While some local branches are close to the Mazembe movement (e.g. the Mighobwe branch), other publicly distanced themselves.⁹² Beyond protecting Nande custom and land, Kyaghanda Yira is known for its critical stance towards Rwanda and Kinyarwanda-speakers.⁹³

MAP OF ARMED GROUPS IN 2015

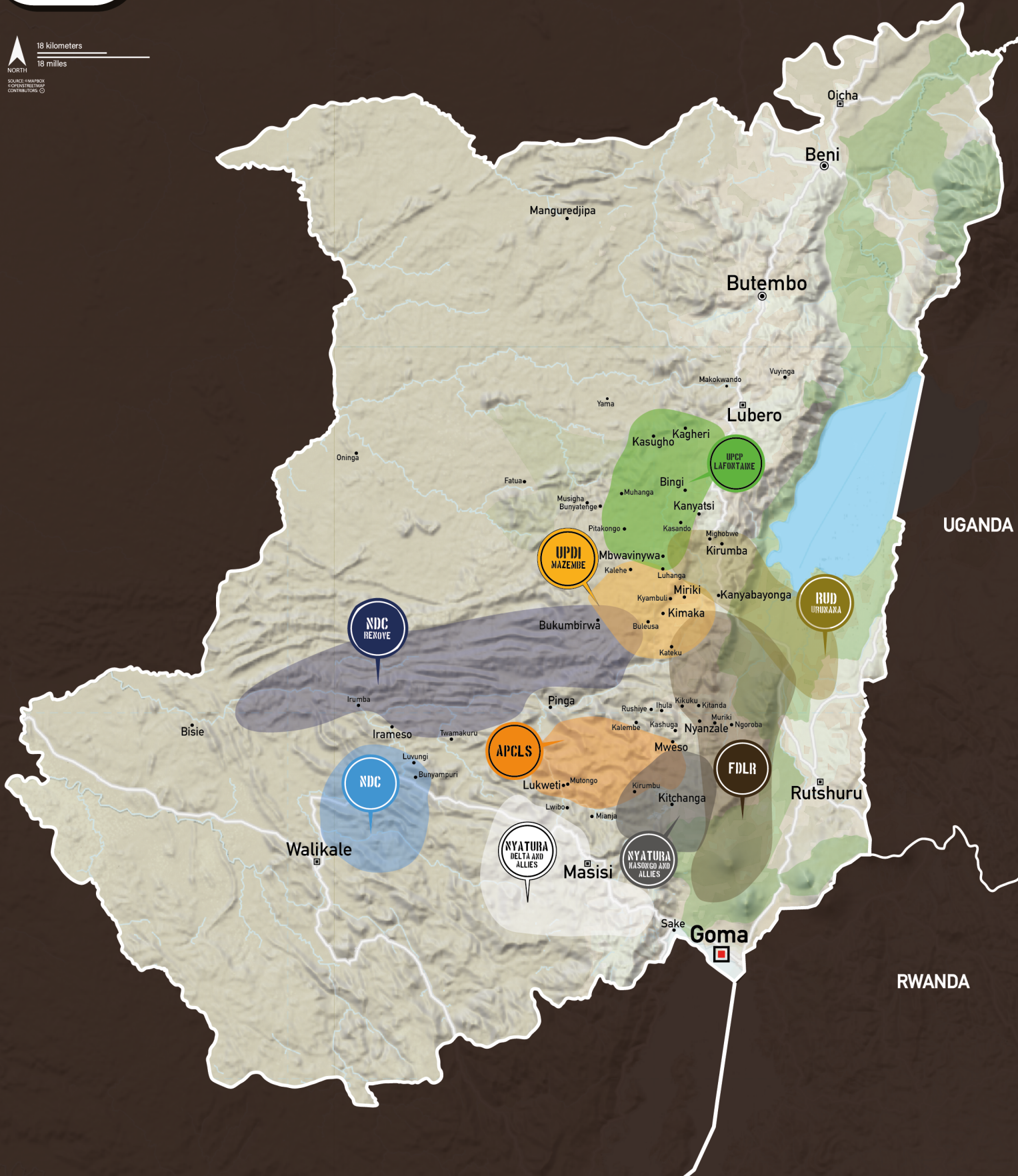
ZONES OF INFLUENCE - BASED ON CRG DATA



18 kilometers
18 miles

NORTH

SOURCE: MAPBOX
POPENSTREETMAP
CONTRIBUTORS ©



UGANDA

RWANDA

- 
NDC-R
 Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové
- 
NDC
 Nduma Defense of Congo
- 
APCLS
 Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain
- 
RUD-URUNANA
 Rassemblement unité et démocratie
- 
FDLR
 Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
- 
UPDI/MAZEMBE
 Union Patriote pour la Défense des Innocents
- 
UPCP LAFORTAINE
- 
NYATURA KASONGO and ALLIES
- 
NYATURA DELTA and ALLIES

The Union patriotique pour la défense des innocents (UPDI)

Based in Katundula, a hill near Miriki, the initial UPDI mobilisation has its roots in tensions between Hutu and Nande in southern Lubero. Responding to frequent FDLR attacks, a small group around Marungu Muliro and a couple of former Mai-Mai combatants and féticheurs (so-called witchdoctors who prepare the dawa or medicine and fetishes alleged to protect combatants) began organizing small-scale ambushes against FDLR units and Hutu civilians in June 2015, which were quickly reciprocated by the FDLR as well as the RUD–Urunana.⁹⁴ These villagers, ethnic Kobo and Nande, often acted as scouts for the FARDC. Initially made up of seven men, this group included David Kasereka Kasayi “Mbisi” (a former Lafontaine officer), Albert Kasheke, and Kitete Bushu (see box 6). One combatant recalls the beginnings, including instances of child recruitment:

It began July 2015 in Ikobo groupement. FDLR took our fields and raped our women. Things had become unbearable. We began our war without firearms but then captured a gun from FDLR. We continued to carry out ambushes and raided more guns. With three guns, we began ambushing FDLR camps. People saw this and joined our movement. In October 2015, the FDLR began to flee Ikobo. We got a lot of schoolboys in our ranks who had joined us during their holidays. Mazembe has no cahier de charge (list of demands), just cahiers d’appel (calls to arms) for the combatants. Our elders from Kyaghandanda Yira disapproved of our fight, but we went ahead.⁹⁵

In its early days, the group around Marungu and Mbisi received contributions from Nande politicians as well as from local villagers, traders, and Kyaghandanda Yira members.⁹⁶ Later, in May 2019, Mbisi was arrested, coming back from Goma, with 2000 rounds of ammunition bought from a FARDC officer.⁹⁷ Since Lafontaine believed that Safari had tipped off FARDC intelligence services, he ordered Mbisi’s escorts to kill Safari. Wounded, Safari surrendered and is currently in prison.⁹⁸ In late 2015, the Mazembe took control of Buleusa village, kicking out the FDLR under “Gouverneur Kizito,” notorious for running the logistique non-conventionnelle, as the FDLR internally calls its system of racketeering and revenue-generation. The UPDI then retreated westwards and joined the NDC–R, except for Kasheke’s troops who continued to work as local guides helping the FARDC to find FDLR positions.

Mai-Mai Mazembe and the Proliferation of Armed Resistance

When Marungu joined the NDC–R, a new branch emerged in early 2016 under the name Mai-Mai Kyaghandanda Yira, led by Albert Kasheke and Kitete Bushu. After a series of brutal attacks against the FDLR, the Kyaghandanda Yira cultural association openly dissociated itself from the group and denounced the use of its name.⁹⁹ The attacks, which had been successful in pushing the FDLR out of the area, gave Kasheke’s group the name Mazembe, as the eponymous football team has a reputation of rarely losing.¹⁰⁰ On 6 January 2016, Mazembe elements killed a FARDC soldier escorting displaced Hutu on the Kimaka-Busimba road. This incident had been sparked by the arrival of displaced Hutu in the area. Local Nande leaders complained that the displaced, some of whose camps were protected by MONUSCO and FARDC, were grabbing their land.¹⁰¹ The FARDC reacted to the killing of their comrade by arresting young men believed to work with Mazembe in Kimaka and Miriki. The following night the FDLR also launched a reprisal attack on Miriki, close to a MONUSCO position, killing twenty Nande villagers including the families of two local chiefs.¹⁰²

MUHINDO LUANZO KITETE BUSHU

“GENERAL” AND LEADER OF THE UPDI-MAZEMBE

UPDI
MAZEMBE

Who is Muhindo Luanzo Kitete Bushu?

Kitete Bushu is a former kadogo dawa in the Mai-Mai group of Ushindi.¹⁰³ He returned to civilian life, but then took up arms again when the Mazembe movement emerged. He is a middle-aged Nande who became a leader of the Mazembe early 2016 and established the movement’s headquarters in Kyambuli. In a rare interview, Kitete stressed that his movement has no xenophobic agenda against the Hutu who have “always been there.”¹⁰⁴ Rather, the UPDI’s goal is to kick out the FDLR. As with other armed groups with deep roots in local communities, the UPDI created a separate branch responsible for administering dawa, under Kitete’s authority. Until today, Kitete is referred to as “general,” the only one in UPDI.¹⁰⁵

KASEREKA KASYANO “KABIDON”

“GENERAL” AND LEADER OF THE FPP-AP

FPP-AP

Who is Kabidon?¹⁰⁶

Born in Kateku, Ikobo groupement, Walikale territory, Kasereka Kasyano “Kabidon” joined the rebellion led by a commander called Kaganga around 2000, where he worked under Ushindi, who was producing the dawa for that Mai-Mai group. He served as a kadogo dawa – the children carrying magic potions during operations – giving him the name of Kabidon (“small jerrycan”). When Ushindi passed away, Kabidon succeeded him as a féticheur (the maker of dawa), a role he also later played for the PARECO faction of Lafontaine and Muhamba Lyaki. Later, he refused to join the army and returned to Bunyatenge where he started a family. He joined Lafontaine’s UCP rebellion around 2012, reportedly in an effort to obtain a demobilization certificate. Lafontaine had promised these certificates to his combatants, but did not follow through, trying to forcefully re-recruit his ex-combatants in 2013. Kabidon fled to Mambasa, in Ituri province, where he worked as a farmer, before returning again as a féticheur in the newly created Corps de Christ militia around 2016. After the arrest of Corps de Christ’s leaders Baraka Lolwako and David Maranatha, Kabidon fled back to Kateku to hide. Facing NDC–R violence in the area, he joined Mazembe in 2016, and helped in creating the FPP–AP in 2018.

The Mazembe tried to consolidate their forces during a meeting in Kyambuli in spring 2016. Kitete was elected overall commander, with Alpha Katoto and Kasheke as his deputies. Shortly afterwards, the Mazembe intensified operations against the FDLR, displacing them from Buleusa.¹⁰⁷ On 27 November 2016, Mazembe attacked Luhanga, a village mainly inhabited by Hutu, killing 35 civilians. Around the same time, relations increasingly soured between the Mazembe and their NDC–R allies, leading a major clash in Kyambuli.¹⁰⁸

In 2016, two former Lafontaine commanders – Buligho Jacques “Safari” ([see box 8](#)) and Kasereka Kasyano “Kabidon” ([see box 7](#)) – joined the Mazembe movement, responding to a call by local chiefs in Kateku to retaliate against the NDC–R, whose governance was increasingly marked by a heavy-handed approach toward civilians.¹⁰⁹ Equipped with weapons allegedly bought by local chiefs from FARDC military justice officers in Kanyabayonga, Kabidon launched his first operations against the NDC–R. Soon afterward, he contacted Lafontaine for support. The latter instructed his former aide Kasayi Mbisi, who himself had left Lafontaine’s group in 2015 to join Kitete’s Mazembe group, to help and organize supplies. This collaboration became the foundation of a merger between Kabidon’s and Kitete’s groups. However, the movement lacked cohesion, and it was spread out over a large area.¹¹⁰

Lafontaine’s Shadow and the UPDI and FPP/AP

Kitete remained leader of Mazembe until mid-2018, when tensions ripened due to diverging military objectives. While Kitete’s aim was to displace the FDLR once and for all from southern Lubero, Kabidon wanted to focus on the NDC–R.¹¹¹ Another major point of discord between them – both former kadogo dawa – has been whether or not to allow for Lafontaine to return and lead the group.¹¹² While some of his former lieutenants were pushing for this, other Mazembe leaders were hostile due to his previous alliances with the FDLR. In June 2018, the Mighobwe section of Kyaghanda Yira helped to organize a raid on the farm of Cascotte near Mbughavinywa, where Lafontaine was hiding at the time.¹¹³

In August 2018, the rift became apparent as Kabidon, Safari, and Kasayi left the UPDI to create the FPP–AP shortly afterwards. They established their area of influence around Mbughavinywa, Kanyatsi, and Pitakongo where they received support from the local Mighobwe chapter of the Kyaghanda Yira as well as some former Corps de Christ members. Meanwhile, the UPDI kept its base to the east, towards Bingi, with its headquarters in Kimaka.¹¹⁴ UPDI maintained cordial relations with the Mai-Mai of the late Charles Bokande as well as those led by Jackson Muhukambuto—a former Lafontaine ally—but rejected Lafontaine’s attempts to reassert himself in southern Lubero, in contrast with the FPP–AP whom they considered too close to the veteran rebel ([see box 4](#)).¹¹⁵

Both the FPP and the UPDI hold regular meetings with local authorities, sometimes including small FARDC units positioned in their area of influence, in a bid to both legitimize their own mission to defend local populations as well as to ascertain a level of control. While the UPDI appears to be in the process of re-establishing an alliance with NDC–R (see below), the FPP suffered a large wave of surrenders in January 2020. [Table 3](#) illustrates the organisational structure of the UPDI’s and the FPP’s leadership.

JACQUES BULIGHO “SAFARI”

“COLONEL” AND FORMER NUMBER TWO OF THE FPP/AP

FPP-AP

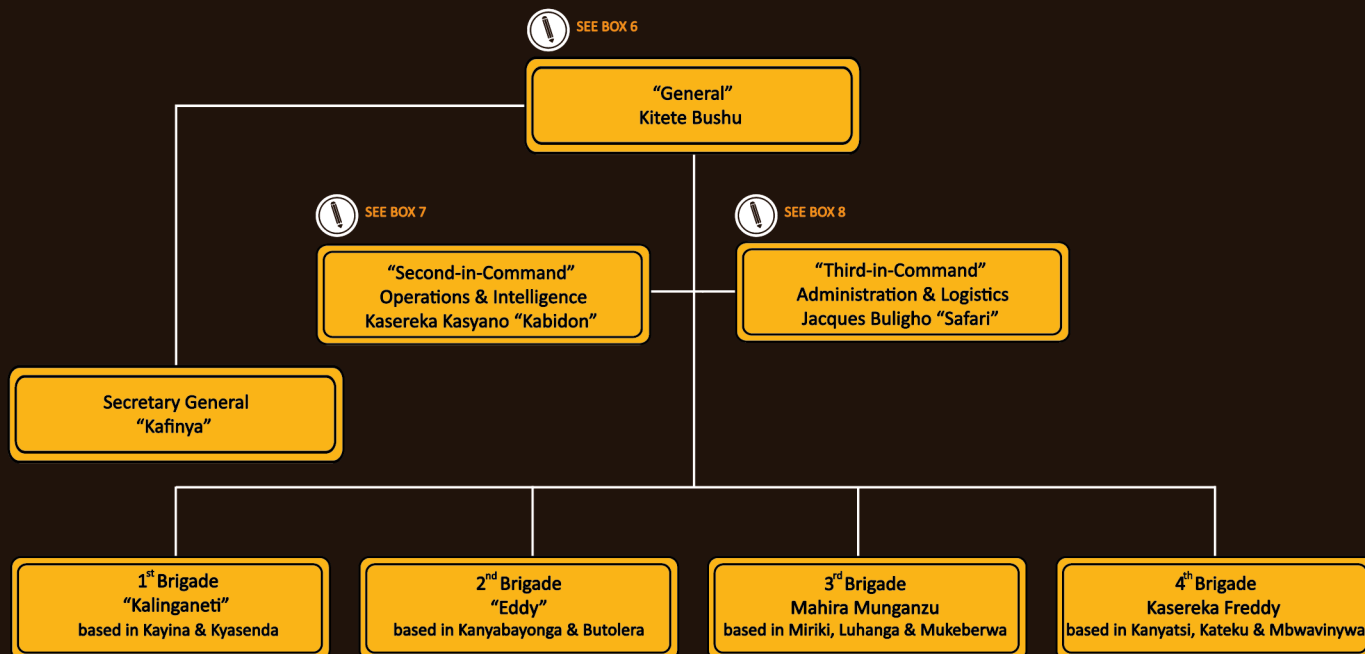
Who is Jacques Buligho “Safari?”

Jacques Buligho, known as “Safari,” is a Mai-Mai commander who rose through the ranks of Mai-Mai Lafontaine, UPDI and FPP–APP. Together with Muhamba Lyaki, Kabidon Kasereka and Kasayi Mbisi, Safari belongs to the close aides that have accompanied self-styled “General” Lafontaine through many years of successive rebellion and armed mobilization. Safari has a large scar on his face due to combat wounds and speaks – like numerous Nande militia commanders – fluent English with a strong Ugandan accent. When Lafontaine’s UPCP disbanded under increasing NDC–R pressure in late 2015, Safari joined the Mazembe movement but kept in regular contact with his erstwhile leader. Alongside Kabidon, Safari was a major force behind the split between UPDI and FPP–AP – effectively dividing the Mazembe universe into a pro- and anti-Lafontaine faction in 2018. In 2019, Safari was wounded in an ambush – allegedly orchestrated by Lafontaine, doubting his loyalty – and surrendered to the FARDC. Currently, he is in prison in Beni.



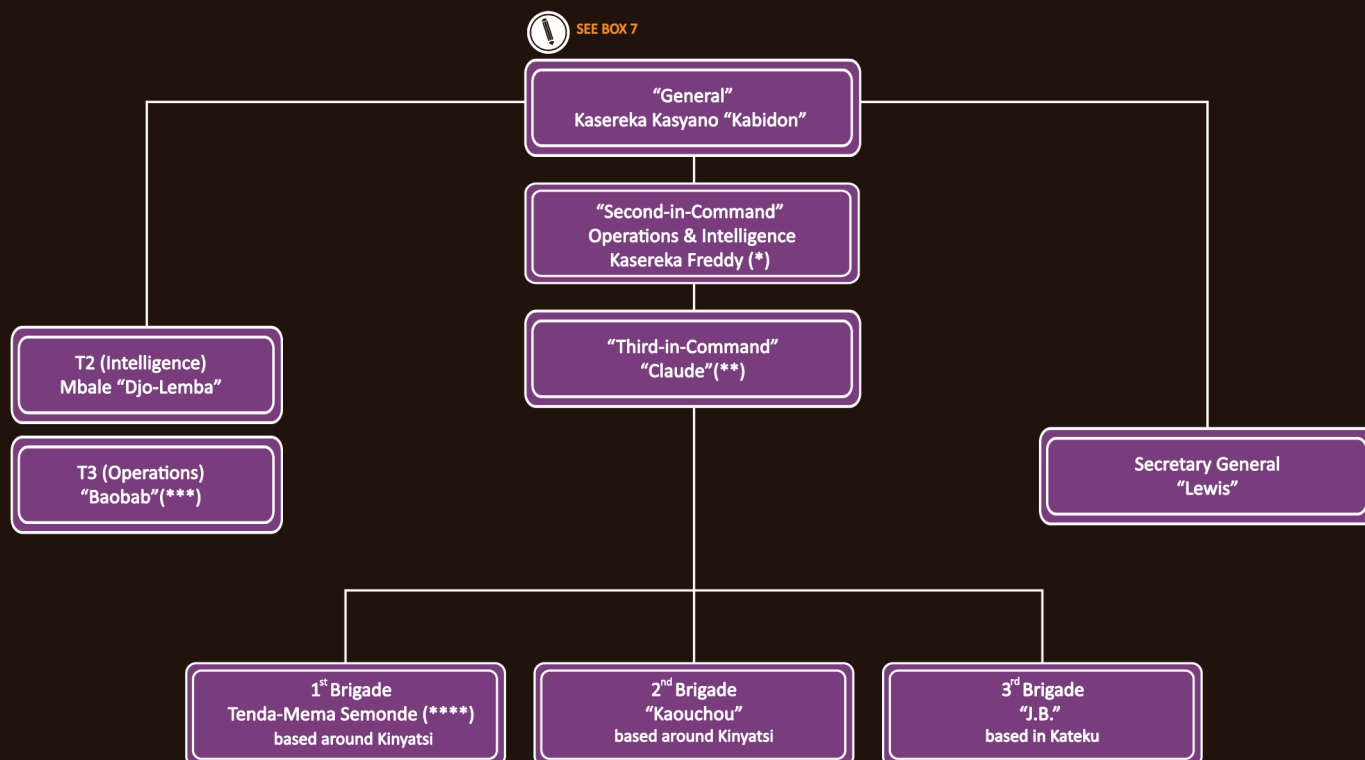
MILITARY STRUCTURE OF THE UPDI

UNIFIED MAZEMBE STRUCTURE PRIOR TO UPDI/FPP SPLIT IN SEPTEMBER 2018



MILITARY STRUCTURE OF THE FPP-AP

MILITARY STRUCTURE OF THE FPP-AP AFTER THE SPLIT



(*): Replaces Jacques Buligho "Safari", arrested in June 2019
 (**): Defected in December 2019
 (***): Replaces Humba, killed in January 2020
 (****): Replaces Mbisi, arrested in May 2019

4.4 The NDC–Rénové as a Proxy for the Congolese Army

After its successful implantation into large parts of southern Lubero, the NDC–R began expanding its reach into northern Masisi in late 2018. Support to them from the FARDC there has been increasingly visible compared to operations in Lubero. NDC–R combatants move freely in FARDC areas and wear different types of FARDC uniforms during parades. In various places, the two forces have peacefully handed over positions and conducted joint patrols.¹¹⁶ A humanitarian based in Masisi told CRG:

I am unaware of clashes between NDC–R and FARDC. They have almost the same equipment. I have spoken to people who saw NDC–R elements coming back with bags from FARDC positions in Pinga and Nyabiondo. Civilians have a hard time distinguishing between the two forces. In late April, when NDC–R attacked Mianja near Masisi, the people thought they were FARDC.¹¹⁷

FARDC grants the NDC–R free passage, allowing its combatants to pass formal checkpoints with arms and in uniform.¹¹⁸ In the words of one of the group’s recruiters, “it is like the enemy of my enemy is my friend and the courage of the NDC–R also impressed politicians and local leaders who invite them.”¹¹⁹ NDC–R officers meet FARDC counterparts to jointly plan operations or discuss other issues. One eyewitness CRG spoke to, reported the following:

I saw Mapenzi [Likuhe, the NDC–R number three (see box 9)] in Goma, sitting in General Gahizi’s [the deputy FARDC commander in North Kivu] car.

[CRG: How can you know?]

Well, I know Gahizi’s car and I have met Mapenzi before. Gahizi manages the NDC–R dossier at the provincial level.¹²⁰

CRG contacted Gahizi, as well as the FARDC’s national spokesperson, with regards to these allegations but has not received an answer. Two of the numerous sources talking to CRG about NDC–R/FARDC collaboration – a UN analyst and a local civil society member – specified it is managed by the Sukola II command and from the 34th Military Region in Goma, and dates back to the NDC–R’s advance into Lubero.¹²¹ The NDC–R advance from Pinga to Kalembe, where there is a roundabout held by FARDC a few meters behind an NDC–R checkpoint, is illustrative, as are joint operations in which the NDC–R recovered territory from the CMC only to hand it over to the FARDC units.¹²² FARDC and NDC–R also jointly manage positions along the Pinga–Mweso road, such as in Karto, Kiusha, Kirumbu, Kibachiro, Lufunda/Bumumba and Kasura.¹²³ In its advance towards Mweso, the NDC–R received support and instructions from key army officers, and later split control of the Mweso area between FARDC and NDC–R. One of the group’s top commanders told CRG:

The FARDC are allies of the NDC–R, they offer [us] full support. On 6 January 2019, they provided a shipment of arms and ammunitions to attack the FDLR [CNRD] headquarters in Faringa [...]. We receive materials and instructions from FARDC. The regiment in Kitchanga under colonel Yves collaborates with us, he regularly sends delegations to meet us and discuss. His logistics officer brings supplies by vehicle. The regiment in Nyanzale also received orders from the 34th Military Region to collaborate with us. Their hierarchy in Kinshasa knows about us and our coordinator travels regularly to meet them there. Rwanda is also our ally in operations, but in terms of diplomacy we are still waiting for their promises to materialize and be fulfilled.¹²⁴

This support has been confirmed by other testimonies from local civil society as well as senior members of the NDC–R, and was preceded by a high-level FARDC visit in December 2018 during which military materials were handed over.¹²⁵

MAP OF ARMED GROUPS IN 2018

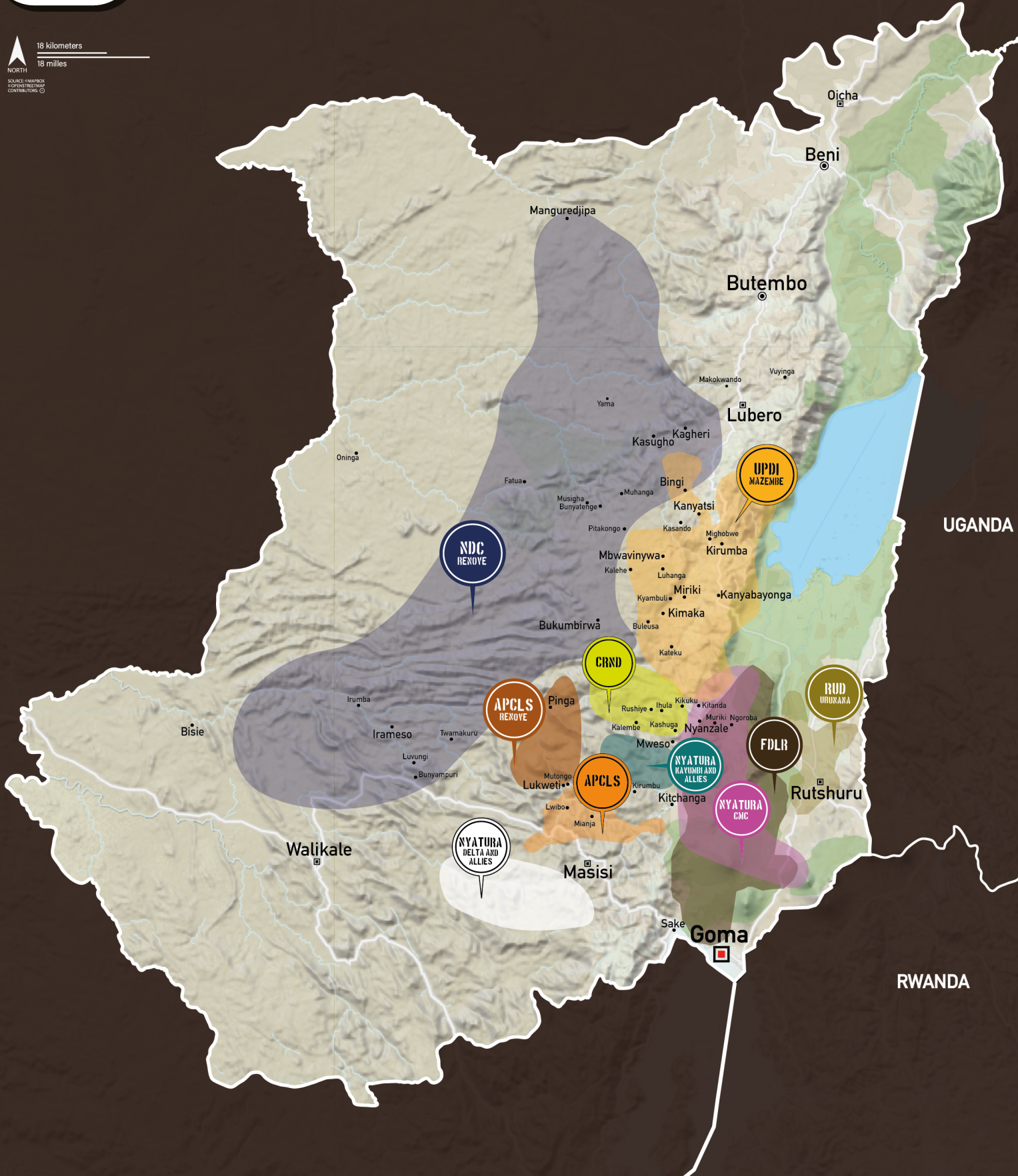
ZONES OF INFLUENCE - BASED ON CRG DATA



18 kilometers
18 miles

NORTH

SOURCE: MAPBOX
POPENSTREETMAP
CONTRIBUTORS ©



UGANDA

RWANDA

- 
NDC-R
 Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové
- 
APCLS
 Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain
- 
CRND
 Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie
- 
RUD-URUNANA
 Rassemblement unité et démocratie
- 
FDLR
 Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
- 
UPDI/MAZEMBE
 Union Patriote pour la Défense des Innocents
- 
APCLS-R
 Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain-Renové
- 
NYATURA KAVUMBI and ALLIES
- 
NYATURA DELTA and ALLIES
- 
NYATURA CMC
 Collectif des mouvements pour le changement

MAPENZI LIKUHE

NUMBER THREE OF THE NDC-R

NDC
RENOVE

Who is Mapenzi Likuhe?¹²⁶

Mapenzi is from the Hunde community of Masisi. He was born in Lwibo around 1990 and adopted by Joseph Likuhe (“Baba Mulishi”), a local clerk and school director from the Banyabiancha clan, who married Mapenzi’s mother Maria. Mapenzi reportedly holds a bachelor’s degree in pedagogy, and later joined the Congolese police where he attained the rank of major. There, he became part of the security detail of the national parliamentarian Dieudonné Mithondeke and former North Kivu Vice-Governor Feller Lutaichirwa. After having spent time under arrest for smuggling ammunition, he defected from the police to join the APCLS, becoming the third-in-command of that group. Mapenzi then left the APCLS to join the NDC-R, again becoming third-in-command, tasked with administration and logistics. Mapenzi’s troops helped rig the 2018 elections in favor of Feller and Marie Shematsi, another influential Hunde politician, in northern Masisi.¹²⁷ Both of these politicians have denied these allegations to CRG. Mapenzi speaks English and his joining has improved the “diplomacy of the NDC-R.”¹²⁸

Most frequently mentioned is the FARDC’s outgoing 3411th regiment commander in Kitchanga, Colonel Yves Kijenga and Colonel Cesar Nkoyo, a son of the Munsanga customary chief in Walikale.¹²⁹ Kijenga and other FARDC officers have met with senior NDC–R leaders on multiple occasions to hand over military equipment.¹³⁰

Another local source in Masisi reported:

Near Kitchanga there is one FARDC checkpoint where army and NDC–R elements often meet for drinks. They also planned joint operations in Hotel Nyarusumba in Kitchanga. I saw myself how FARDC uniforms were distributed there. Mapenzi, Poyo, and others were around. There are several ways you can tell the difference between NDC–R and FARDC: NDC–R speak Swahili with a Kinyanga accent and many of them use skin bleaching cosmetics and often have braided hair. In Kalembe, people [are forced to] buy NDC–R jetons despite the FARDC presence in town. In March 2019, there were FARDC operations against APCLS in Ngingwe but later on the NDC–R took over the conquered positions.¹³¹

During the NDC–R’s initial advance into Lubero, this collaboration has been much less visible, although most sources reported broadly similar dynamics, such as the NDC–R’s strikingly new army uniforms and the absence – except in Kasugho and Kagheri in August 2018 – of any significant fighting between Guidon’s troops and government forces. However, it was during the NDC–R’s Masisi campaign that the extent of the collaboration with the FARDC became clear.

In a local press conference in July 2019, in the “Salle Bunyakima” in Mweso, Kitchanga-based FARDC officials did not deny their support to NDC–R, stating that,

[T]his goes beyond our competence, but you must understand that some armed groups do not disturb the population and just aim at becoming part of the national army.¹³²

On several occasions, including late August 2019, Mapenzi, Bwira and other NDC–R commanders travelled to Rwanda and Goma. The FARDC has also transported NDC–R combatants and their belongings in their vehicles.¹³³ The following statement by an NDC–R commander explains their relationship with the army:

The NDC–R is not against the government, we are revolutionaries aiming at army integration. We cannot consider the army our enemy – only the FDLR, who are a common enemy, hence we have a good collaboration with the FARDC. The authorities know where we are, they come visit as we collaborate in anti-FDLR operations. Their support is great, and we can go wherever there are operations against the enemies of the state.¹³⁴

Despite the frequent assertion that the NDC–R will soon lay down its weapons and join the national army, they have been receiving support sporadically for at least three years.

The NDC–R also benefited from defections from other armed groups, including some based in the Hutu community, like the CNRD and Nyatura, that it was fighting against.¹³⁵ For example, on 25 May 2019, the FARDC and NDC–R ambushed the CNRD – which had split from the FDLR in June 2016, taking roughly half of its troops and equipment – north of Masisi centre, killing 26.¹³⁶ Afterwards, Guidon was told by FARDC officers in Kinshasa to approach local Hutu leaders in Bashali area to solicit local Hutu combatants to join the NDC–R.¹³⁷ In April 2019, Colonel Kijenga even attended the ceremony marking the end of military training of a motley group of former Nyatura integrating the NDC–R.¹³⁸ The following and last section of this chapter will trace the NDC–R’s evolution during the past year.

MAP OF ARMED GROUPS IN 2019

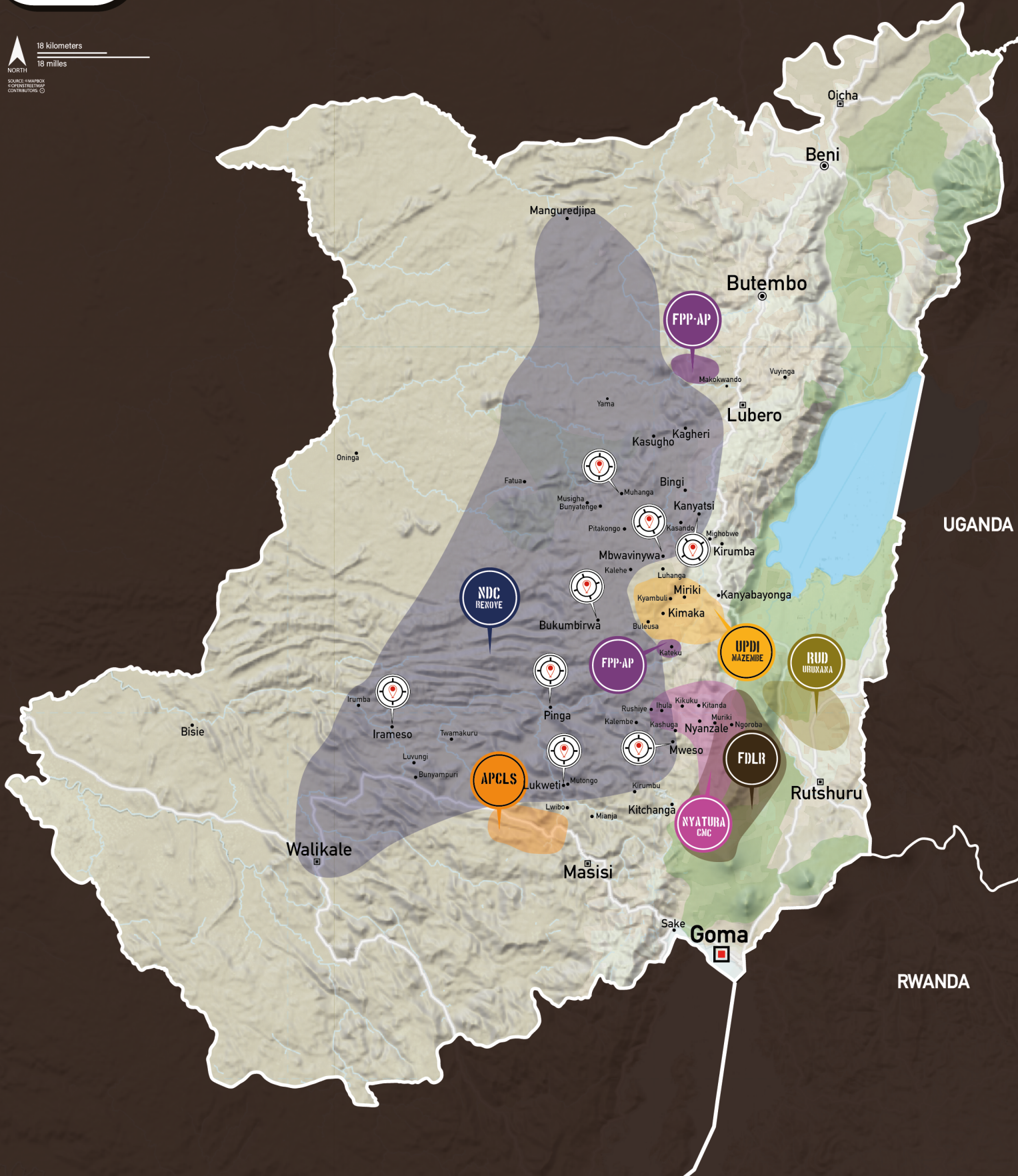
ZONES OF INFLUENCE - BASED ON CRG DATA



18 kilometers
18 miles

NORTH

SOURCE: IMAPROK
OPENSTREETMAP
CONTRIBUTORS ©




- 
NDC-R
 Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové
- 
NDC-R CAMP
 (SEE TABLE 4)
- 
APCLS
 Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain
- 
RUD-URUNANA
 Rassemblement unité et démocratie
- 
FDLR
 Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
- 
UPDI/MAZEMBE
 Union Patriote pour la Défense des Innocents
- 
NYATURA CMC
 Collectif des mouvements pour le changement
- 
FPP-AP
 Force Patriotique Pour la Paix/Armée du Peuple

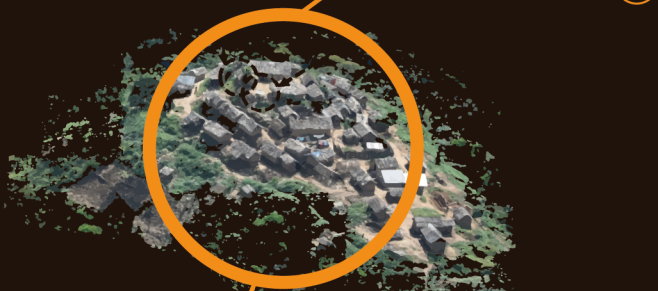
SELECTED NDC-R CAMPS

KEY POSITIONS OF THE GROUP IN 2019




IRAMESO

1° 2'2.83"S 28°15'44.70"E 



Former NDC Sheka HQ, now NDC-R HQ

BUKUMBIRWA

0°42'0.41"S 28°53'59.94"E 



11th Sector NDC-R HQ


LUKWETI

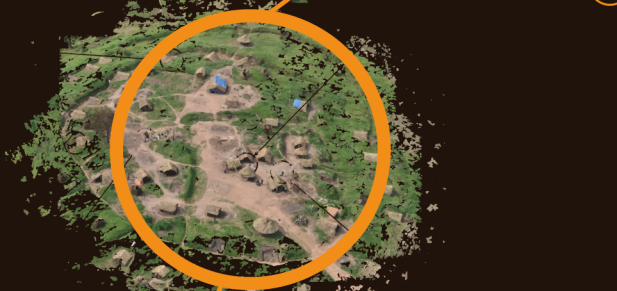
1°13'49.78"S 28°44'46.19"E 



Former APCLS HQ, strategic NDC-R position along Osso river

MBWAVINYWA

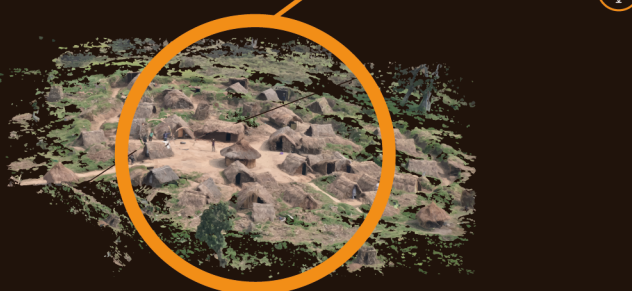
0°33'47.77"S 29° 0'14.44"E 



Former UPCP, UPDI/MAZEMBE and FPP/AP HQ


KANYATSI

0°32'24.65"S 29° 2'12.77"E 



Former FARDC and UPDI/MAZEMBE Camp


MUHANGA

0°24'54.35"S 28°55'11.13"E 



Former UPCP and FARDC Camp

KIVUYE

1°7'17.06"S 28°55'15.73"E 



New NDC-R Camp

MUTONGO

1°10'22.60"S 28°47'26.01"E 



New NDC-R Camp

4.5 The NDC–Rénové in Masisi: Endgame for the FDLR?

After its successful foray into southern Lubero, the NDC–R began expanding its reach into Masisi in late 2018. Here, Guidon took advantage of a split within the APCLS, an armed group led by Janvier Karairi. Collaborating with a splinter faction that even mimicked its partner’s name, calling itself the APCLS–Rénové, or Lola Hale (“see far” in Kihunde), Guidon’s forces advanced into northern Masisi.¹³⁹

Based mostly out of western Masisi territory, the APCLS recruits from the Hunde community and has been a key belligerent in Masisi throughout the past decade. Since 2015, tensions increased within the group, as Mapenzi Likuhe and other commanders grew unhappy with Janvier’s refusal to use their military leverage to negotiate for positions within the FARDC. In mid-2018, Mapenzi defected along with Buuma Poyo, the APCLS’s head of police and brother-in-law of Janvier.

While this turmoil was in part due to internal disputes – similar to the NDC’s split in 2014 – politicians played a critical role. Hunde elites including Feller Lutaichirwa, North Kivu’s vice-governor between 2007-2019; Marie Shematsi, a provincial minister from 2013-2018; and local businesspeople helped prompt the split by fomenting internal discord.¹⁴⁰ Contacted by CRG, Lutaichirwa and Shematsi have rejected these allegations. Meanwhile, FARDC officers seized the opportunity to weaken Janvier, a long-standing opponent, by supporting Mapenzi.¹⁴¹

Initially Mapenzi based himself close to Lwibo, north of the main APCLS strongholds. Later, Mapenzi and Poyo met Guidon in nearby Mutongo. Several local chiefs had already approached Guidon, asking for support for Mapenzi’s campaign against the FDLR.¹⁴² Some FARDC officers brokered a meeting of Mapenzi’s nascent Lola Hale militia and NDC–R in Goma, resulting in an alliance making Mapenzi the number three of NDC–R and its operations commander, while Poyo took command of a brigade, thus significantly bolstering the NDC–R’s strength in northern Masisi.¹⁴³

After absorbing the APCLS–Rénové in late 2018, an invigorated NDC–R began progressing on the Pinga–Mweso road, clashing with a range of armed groups recruiting from the Congolese Hutu community, and were able to cultivate cordial relations with local chiefs.¹⁴⁴ In November 2018, NDC–R troops struck up a brief coalition with the Nyatura of John Love – part of the coalition called Collectif des mouvements pour le changement (CMC) against whom they had fought in 2016 and 2017 (see 4.2) – in order to attack the CNRD, the dissident FDLR group operating around Kashuga and Mweso. A CMC commander related the sequence of events:

FARDC used NDC–R and Mazembe to attack us (CMC and FDLR) near Ngoroba and Muriki. NDC–R also attacked us several times coming down from Buleusa. In late 2018, NDC–R got in touch and proposed to jointly fight CNRD. We agreed and helped them kick CNRD out in January 2019, hiding this collaboration from our FDLR allies. Later, NDC–R asked us to fight [the FDLR] together. Guidon approached John Love and offered guns, but John refused. We subsequently clashed with the NDC–R, and John Love was eventually killed in an internal cabale.¹⁴⁵

After pushing the CNRD out toward South Kivu, the NDC–R began fighting with a variety of smaller Nyatura groups in northeastern Masisi, around Kashuga and Mweso. In January, some of the Nyatura led by Kavumbi surrendered to the FARDC and were transported to the far-off Kamina military base to join the army. However, Mapenzi and other sources claimed that other Kavumbi combatants, as well as deserters from other Nyatura groups and the CNRD, had joined the NDC–R.¹⁴⁶ According to a senior NDC–R officer, the current reach of the NDC–R in Masisi extends over almost all of the northern half of the territory.¹⁴⁷ [Map 5 approximates](#) approximates the zones of influence of different armed groups in that area as of November 2019.

MILITARY TRAINING IN THE NDC-R

TRAINING CAMP NEAR PINGA

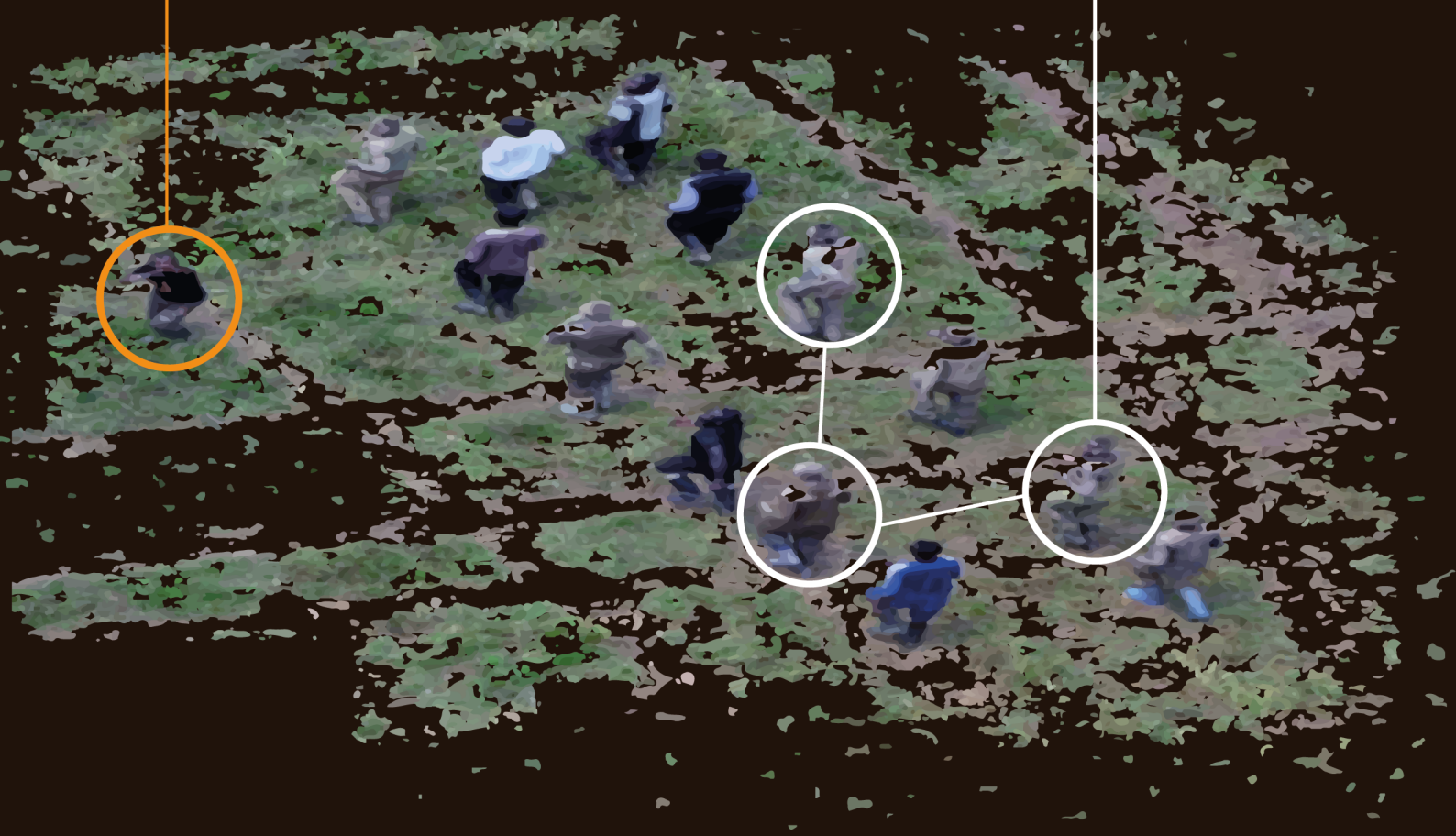
11th sector of the NDC-R



0°59'47.89"S 28°41'17.61"E

RECRUITS

INSTRUCTOR



By mid-2019, the main remaining opponents to the NDC-R in Masisi were armed groups that were part of CMC.¹⁴⁸ This Nyatura coalition emerged around 2016, when troops led by Dominique Ndaruhutse Kamanzi (known as “Domi”) and the late Muhawenimana Bunombe (known as “John Love”) formally merged.¹⁴⁹ The CMC also includes a number of smaller Nyatura factions, and a large number of its combatants – almost exclusively Congolese Hutu – underwent FDLR military training.

Many of the non-CMC Nyatura were eager to join the NDC-R throughout 2019, despite the latter past attacks against Hutu-based armed groups, as it provided them both a livelihood and the relative security of living close to their communities, in contrast with surrendering to FARDC and being taken to military bases in western Congo, over 1,000 km away.¹⁵⁰

Throughout 2019, the NDC-R continued this strategy of advancing eastward, aiming at the FDLR strongholds in southern Bwito, all the while incorporating defectors from other armed groups. Nonetheless, this growth has also presented challenges. Its rapid expansion and the absorption of armed groups from different ethnic communities has eroded some of its internal cohesion. Despite the training these new NDC-R recruits received – in the presence of FARDC officers – in Nkasa in August 2019, the ex-Nyatura units within the NDC-R appear to be less disciplined on the ground ([see table 5 on NDC-R military training](#)).¹⁵¹ Moreover, one of the NDC-R’s finance administrators reportedly defected in late August 2019 with a large sum of cash, triggering the temporary non-payment of troops in Masisi. Since then there have also been consistent rumors over the possible defection of the NDC-R’s number two, Gilbert Bwira Chuo.¹⁵² Nonetheless, the NDC-R has continued to expand their turf throughout 2019. On 18 September 2019, news broke of the death of the FDLR’s long-standing military commander Sylvestre Mudacumura ([see box 10](#)), which was attributed by some to the NDC-R. Guidon’s communication team skilfully navigated the ensuing media storm by neither confirming nor denying responsibility.

Most available sources now agree that the NDC-R was engaged in the broader military offensive that led to the death of Mudacumura but did not carry out the killing—most likely one of Mudacumura’s own soldiers pulled the trigger. The only person CRG could speak to that confirmed seeing Mudacumura’s corpse before it disappeared provided credible testimony that no traces of fighting were seen in the place where the FDLR leader had died.¹⁵³

The NDC-R’s role as proxy for the FARDC coincided with a larger push to dismantle the FDLR, its dissident groups such as the CNRD and the RUD-Urunana as well as their respective networks. While the NDC-R has run the bulk of fighting against the FDLR’s allies, the Congolese army launched a series of operations in North and South Kivu – involving small, rotating detachments of Rwandan special forces. Intermittent in character, these operations began since early 2019. CRG triangulated reliable testimony confirming this collaboration, including local observers and individuals close to and within the Congolese and Rwandan armies. In South Kivu, the operations led to the dispersal and capture of CNRD combatants, officers and dependants, and the disappearing of CNRD leader Laurent Ndagijimana (known as “Wilson Irategeka” or “Lumbago”) whose whereabouts remain unclear. In North Kivu, notable examples include the military pressure foreshadowing the death of Mudacumura in September 2019 and the killing of Juvénal Musabyimana (known as “Jean-Michel Africa”), erstwhile commander of the RUD-Urunana, in November 2019.¹⁵⁴

Mudacumura’s death was followed by short-lived reversals on the battlefield, as the CMC was able to inflict a series of losses to a hitherto unbeatable NDC-R. Around 12 November 2019, the NDC-R – backed by both the FARDC and non-CMC Nyatura – pushed into Bwito chieftaincy for a second time to attack the CMC. Operating on several fronts, the NDC-R forced John Love’s successor Nzeyimana Heri to surrender to UN troops and dislodged Domi from Bukombo. Frequent clashes continued throughout December and into January 2020.

SYLVESTRE MUDACUMURA

“GENERAL” AND MILITARY COMMANDER OF THE FDLR

KILLED | 09-18-2019

FDLR

Who is Sylvestre Mudacumura?

Mudacumura was the FDLR’s overall military commander since the early 2000s. One of the few current FDLR commanders with a significant role in the former Rwandan army (FAR) during the 1994 Genocide – Mudacumura was a major in Habyarimana’s presidential guard – he had been sought for 25 years. A picture of his corpse was the first public picture of his in two decades. Mudacumura represented the hardline wing of the FDLR and was a key protagonist in the group’s cluster of “northerners”, representing the Rwandan regionalist identities within the FDLR.

While they led to losses on both sides, the large number of CMC who have surrendered suggests the NDC-R, who temporarily moved into the CMC's former heartland around Bukombo, have gained the upperhand. Nonetheless, CMC and APCLS troops have been able to continue attacking NDC-R positions in northern Masisi in early 2020.

Meanwhile, since early December 2019, Guidon had rallied leaders of other armed groups in a bid to federate them around the NDC-R. At the time of publication, CRG is in possession of videos in which Guidon announced his new Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais (RPRC) coalition and has confirmed the UPDI-Mazembe adhering to it. Little firm evidence exists to date for the other armed groups cited as RPRC members, most notably the Simba and Kifuafua Mai-Mai factions. Meanwhile, rumors persist regarding an impending split between core NDC-R leaders, with Bwira and Mapenzi alternately named as potential plotters against Guidon.



(Guidon Shimiray at an improvised press conference in May 2020)

MAP OF ARMED GROUPS IN 2020

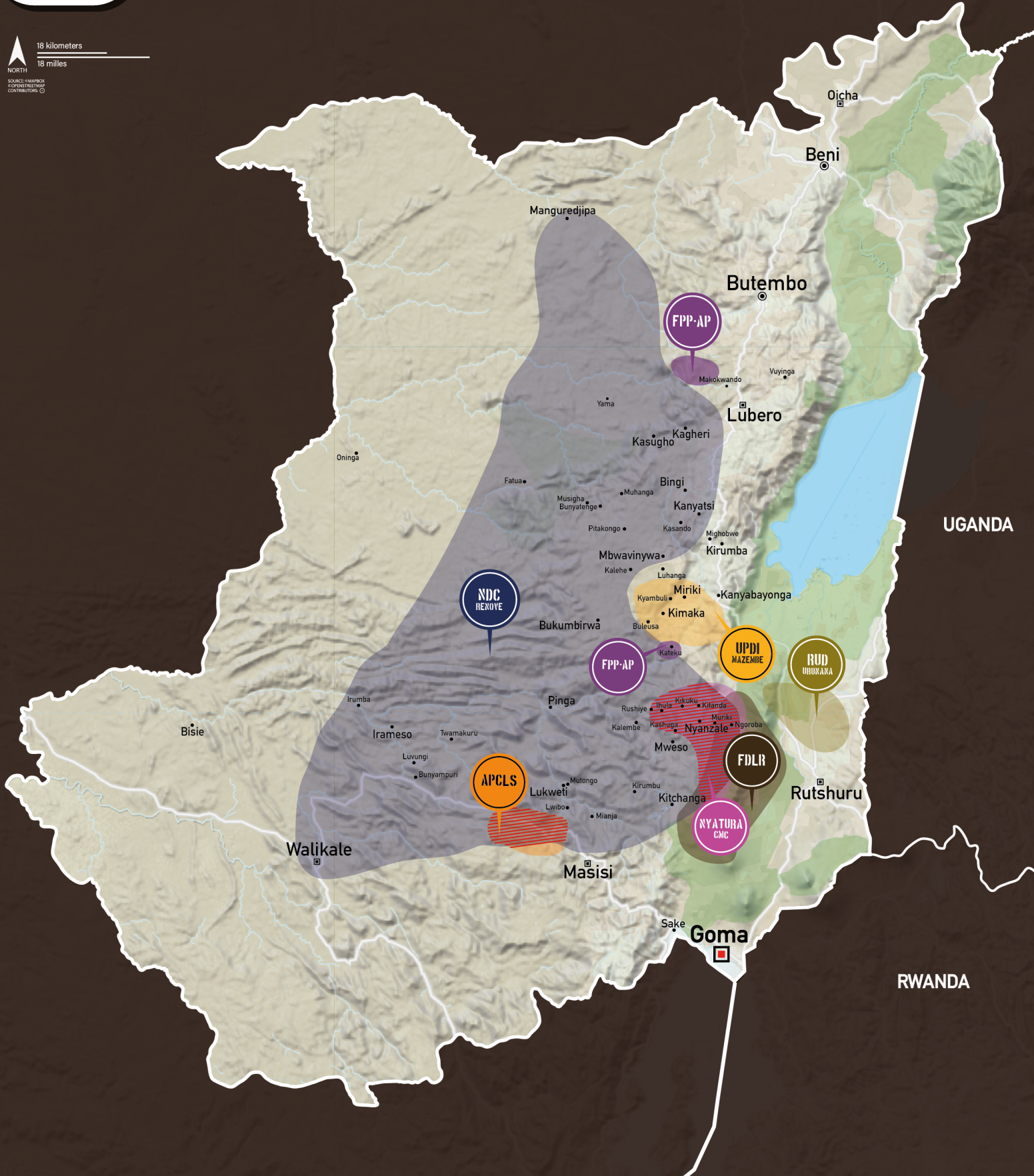
ZONES OF INFLUENCE - BASED ON CRG DATA



18 kilometers
18 miles

NORTH

SOURCE: MAPBOX
OPENSTREETMAP
CONTRIBUTORS ©



UGANDA

RWANDA

- 
NDC-R
 Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové
- 
APCLS
 Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain
- 
RUD-URUNANA
 Rassemblement unité et démocratie
- 
FDLR
 Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
- 
UPDI/MAZEMBE
 Union Patriote pour la Défense des Innocents
- 
NYATURA CMC
 Collectif des mouvements pour le changement
- 
FPP-AP
 Force Patriotique Pour la Paix/Armée du Peuple
- 
AREAS
 Where Armed Group Control Overlaps
 Fluctuates / Openly Contested

5. Analysis: Proxy Warfare, Governance Experiments & Extractive Authority

After five years of existence, by 2019 the NDC-R had become one of the most formidable armed groups in the eastern Congo. Three factors correlate with their dramatic expansion and success: the FARDC's subcontracting of counterinsurgency to them, a relatively sophisticated and multi-ethnic organization, and their ability to harness local grievances and resources.

5.1 Proxy Warfare and Alliance Formation: Deals, Co-optation, and Parallel Operations

Since Kinshasa decided to seriously attack the FDLR in 2015, the army has employed different proxy forces and alliances. However, none has been as organized and successful as its alliance with the NDC-R. This collaboration was visible during the NDC-R operations in southern Lubero and became more obvious as Guidon progressed into northern Masisi.¹⁵⁵ This is not unusual for the Congolese army. Over the past 25 years of conflict in the eastern Congo, every major belligerent has sought to extend its power through alliances and proxies. While between 1996 and 2013 regional countries played critical roles, the FARDC has been the most important source of support to armed groups since then.

This backing has been central to the evolution of the NDC-R, even though FARDC officers have often denied collaboration. Some FARDC officers have admitted in private to this collaboration—especially in the form of ammunition for light weapons (see table 6).¹⁵⁶ One senior military intelligence official framed it diplomatically, “these are no joint operations, they are parallel operations.”¹⁵⁷ On the NDC-R side, there is less caution. The following testimony by an NDC-R combatant illustrates this:

We did not clash with FARDC, because “biko wazazi yetu” (they are our parents). Sometimes we had “remise-reprise” (hand-overs) with army units at certain positions. We also have deals about who takes what position. When we meet FARDC units, we easily hang out and have drinks together. We can pass [through] FARDC areas with our guns. When we fought CMC and FDLR and lacked ammunition, the FARDC would help us out. Same [thing] during our operations against CNRD.¹⁵⁸

Guidon's group has benefited from supplies and material support, a non-aggression pact, and complicity in various taxation rackets, some of which are joint ventures with army commanders. With very few exceptions, such as the clashes in Kagheri and Kasugho in August 2018 – triggered by the NDC-R's belief that FARDC troops were fomenting resistance against the NDC-R's jeton taxes among the local population (see below) as the two forces also competed over local gold mines¹⁵⁹ – there have been no confrontations reported between the army and Guidon's troops.¹⁶⁰

The basis for this collaboration is usually personal relationships between army officers and NDC (later NDC-R) commanders, often involving joint extortion rackets. During the initial stage, beginning around 2011, the NDC relied on networks of integrated ex-CNDP officers around Bosco Ntaganda, including Colonels Bahame and Kijenga, who provided supplies via Erasto Ntibaturana's militia in northern Masisi.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the NDC had links to officers from Walikale, such as Kasikila, Bindu and others, but allegedly also to high-level army commanders even though CRG could not establish definitive proof.¹⁶² When Guidon split from Sheka, a number of Walikale-based FARDC officers backed the creation of the NDC-R, just as FARDC officers helped to foment dissent in the APCLS later.¹⁶³

For each of these officers, CRG obtained at least three independent and reliable testimonies of support and in some cases, many more. Altogether, out of the 90 interviews underpinning this report, 29 sources with direct knowledge

testified to army support to the NDC–R in multiple ways and through different intermediaries. CRG contacted the Congolese government with regards to the main allegations made but did not receive a response at the time of publication.

Why does the FARDC support the NDC–R, given all the risks involved? There appear to be several reasons. Paradoxically, armed proxies can be easier to control than the FARDC’s own units, allowing them to project force into areas that are difficult to access. The current FARDC is an amalgamation of former belligerents who participated in the 2003-2006 transition, as well as of groups that have since been integrated into the force. The result is a patchwork of different chains of command and loyalties. In addition, the army has limited resources – it is the third largest army in sub-Saharan Africa but only ranks 38th in military expenditures.¹⁶⁴

The lack of spending is compounded by corruption and disorganization. Battalions are often understaffed compared to official rosters, salaries on the frontlines rarely arrive on time, and commanders on the ground frequently lament the embezzlement of operational funds. Moreover, top commanders in the FARDC often distrust their own units unless they are part of their respective parallel chains of command. At the troop level, military leadership quality varies across commanders, and morale is compromised by logistical problems – especially for units deployed far from urban centers. This is at least in part strategic on the part of the government and the military top brass, as a stronger army may endanger their survival. A fragmented army is easier to control. The use of proxies is also a source of revenue for army officers, who can derive substantial profits from the illegal trade in minerals and other goods (see 5.3).

Taken together, the use of proxies provides an opportunity to both increase efficiency and reduce costs. However, while this strategy was successful in inflicting a series of defeats against the FDLR, it came with dangerous side-effects, exacerbating ethnically-tinged violence. On the one side of the battlefield were a series of militia dominated by Nyanga, Nande, and Kobo, facing off against the FDLR and its satellite militia, all rooted in local Hutu communities. This in turn produced a brutal cycle of violence that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians. This approach also eroded government legitimacy. The lack of FARDC presence and action in these areas undermined state authority in the long run. Moreover, like other proxy forces, the NDC–R has begun developing its own interests and ambitions which may not align with those of the respective FARDC leadership in the area. This could eventually force the FARDC to either confront a former ally, potentially incurring casualties from its own ammunition, or search for yet another proxy to counter its former partners.

There have also been allegations of collaboration between the Rwandan government and the NDC–R, which have been more difficult to confirm. Until recently, the NDC–R’s spokesperson lived in Gisenyi and told CRG he never had difficulties in communicating with the movement’s leadership on the ground. Like other senior NDC–R figures, he also boasted of conducting regular trips to Kinshasa and organizing NDC–R meetings in Rwanda.¹⁶⁵ While we could not verify this claim, three sources specifically claimed that Rwanda provided material support to the NDC–R via FARDC.¹⁶⁶ Since many other sources described how FARDC support to the NDC–R was channelled to units led by Kinyarwanda-speaking officers, it is unclear whether Guidon has received any direct foreign support. A senior commander of the NDC–R described relations with Rwanda as follows:

Today we have material support (arms and ammunition) from FARDC and we collaborate well with the Rwandans – in fact our spokesperson lives in Rwanda for his security. FARDC use us as part of their operations. We do not receive money, but rather logistical support through the Kitchanga FARDC regiment. We are allies.¹⁶⁷

Rwanda has a long history of supporting armed groups in the eastern Congo.¹⁶⁸ While these efforts have usually focused on groups with roots in the Rwandophone community, they have also had periodic contact with other groups in an attempt to maintain influence in the region, gather intelligence, and conduct targeted strikes – in particular against the FDLR.

DIVERSION OF STOCKPILES

FARDC AMMUNITION FOUND 2019 IN MASHANGO



0°42'0.41"S 28°53'59.94"E

Product designation: Ordinary cartridge 7.62 x 39 mm, type 56
(standard ammunition for AK47)

Name of recipient: MDNAC-R/RDC
(Congolese defense ministry)

Serial number: 20170223/FP/CK/MOD/GDW

During interviews, three sources (including FARDC and CMC) confirm the discovery of an ammunition case. The case has writings on two sides. It was abandoned by the NDC-R in the locality of Mashango, Bukombo groupement (Bwito chiefdom, Rutshuru) after clashes opposing the NDC-R and the CMC.

Désignation du produit: Cartouche ordinaire 7.62x39mm type 56
Nom du destinataire: MDNAC-R/RDC
Numero du central: 20170223/FP/CK/MOD/GDW

5.2 Governance, Legitimacy, and Ideology in the NDC–Rénové

Much like to the Congolese army itself, it would be a mistake to see the NDC–R as a purely military endeavor. Armed groups’ objectives, alliances, and relations with local communities are deeply shaped by the social and economic dynamics in the areas where they emerge and operate. In eastern Congo, armed resistance tends to be framed as resistance against “outsiders,” which can be the central government or a rival armed group, with members of the Rwandophone community frequently cast in that role. Nonetheless, armed groups rarely reject the idea of state-like governance or the overall legitimacy of the Congolese state. This leads them to emulate state practices, such as those outlined in section 5.3 on taxation.

Compared with most other armed groups in eastern Congo, the NDC–R has been successful in setting up local governance structures, making it more legitimate (at least in the eyes of parts of the population), and allowing it to better communicate its objectives. The backbone of this governance has been its military cohesion, which – despite the tensions described above – has remained remarkably intact as it has grown in size and geographic spread, absorbing other armed groups from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. As it has grown, it has developed a set of governing documents, including a cahier des charges (list of demands), outlining its political orientation on key issues. Many of its official grievances are linked to the “bad governance” of Sheka’s leadership before Guidon defected. As Guidon told a local human rights group in an interview:

Sheka neglected me, despite the good advice I gave him. Other officers have accused him of many things – embezzlement, salary delays, deviationist behavior, mismanagement. Those same officers chose me to lead the NDC–R, though I did not attend the Twamakuru meeting, as I was in Irumba. On 30 July 2014, they nominated me to be commander of the NDC–R. The NDC–R does not consider the FARDC an enemy, nor the government as a whole. We collaborate well with the authorities and the army, yet they do not provide us with supplies. Our final aim is to join the FARDC with our demands being taken into account.¹⁶⁹

Much of the group’s identity is wrapped up in narratives of self-defense on behalf of indigenous communities against the FDLR. While during interactions with his troops, Guidon justified the split and creation of his movement with Sheka’s failures, the NDC–R’s external legitimacy was based on its campaign against the FDLR. Rallying around anti-Rwandan sentiment is typical for many Congolese armed groups, but the NDC–R is – with the exception of the much less structured Raia Mutomboki groups – one of the few actors that has been able to match its rhetoric with action.

We can therefore observe different registers of justification: in Walikale the group emphasizes its indigenous roots among the Nyanga community, while outside its home turf anti-Rwandan sentiment dominates. This quote from a combatant captures the NDC–R’s ideology neatly:

The ideology consists of fighting FDLR and its allies who rape the communities of North Kivu, and to protect our communities. In addition, we fight for Walikale to be heard at the provincial and national levels. The riches of Walikale ought to help Walikale to develop itself.¹⁷⁰

Despite this lofty rhetoric, the group displays a heavy-handed approach towards local populations, in particular during phases of conquest in which new order needs to be established. Senior NDC–R members have tried to explain this violence by stating that in the early days of their expansion into Lubero, a code of conduct had not yet been finalized, one of them confessing that “looting was the basis of our revenue.”¹⁷¹ Subsequently, the establishment of the jeton taxation system and monopolies around mining areas have created more stable, less violent sources of income. This system has allowed for the NDC–R to shift its operational focus from Lubero to Masisi without losing their grip in areas in which authority had already been established.¹⁷²

In most areas where the NDC–R operates, a variety of state institutions remain present. Here, local authority has often become a negotiation between the rebels and local chiefs, agricultural inspectors, and other state agencies.¹⁷³ For example, in the run-up to the 2018 elections, the NDC–R arrested a local official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) in Walikale, as the NDC–R and local authorities disagreed about where he was telling voters to register.¹⁷⁴

Guidon and other NDC–R leaders have organized public meetings with chiefs and local administrators, making it clear that the armed group is ultimately in charge, such as during a meeting with local authorities in northern Masisi early 2019. The NDC–R has forced police officers and local judicial officials to answer to it and has farmed out taxation to local leaders. It has its own police units, although it is not clear to which extent these are new recruits or co-opted PNC staff.

In cases where Congolese law is broken – the NDC–R claims to respect the constitution and the Congolese criminal code – the NDC–R may refer them to government actors. These include FARDC or PNC in areas adjoining the NDC–R’s territory, or customary tribunals and local state courts known as *tribunaux de paix*. It deals with the remaining cases itself. In southern Lubero, the NDC–R runs most detention facilities, which are often make-shift structures, themselves.¹⁷⁵ There is considerable variation in these local governance arrangements; it is unclear to what extent these depend on the personality or authority of the local commander.

The NDC–R has a similarly nuanced approach in its own internal organization. It maintains a relatively high degree of differentiation, with clear military hierarchies and responsibilities (see table 7). This has rendered the group more efficient, allowed it to acquire a much larger territory than other militia, and has produced a degree of popular support given its capacity to effectively control and secure areas, although individual disciplinary violations are common. According to senior officers, recruits are required to sign a pledge, adhering to the aims and rules of the movement, but also providing plausible deniability for the leadership in cases of individual wrongdoing. This act is linked to the code of conduct, which, according to NDC–R members, was still being finalized in late 2019.¹⁷⁶

Revenue sharing is critical to its internal cohesion, as the erstwhile split between NDC and NDC–R highlights. The NDC–R centralizes most revenue before sending salaries and operational funds to its units. In case of emergency, commanders can ask for permission to use income directly – such as for purchasing ammunition from FARDC commanders. Before Sheka and Guidon fell out, senior officers received 150,000 FC per month (around USD 90) and were allowed to exercise monopoly control over the retail trade of specific goods. The NDC–R temporarily doubled salaries for senior officers, but then reduced them to 120,000 FC (USD 75), plus additional perks such as controlling specific sectors of local trade. Rank-and-file members receive between 10,000 FC and 40,000 FC (USD 6 to 25) each month.¹⁷⁷ While some sources said that these salaries are often delayed, their existence is unusual for armed groups in the eastern Congo.

The NDC–R’s revenue and salary system relies on a separate administrative branch within the group. In collaboration with the movement’s overall head of administration, Colonel Mwissa Hangi, and ultimately authorized by Guidon Shimiray, finance officers in the “brigades” and “sectors” organize the collection and redistribution of taxes through low-level NDC–R commanders and co-opted local authorities. The overall finance coordinator receives all revenues and, after approval from Guidon, allocates spending by each brigade. These administrators also run the *jeton* system explained below.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS INSIDE THE NDC-R

THE ROLE OF GENDER, FAMILY AND VIOLENCE

NDC
RENOVE

Women in the NDC-R¹⁷⁸

While there is no female commander known in the top leadership of the NDC-R, women occupy important roles. As in many armed groups, they are involved in their economic activities, such as selling alcohol and tobacco in the mines controlled by the group. At the Irameso headquarters, there are several mid-level female commanders. Many combatants are polygamous and have several wives and families; family members often work to prepare food or transport goods. The NDC-R claims to have a clear policy regarding gender-based violence, however this is not always fully respected, as local PNC under order of the NDC-R explained.¹⁷⁹ Instead of punishing the guilty party, commanders often provide compensation to the families of rape victims. In one recent case of rape by an NDC-R officer, in early August 2019 near Muhanga, the population took justice into its own hands and killed him.¹⁸⁰ CRG also received numerous reports of forced marriage, including of underage girls, and in one case, NDC-R's Colonel Ushindi reportedly threatened to kill a woman in Mweso if she refused to marry him.¹⁸¹



The multi-ethnic nature of the NDC-R stands out among Congolese armed groups, which mostly recruit from a single ethnic community. While it began as a largely Nyanga group, as it has expanded its internal composition has changed, bringing on board Hutu officers such as Batachoka, Kobo like Tondeuze, and Hunde officers such as Mapenzi or Poyo. In part, this is due to its popularity for chasing out the FDLR and re-establishing local authority, in addition to its policy of integrating other armed groups. These two factors helped attract Hunde and Nande combatants, in particular APCLS troops under Mapenzi and the early UPDI. In its most recent expansion across northern Masisi, the NDC-R also managed to recruit among several Nyatura groups through a mixture of financial incentives and the threat of violence. ([see table 7 for the NDC-R’s current leadership and military structure comprising commanders of different ethnic groups](#)).

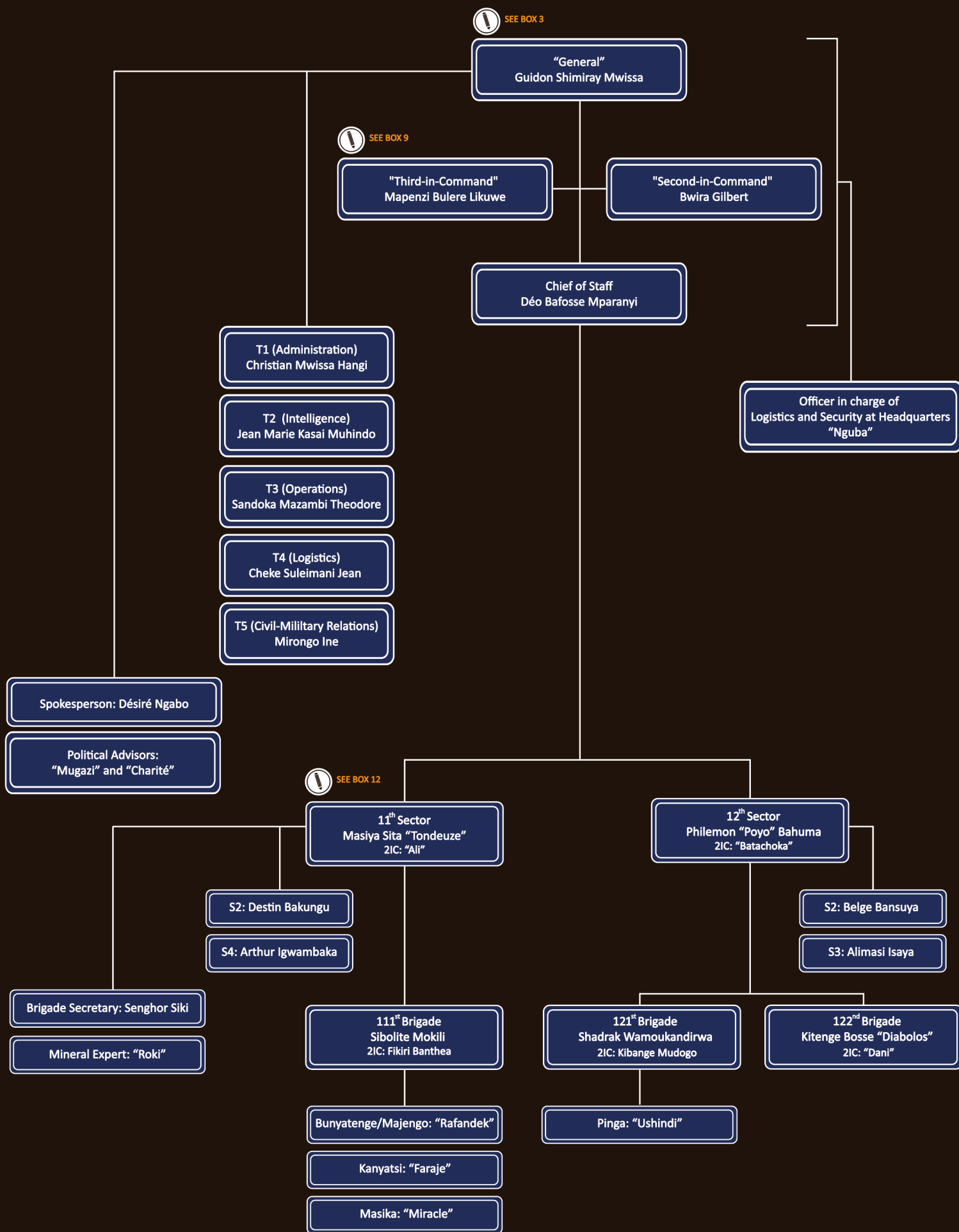
5.3 Business, Taxation, and Monopolies: “A chaque repas, on exige la sauce de la poule”¹⁸²

The NDC-R taxes most economic activities in the area under its control and has encouraged the emergence of trade monopolies to facilitate revenue collection. In several of these endeavors, the group partners with other actors – including local authorities, other armed groups, and national army units. Guidon (a former FARDC officer himself) and some of his top aides have established and maintained close links to army commanders; some of these connections appear to be rooted in economic interests. These arrangements are not exceptional. Before Sukola II, the FARDC used the FDLR in a similar fashion – most notably in the lucrative charcoal trade around Goma, as reported in subsequent UN Group of Experts reports.¹⁸³



MILITARY STRUCTURE OF THE NDC-R

BASED ON CRG FIELDWORK AND INTERVIEWS



Jetons, War Efforts, and Military Rations

Across the territory it controls, the NDC–R has diversified from a purely resource-oriented economic venture: it has established a sophisticated taxation racket by professionalizing the well-known jeton taxation systems applied by many armed groups. Civilians between 15 and 59 years of age have to buy one jeton – or tax receipt – for 1000 Congolese francs (USD 0.6) each month and then keep the small receipt to show they have paid. Vehicles (30,000 Congolese francs, USD 19) and transporters of goods, such as meat, have to pay more. In cases of non-payment, fines of 10,000 FC (6 USD) or more apply, as well as detention and beatings. The NDC–R gathers these taxes in most areas under their control.

Combatants check for jetons – in certain places called “carte mémoire” – both randomly and at roadblocks. Each jeton is only valid for a particular area and period of time. Traders need to register with NDC–R and pay part of their profits or fixed taxes in order to operate. Jetons are produced centrally under the oversight of Guidon but then handed out and collected in a decentralized manner.¹⁸⁴ Revenue collection is organized at the level of local commanders at the end of the month, who also hand out the jetons to local chiefs.¹⁸⁵ As with other armed groups in eastern Congo, each jeton features a date and a stamp. Until July 2019, the NDC–R exempted teachers, pupils, and state employees, but has since gotten rid of that exemption. Tax collection leads to occasional abuses and human rights violations. For instance, in July 2019, a teacher was killed in Muhanga when he refused to pay. In retaliation, the responsible NDC–R combatant was burned alive by the population.¹⁸⁶

Before and after military operations, the NDC–R collects contributions to motivate combatants or buy ammunition. Local populations have to deliver foodstuffs to the NDC–R units based in their vicinity. Larger farms or ranches, of which there are few in their area of control, pay lump-sum taxes in order to operate without ambushes or intimidation.¹⁸⁷ Occasionally, the rebels impose a “war fund” tax (called mukongoro, “collection”), which can range between 3000 and 6000 FC (USD 1.8-3.6). This tax – and the jeton that comes with it – does not replace the ordinary monthly tax and jeton. Each family in NDC–R territory is asked to contribute a weekly ration of foodstuffs (such as maize and cassava flour) to the nyumbakumi, the smallest administrative unit in any given village.¹⁸⁸ Customary chiefs also collect goods like oil, soap, or salt from local traders and then deliver these goods to the local NDC–R position. Artisanal miners pay a tax of 7000 FC (USD 4.30) per month.¹⁸⁹

This collection of jeton and mukongoro income has helped the NDC–R to regularly pay combatants, making the group a more attractive employer than other militia, where salaries are often paid rarely and irregularly – fostering the marauding behavior of certain combatants.

Gold and Other Mining Operations

The NDC–R has overtaken most of Sheka’s previous mining operations in Walikale, and its expansion into southern Lubero has allowed it to gain access to the numerous artisanal gold mines around Kasugho and Kagheri.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, it controls and taxes the supply in food and household goods for the numerous workers and diggers there. Prior to the NDC–R’s arrival in 2015 and the emergence of Mazembe, Kasugho area was controlled by the FDLR and FARDC for more than a decade.

In these mining areas, state institutions are often present, but too weak to withstand being effectively overtaken by the NDC–R. Confidential UN documents also suggest that in other places, such as Vuyinga and Makokwando, control is shared between the NDC–R and FARDC.

Artisanal miners in areas controlled by the NDC–R pay taxes depending on their production and revenue.

According to a civil society source, the group controls over a hundred known mining sites in Walikale territory alone.¹⁹¹ A comparison of the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) mapping of artisanal mines in the eastern Congo suggests that at least 40–50 known mining sites are within the group’s reach.¹⁹² In the Musigha mine (Lubero territory), for instance, a local chief has to pay 5 grams of gold per month, while miners pay the equivalent of around 10000 FC (USD 6) in gold. Failure to pay the taxes can result in fines between 5 and 15 grams of gold. In other mines, monthly taxes also exist, often euphemistically called “rations” or sabuni (“soap”). Usually these taxes are gathered around the end of a month. They amount to 1.5 tiges, a local measurement unit worth around 10000 FC (USD 6).

The NDC–R imposes other payments or restrictions as well. Miners and local traders need to register through a system that resembles the one set up by government agencies, obtaining separate mining and trading permits. Moreover, the NDC–R controls who is allowed to buy the gold production from miners. In addition, the group requires “trade permits” for other entrepreneurs in the area, such as those trading food and other merchandise.



Gold mines in the area controlled by the NDC-R include Kitowa, Fatua, Oninga, Yama, Kanaana, and Makokwando, some of which are several days' walk from the main road. Thousands of miners are involved in alluvial and artisanal mining, mostly along the Tayna and Lubero rivers. Visits to various mining areas reveal remote places where violence is commonplace but profits can be extremely high. In Musigha, for example, an average of 32kg of gold is produced each month, totaling around 15,000 USD on the local market (compared with around USD 48,000 for a kilogram of refined gold on the international market). In Yama, another mining site, there is no currency, everything is paid for in gold. Miners also pay for combatants' food and upkeep worth up to 14,000 FC each month (USD 8). In return, the village has been reconstructed by the NDC-R after FDLR raids.¹⁹³

From these remote mining areas, much of the gold is brought to Kasugho, a bustling town accessible by car from the main Goma-Butembo road. One trader there told CRG, "you just need capital, that's all" in order to earn a good living. Through local intermediaries in Kasugho, most of the gold is transported to the large towns of eastern Congo. Sometimes, traders are arrested on the way for lack of trading licenses, incurring fines of up to 400 USD.¹⁹⁴ Much of the gold reaches Butembo, where it is bought by different trading houses—CONGOCOM/KISONI, COMIBA, Glory Minerals—, while some is also transported to Goma, where it is sold to COMIALO, COMADECO, or to COMISKI or COMUNG in Bukavu.

Local Retail Trade Monopolies

Another key source of income for the NDC-R are monopolies in local retail trade, in particular for cigarettes, batteries, beer and other items around mining sites.¹⁹⁵ This practice is rooted in NDC times, when Guidon had already organized a tobacco monopoly in Walikale. Meanwhile, this technique has been decentralized, associating other commanders. The monopolies are structured as follows: no one can sell tobacco products within NDC-R-controlled territory without a special authorization, which often costs around 50 USD per month, although a fixed price does not exist. Very few authorizations are given to individuals who are not part of or close to the NDC-R. Locally produced tobacco is prohibited against a fine of 5–15 grams of gold. There is a similar monopoly on the sale of alcohol. Both monopolies apply to the NDC-R's zone of influence, except larger urban centers where it might trigger larger public disavowal. While Guidon and key senior officers oversee the tobacco monopoly, the alcohol monopoly is decentralized to the level of battalion commanders. Often, combatants' wives handle alcohol retail in mining areas and are exempt from taxation.

Tondeuze Masita ([see box 12](#)), currently a sector commander, manages monopolies around the sawing and trade of timber. He began in Bukumbirwa, then instituted a similar scheme in Muhanga/Bunyatenge area – close to where he is building a hotel ([see table 8](#)) – and more recently in northern Masisi, using forced labor to transport the wood.¹⁹⁶ One FARDC officer received a kickback for not attacking Tondeuze's wood transports. When asked about it, Tondeuze stated that "it is impossible for my trucks to be stopped because senior [army] officers handle things."¹⁹⁷ These collaborations further entrenched NDC-R/FARDC relations in southern Lubero and have facilitated ammunition deals.

MASIYA SITA “TONDEUZE”

COMMANDER OF THE NDC–R’S 12TH SECTOR

NDC
RENOVE

Who is Tondeuze Siya Masita?¹⁹⁹

Tondeuze is a Kobo from Kisangani with a Greek father and Congolese mother. He is a senior commander who has held different positions in the NDC–R. In mid-2019 he was a sector commander, after having been the group’s civil-military affairs head (T5) and a sector commander in southern Lubero before. Previously, he was a FARDC soldier, allegedly trafficking arms on behalf of his superiors. He joined the NDC after having been captured by Sheka in fighting with FARDC around in Pinga in 2012. Tondeuze is one of the most commercially savvy commanders and has good relations with the army and other militia. He also manages his personal timber business together with FARDC officers in Kasando, selling timber to Goma. Recently, he was deployed to Kalembe in Masisi, where he continues to be involved in timber and charcoal trade.²⁰⁰

BUSINESS IN THE NDC-R

HOTEL "DEUXIÈME MONDE" IN MUSIGHA

12th sector of the NDC-R



0°25'0.24"S 28°50'59.65"E



Since early 2019, Tondeuze Masita has begun building a small hotel in Musigha. Called "Deuxième Monde", it offers rooms starting at three dollars, or its gold equivalent, but also serves as a place for gathering to NDC-R officers deployed in the area.



Although the hotel remains unfinished in early 2020, 28 rooms are already operational. The hotel is located on the hills dipping down to Musigha.

Miscellaneous Taxes and Revenue Streams

Finally, there are a number of other taxes in the NDC-R's area of control. In remote areas that do not have mobile network coverage, local traders or churches often use high frequency (HF) radios. The NDC-R requires authorizations for such communication, to be purchased for a fee. While this provides additional revenue, it also serves as a means of disciplining and control – radios are seen as military material. The NDC-R also levies a fee for the registration of hunting rifles, whether self-made or bought. Moreover, the group levies taxes on the ownership of chainsaws. While based in Lubero, Tondeuze oversaw this tax in collaboration with two major wood traders from Kirumba, controlling much of the timber business towards Muhanga and Bingi. Occasional income stems from ransom imposed on civilians who fail to engage in salongo (a form of “coercive voluntary labor”), mostly repairing and maintaining roads, and on families of deserters. In certain areas, like northern Masisi, the NDC-R also levies roadblock taxes of 200 FC in addition to the monthly jetons.¹⁹⁸

6. Conclusion

Ten years ago, Guidon Shimiray was a completely unknown figure. Today, he leads one of the most important armed groups in the eastern Congo. The story of how this was possible was in part crafted by coincidence, in part by structural conflict dynamics, but also by Guidon himself. He is a charismatic speaker who skilfully navigates the politics of conflict in North Kivu, setting up one of the most sophisticated governance structures of any armed group in the eastern Congo. He savvily uses social media and propaganda stunts to broadcast everything from his exploits to trainings in international humanitarian law for his troops. To walk from one side of Guidon's territory in Walikale to the other in Lubero would take more than a week. Yet his local commanders continue to send him at least part of their revenues and obey his orders. In doing so, he has drawn on local demands for greater protection and dignity, while playing to oversized fears of a Rwandan invasion. Collectively referred to as the "balkanization" of the Congo, these fears have experienced a significant revival since late 2019.²⁰¹

But it would be wrong to focus solely on the media-friendly image of someone who is, in fact, a brutal rebel leader. His dramatic rise points to systemic problems that go far beyond the NDC-R, only one of over 100 armed groups in the eastern Congo.²⁰² The most important protagonist in his story, albeit often off-stage, is the Congolese army and state, which have treated Guidon with a mixture of outright support and tolerance. Even the arrest warrant that the government issued in June 2019 illustrates this: while some military prosecutors appear determined to put Guidon behind bars, other networks in the army have protected him and continue to collaborate with him.

While Guidon Shimiray may represent the high-water mark of government complicity, many other armed groups also benefit from an army that struggles to motivate and discipline its own troops. Soldiers have a meager salary, little health care, and destitute living conditions for themselves and their families. At the same time, political elites hesitate to crack down on the patronage networks that riddle the security services, encouraging army units to engage in criminal activity and sapping the already small military budget. The outcome is twofold. First, the army is relatively passive, perhaps even complacent: despite sporadic military offensives, commanders rarely have the resources or morale to launch high-risk counterinsurgency operations. Instead, proxy warfare becomes a crucial *modus operandi*: it is cheaper, more effective, and often more lucrative than military operations.

The result is a kind of "franchise state" in which armed groups like the NDC-R operate with the army and on its behalf, while increasingly mimicking the FARDC and the state—from the uniforms to the tax collection and provision of basic services.

This collaboration poses a series of risks for both state authority as well as human security and stability.²⁰³ Since it is conducted outside of official channels, it escapes public scrutiny and transparency, while undermining the army's authority and popular acceptance by local communities. For instance, when the army failed to protect local communities in southern Lubero in 2013 and 2014, as the FDLR migrated to this area, it turned the local population against them and accentuated local youths' anti-Hutu invective. More egregiously, by backing local militias that largely recruit along ethnic lines, the FARDC has become complicit in vicious ethnic feuding that has killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands.

Finally, the NDC-R offers a cautionary tale for those engaged in state-building. When a government is so deeply enmeshed with "non-state" armed groups, it becomes invested in insecurity, rather than the monopolization of legitimate violence. Sovereignty itself has become an object of constant negotiation among powerbrokers, an increasingly fluid concept that bears only a passing resemblance to classical notions of the relationship between the state, territory, and control.

As this study demonstrates, it is not always obvious who is in control – the rebel movement, its state sponsor, or the numerous other belligerents in the area. This is a situation, then, of “partial, horizontal sovereignties” that exist to different degrees in many postcolonial contexts.²⁰⁴

Disentangling these patronage networks and “extending state authority” – a core objective of the UN mission in the Congo and international engagement more broadly – will require comprehensive reform of the Congolese state, which includes greater accountability, a new social contract between the people and their rulers, as well as more resources and training. This is not primarily a technocratic challenge; it is intensely political, as it demands a complete reconfiguring of the incentives of the political and military elites, as well as of their political culture. As the new president Tshisekedi has quickly discovered, “purging” (*débouonner*) those responsible for violence likely is a generational battle.



Endnotes

- 1 Vogel, Christoph & Stearns, Jason (2018): Kivu's Intractable Security Conundrum, revisited. *African Affairs* 117(469): 695–707.
- 2 Vlassenroot, Koen; Hoffmann, Kasper & Mudinga, Emery (2016): *Contesting Authority. Armed rebellion and military fragmentation in Walikale and Kalehe, North and South Kivu*. Rift Valley Institute, London.
- 3 Verweijen, Judith (2013): Military business and the business of the military. *Review of African Political Economy* 40: 67–82.
- 4 Narrated on the basis of an official NDC–R video clip on file with Congo Research Group.
- 5 Mathys, Gillian (2017): Bringing History back in: Past, Present and Conflit in Rwanda and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. *Journal of African History* 58(3): 465–487.
- 6 Stearns, Jason (2012): *North Kivu. The background to conflict in North Kivu province of eastern Congo*. Rift Valley Institute, London.
- 7 Congolese administration is organized as follows in rural areas, in descending order of area size: province, territory, chefferie (chieftaincy) or secteur (sector), groupement (grouping), localité (locality); in urban areas, one can find ville (city) and communes below the province.
- 8 As the AFDL progressed westwards in their ambition to overthrow Mobutu, its Rwandan allies systematically tried to either repatriate or hunt down Rwandan refugees. Many of the latter were civilian dependents of the génocidaires and targeted by reprisals or constrained to flee further west.
- 9 The Nande coexist with and assimilate other, smaller communities such as the Pere in Lubero, or the Vuba, Talinga, Pakombe and Mbuti in Beni.
- 10 Bucyalimwe, Mararo (1997): Land, power and ethnic conflict in Masisi. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30(3): 503–538.
- 11 The combattants, gardes civiles, Kibarizo, Mai-Mai Mongol. These groups mobilised mainly through the MAGRIVI mutualité and were influenced by Masisi's Hutu leaders such as Emmanuel Munyamariba, Félicien Miganda, Hassan Mugabo, Janvier Mayanga, Bigembe Turinkinko and Robert Seninga. On the opposing side, the Batiri, Katuko and Kasindiens militia recruited predominantly from the Tembo, Nyanga, and Kano communities.
- 12 Including those led by Akilimali Shemondo, She Kasikila, Padiri Bulenda and Delphin Mbaenda.
- 13 Like the Bangilima, this group was an alliance of different militia, including the later Resistants nationalistes Lumumbistes (RNL) in Vurondo, Kitambala Mwavita's Forces d'Autodéfense Populaire (FAP), and Bahandule and Fabien Mudoghu's Front de Résistance Populaire de Lubwe–Rwenzori (FRPL-L). See Mughendi, Nissé (2010): *Guerres recurrentes en République Démocratique du Congo. Entre fatalité et responsabilité*. L'Harmattan, Paris.
- 14 Kalenji (payment of part of the harvest as a tithe) and muhako (a form of annual tribute to the chief) are two payments in local land governance.
- 15 The Raia Mutomboki mobilization in 2011-2013 in Kalehe, Shabunda, Walikale, and Masisi pushed almost all FDLR out of these territoires.
- 16 While the Mai-Mai under Matumo ended up in the 85th Brigade, those of She Kasikila (which Guidon Shimiray was part of) became the 14th Brigade.
- 17 A ton cost 6,485 USD in January 2004 and 23,139 USD in July 2008.
See <https://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=tin&months=240>
- 18 These included the Mai-Mai Kifuafua faction of Colonel Sengi and the FDLR. A 2006 pillage of Bisie was allegedly co-sponsored by the 85th brigade with the Kifuafua-Sengi and Sheka. Interviews #09, July 2019, Goma area, #11, #15, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 19 Interview #12, July 2019, Walikale area. The firm was previously known as Association Bangandula.
- 20 See de Haan, Jorden & Geenen, Sara (2016): Mining cooperatives in Eastern DRC. The interplay between historical power relations and formal institutions. *Extractive Industries and Society* 3(3): 823–831.
- 21 Interview #12, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 22 United Nations (2009): S/2009/603, paras. 222–227. This authorization had the title CAMI/AP/617/2006.
- 23 They received the following permits: 4246, 5266, 5267, 5279, 10346. Bisie lies on 5266.

- 24 In addition to COMIMPA, two other mining cooperatives were formally registered in 2009, the Coopérative minière des creuseurs artisanaux de Bisie (COCABI) and the Coopérative minière et de développement pour la reconstruction (COMIDER). Mid-2010 a new collaboration protocol was signed between MPC and the three cooperatives. A fourth protocol was later signed in 2016, as MPC’s concession had been taken over by Alphamin SA. Relations between the mining company and the population have remained tense, yet one NDC–R official described an improvement compared to the MPC days, stating that “back then MPC deserved being ambushed but now things have calmed down, if we have differences with Alphamin we can talk to them.” Interviews #14, July 2019, Goma area, #12, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 25 Those debts sat with Alexis Makabuza, a Goma-based trader. Interviews #06, #08, #10, #15, July 2019, Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area.
- 26 Interviews #03, #07, #11, #12, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 27 In particular, the Mai-Mai from the groups led by Kasikila and Sengi.
- 28 The names of key supporters are on file with Congo Research Group.
- 29 Interviews #01, #03, July 2019, Walikale area, #04, July 2019, Masisi area, #06, #10, #07, #12, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 30 Interviews #06, #07, July 2019, Walikale area, #14, July 2019, Goma area. The citation is attributed to Sheka himself.
- 31 Interviews #02, #05, #06, #15, July 2019, Walikale area, #14, July 2019, Goma area. Specific names of early NDC supporters are on file with CRG.
- 32 Interview #78, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 33 Interviews #01, #06, #07, July 2019, Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area.
- 34 Interviews #01, July 2019, Walikale area, #04, July 2019, Masisi area, #07, July 2019, Walikale area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 35 Both the NDC and NDC–R often refer to their headquarters through the Swahili expressions hewani (‘in the air’) and musituni (‘in the woods’). Interviews #03, #07, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 36 This continued to be the case later in NDC–R times, including in terms of justifying jeton taxes of 1000 FC/month and a 10% tax on the selling of local gold and cassiterite, but also garnering support in kind (known as mukongoro ya bosho) by populations.
- 37 Interviews #09, July 2019, Goma area, #12, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 38 Interviews #01, #04, #05, #07, #10, #13, #15, July 2019, Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area. Names of the individuals are on file with CRG.
- 39 Interviews #03, #06, July 2019 Walikale area, #14, July 2019, Goma area.
- 40 Interview #06, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 41 Interview #17, July 2019, Lubero area. Names of the individuals in question are on file with CRG.
- 42 Interviews #01, #02, #04, #05, #07, July 2019, Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area, #11, #12, #15, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 43 The FDLR unit in question was led by Colonel Jean Marie-Vianney Kanzeguhera “Sadiki Soleil” and also collaborated with APCLS led by Janvier Karairi. In their joint operations at the time, the FDLR retained all non-military goods, while the NDC kept arms and ammunition. Interviews #07, July 2019, Walikale area. See also interview #03, #15, July 2019, Walikale area, #04, July 2019, Masisi area, #09, July 2019, Goma area.
- 44 Examples include attacks in Bisie in August 2009 where over 30 soldiers were killed by FDLR, NDC and ex-85th brigade fighters; Mubi in August 2009 and April 2010; Biruwe, Ossokari, Ndjingala, Omate and Kilambo in June 2010; and Luvungi, Binyampuri, Kembe and Kibua in July and August 2010. Interviews #08, #16, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 45 In lack of systematic mapping exercises back then, this map is reconstructed from testimony and not established following CRG’s usual methodology.
- 46 Compiled and triangulated based on interviews #01–#15.
- 47 Interview #08, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 48 On the Luvungi rapes, and the disputed number of victims, see also <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/04/what-happened-in-luvungi/>
- 49 Interview #10, July 2019, Walikale area, as well as <http://www.afroamerica.net/AfricaGL/2011/11/21/fdlr-commander-colonel-sadiki-killed-by-mai-mai-cheka/index.html>
- 50 Interview #14, July 2019, Goma area.

For the Army, With the Army, Like the Army?

- 51 Interviews #10, #06, July 2019 Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area. Ntaganda allegedly invited Sheka to Goma to that end in 2011.
- 52 Interviews #01, #02, #03, #04, #05, #06, #07, #10, #11, July 2019, Walikale area, #14, July 2019, Goma area. In discussions with local civil society in Walikale, Guidon Shimiray claimed he was the first NDC officer to express concern at the FDLR collaboration.
- 53 Interviews #01, #03, #06, #07, #07, #10, July 2019, Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area. See also Stearns, Jason et al. (2013): Raia Mutomboki: The flawed peace process in the DRC and the birth of an armed franchise. Rift Valley Institute, London; Vogel, Christoph (2014): Contested statehood, security dilemmas and militia politics: The rise and transformation of Raia Mutomboki in eastern DRC. *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs* 2013/2014: 307–331.
- 54 A September 2014 document signed by Guidon laments Sheka's "deviationist behaviour with respect to [the NDC's] objectives".
- 55 Interviews #03, July 2019, Walikale area, #04, July 2019, Masisi area.
- 56 Interview #16, August 2019, Goma area.
- 57 Interviews #03, #06, #07, #15, July 2019, Walikale area, #09, July 2019, Goma area.
- 58 Interview #11, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 59 Compiled and triangulated based on interviews #01–#15, #76, #77, #78, #79.
- 60 Interviews #02, July 2019, Walikale area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 61 Interview #14, July 2019, Goma area.
- 62 Interview #15, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 63 Interviews #07, #12, #13, July 2019, Walikale area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area. Sheka's entry in the UN Security Council sanctions list can be seen at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1533/materials/summaries/individual/ntabo-ntaberi-sheka>
- 64 Interviews #01, #06, July 2019 Walikale area.
- 65 Interviews #06, #03, July 2019 Walikale area.
- 66 Interview #06, July 2019 Walikale area.
- 67 The split coincided with other local security dynamics, such as the arrest of Shebitembe, a Raia Mutomboki commander in Ntoto area, in 2015. Shebitembe had been Sheka's ally, while his local rival, the Raia Mutomboki faction led by Ngowa, collaborated with Guidon.
- 68 Another conundrum of armed mobilization happened further northeast and came to combine southern Lubero's armed politics with urban dynamics around Butembo as well as the security problems around Beni. Drawing from historical mobilization in Vurondo, the Corps du Christ militia emerged from a politico-religious sect based near Mont Carmel. Led by Baraka Lolwako, the son of Pokopoko, David Maranatha, this group managed to bind the FARDC into a series of important clashes from late 2016. For a brief time, Kakolele Bwambale, a veteran armed entrepreneur, also seemed to have overtaken the Corps du Christ group. Almost simultaneously, a joint-venture of Kilalo Katembo, a former 'fétisseur' of Mai-Mai Morgan in Mambasa area of Ituri, and Kitelemire Saperita, a veteran armed entrepreneur from Vurondo, led to the establishment of the UPLC, which attacked Butembo prison in December 2016. Both the 'western' Mazembe factions as well as Corps du Christ and the UPLC have had significant exchanges with Nande groups operating around Lake Edward, in particular those led by the late Charles Bokande, who had taken over the armed group led by Shetani and Jackson Muhukambuto, a former Mai-Mai who defected from FARDC after ten years in the army. See also section 4.3.
- 69 Initially Mai-Mai Lafontaine, later part of PARECO and then UPCP. See Stearns 2013.
- 70 See Hoffmann, Kasper & Vlassenroot, Koen (2014): Armed groups and the exercise of public authority: the cases of the Mayi-Mayi and Raya Mutomboki in Kalehe, South Kivu. *Peacebuilding* 2(2): 202–220.
- 71 Verweijen, Judith (2016): Stable Instability. Political Settlements and Armed Groups in the Congo. Rift Valley Institute, London.
- 72 Muchukiwa, Bosco (2006): Territoires ethniques et territoires étatiques. L'Harmattan, Paris.
- 73 See <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2015/02/26/why-was-un-sidelined-joint-drc-operation-against-rebels>
- 74 Pictures on file with CRG recovered from Lafontaine's mobile phone show a small group of armed men around him. They are dated April 2018.
- 75 Interview #33, January 2019, Lubero area.

- 76 Besides personal quarrels, there were diverging views on a planned biometric census of Rwandan refugees by the UNHCR.
- 77 See United Nations (2017): S/2017/672.Rev1, paras. 30–32.
- 78 Interview #68, January 2016, Lubero area.
- 79 Interview #16, August 2019, Goma area.
- 80 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 81 He was also accused of having participated in the December 2016 prison break of Butembo. Interview #47, January 2017, Beni area.
- 82 Interview #69, August 2016, Goma area.
- 83 Interviews #43, #44, September 2016, Rutshuru area.
- 84 Interview #45, September 2016, Goma area.
- 85 Lafontaine had also lost combatants to Hilaire Kombi, another armed group leader in the Nande community, in 2013 and 2014.
- 86 Interview #87, part b and c, October 2019, Goma area.
- 87 Yet, even the heavy-handed NDC–R grip lacked the brutality of previous phases, until late 2015 when FDLR units under so-called Gouverneur Kizito, who was infamous for extrajudicial executions and pervasive racketeering, governed the area.
- 88 After years, of FDLR interference, customary power was weak at the arrival of the NDC–R and during the emergence of the Mazembe militia. However, the Kyaghanda Yira institution both as a pivot of local political power but also its more mystical attributions, had retained credibility among Nand youth. Local Kyaghanda Yira sections consist of some type of pavillon and unites elders as well as customary leaders. Certain customary chiefs also had collaborated with the FDLR and faces later reprisal by Mazembe or NDC–R. Others, like Musesea in Musigha, would face revenge acts by the FDLR for having engaged with the NDC–R.
- 89 Interview #37, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 90 See United Nations (2016): S/2016/466, annex 59.
- 91 Certain Nande claim, invoking an old fairy tale, that the Konjo did not dare swimming across a river – probably the Semuliki – and settle on the western side because of crocodiles. This legend often comes up when Nande talk about their very own grit.
- 92 Interview #39, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 93 Interview #52, March 2017, Lubero area.
- 94 Interviews #67, #71, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 95 Interview #45, September 2016, Goma area.
- 96 Interview #70, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 97 Mbisi is from Batangi, Lubero, and joined his first rebellion with 15 years in 2000. He became Lafontaine’s right-hand man but was wounded by NDC–R in Pitakongo in the last days of the UPCP in 2015, then hospitalised in Goma. Recovered, he joined Mazembe, and delivered arms to Kabidon as ordered by Lafontaine – with the aim to fight NDC–R. While in Mbughavyinywa, Mbisi co-opted Justin Mwanzala of the Kyaghanda Yira Mighobwe (hostile to both the NDC–R and the FDLR) and helped Lafontaine to hide at Cascotte’s farm. Later, Cascotte was killed in a raid to search Lafontaine.
- 98 Interview #36, July 2019, Lubero area.
- 99 The Mazembe were initially often referred to as ‘Mai-Mai Kyaghanda Yira’. One customary leader in the area differentiated between the ‘real Mai-Mai’ who would consult them for any important decision, and others who would not. Interview #37, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 100 Interview #39, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 101 Interviews #41, #71, #35, July 2019, Lubero area.
- 102 Interviews #41, #71, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 103 A child soldier in charge of carrying and applying traditional charms and potions to the combatants. Interviews #47, January 2017, Beni area, #37, August 2019, Lubero area.

For the Army, With the Army, Like the Army?

- 104 Interview notes shared by a Congolese researcher on file with Congo Research Group.
- 105 This box is based on previous research carried out by Congo Research Group.
- 106 Interviews #35, #37, July 2019, Lubero area, #46, September 2016, Goma area.
- 107 Interview #47, January 2017, Beni area.
- 108 Interview #72, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 109 Interviews #72, #35, July 2019, Lubero area.
- 110 Interview #35, July 2019, Lubero area.
- 111 Interviews #72, August 2019, #33, January 2019, Lubero area.
- 112 Interview #37, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 113 Interview #33, January 2019, Lubero area.
- 114 Interview #72, August 2019, Lubero area, #34, February 2019, Lubero area, #40, April 2019, Lubero area.
- 115 Interview #40, April 2019, Lubero area.
- 116 Other FARDC are reportedly angry at NDC-R that they hold checkpoints while local FARDC are not allowed. Interview #53, May 2019, Goma area.
- 117 Interview #62, August 2019, Goma area. This testimony is confirmed by #64, August 2019, Masisi area. Both sources are former CMC who have been trained by the FDLR and participated in the CMC's short-lived alliance with NDC-R against the CNRD in December 2018.
- 118 Including in Pinga, Mweso, Busumba, Kalengera, Kirumba, Mpati, and Kitchanga. Interview #81, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 119 Interviews #11, July 2019, Walikale area, see also #60, July 2019, Goma area.
- 120 Interview #55, May 2019, Goma area. Gahizi has also been seen in a meeting with Mapenzi Likuwe at Hotel Nyarusumba in Kitchanga on 27 December 2018. Interview #86, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 121 The 3307th, 813th and 804th regiments were involved in operations in Buleusa. Since November 2018, there have been several meetings in Gisenyi, involving Rwandan and Congolese intelligence. Interviews #32, August 2019, Lubero area, #48, January 2017, Goma area.
- 122 Interviews #63, August 2019, Goma area, #80, #81, #82, September 2019, Masisi area. See also S/2019/469, paras. 58–62. According to these sources, this happened in Kahungu in November 2018, Nyabiondo in January 2019, Ngingwe in May 2019, Lushebere, Bumbasha in July 2019, Lukweti, Kyahemba, Mwe Kanyangohe, and Ibuga in August 2019).
- 123 Interview #84, September 2019, Masisi area. See also S/2019/469, paras. 58–62.
- 124 Kijenga has already played a role in supporting the NDC when he was commander of a military sub-sector in Walikale. Interview #04, July 2019, Masisi area, see also interviews #16, August 2019, Goma area, #07, July 2019, Walikale area, #60, July 2019, Goma area.
- 125 Interview #86, September 2019, Masisi area. Interview #83, September 2019, Masisi area, dated this meeting in March 2019.
- 126 Interviews #74, #77, #79, #81, #83, #85, #86, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 127 Video materials on file with Congo Research Group.
- 128 Interview #78, August 2019, Masisi area.
- 129 See S/2019/469, paras. 58–62. See also United Nations (2009): S/2009/603, para. 46. Interviews #74, #76, #79, #81, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 130 21 August 2018 in Kalembe; December 2018 and January 2019 in several villages; 14 April 2019 in Kalembe, 1 May 2019 and 22 May 2019 in Karto, 3 May 2019 in Muhongozi. Interviews #74, #75, #77, #79, #80, #83, #85, September 2019, Masisi area. See also S/2019/469, paras. 58–62.
- 131 Interview #60, July 2019, Goma area.
- 132 Interviews #73, #81, #85, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 133 Interviews #75, #77, #78, #79, #84, September 2019, Masisi area.

- 134 Interview #14, July 2019, Goma area.
- 135 Interview #01, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 136 Interview #56, June 2019, Goma area.
- 137 Interview #53, May 2019, Goma area. Specific names are on file with CRG.
- 138 Interviews #53, May 2019, Goma area, #80, #83, September 2019, Masisi area. The combatants came from the factions of Batachoka, Kavumbi, Apollo/Bohoza and Mudogo.
- 139 Interview #02, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 140 Interviews #65, August 2019, Masisi area, #07, July 2019, Walikale area, #56, June 2019, Goma area.
- 141 Most notably, local FARDC commanders based in Masisi supported Mapenzi’s early operations in Lukweti, Kahira, Kilambo and Kalungu during August to December 2018, before Mapenzi effectively joined the NDC–R. See interview #87, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 142 Interview #16, August 2019, Goma area.
- 143 Interviews #74, #75, #76, #77, #78, #79, September 2019, Masisi area, #56, June 2019, Goma area.
- 144 Interview #04, July 2019, Masisi area
- 145 Interview #58, June 2019, Masisi area, see also interview #89, January 2020, Goma area.
- 146 This reportedly included the dismantled Nyatura factions of Bohoza, Kasongo and Batachoka. Interviews #61, June 2019, Goma area, #60, June 2019, Masisi area, #74, #76, #81, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 147 Interview #14, July 2019, Goma area.
- 148 Interviews #53, May 2019, Goma area, #60, July 2019, Goma area, #16, August 2019, Goma area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 149 Domi had been part of PARECO and subsequent Nyatura factions and managed to consolidate the Nyatura groups in southern Bwito area after his previous commanders Muchoma and Bapfakururimi fell out around 2013. John Love is a trained IT technician from Nyanzale. After serving roughly 2–3 years with the FDLR, running their IT, John Love went on to create his own Nyatura faction. Based out of Muriki (east of Nyanzale town and close to the FDLR’s main positions), John Love’s units initially bore the brunt of fighting against the NDC–R and Mazembe units in 2016 and 2017 in northern Bwito. It then collaborated briefly with the NDC–R against the CNRD in early 2019 before clashing again with them, resulting in John Love’s death.
- 150 The NDC–R is attractive for its share of the spoils (jeton income, mining income and monopoly dividends), providing roundabout 100,000–150,000 FC/month to officers and 10,000–50,000 FC/month to rank-and-file. Interviews #16, August 2019, Goma area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 151 Interview #84, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 152 Interview #87, September 2019, Goma area.
- 153 Interview #88, January 2020, Masisi area.
- 154 CRG repeatedly spoke to over five sources about the character and shape of the joint operations, Officials of the concerned armies have publicly denied the operations but have been less categorical in conversations off the record. See also <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5539> and <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5838>
- 155 Interview #15, July 2019, Walikale area.
- 156 Two of the authors of this report spoke several times to several senior FARDC officers between 2015 and 2018 on these dynamics.
- 157 A high-ranking FARDC officer in 2017.
- 158 Interview #66, August 2019, Masisi area.
- 159 Interview #87, January 2020, Masisi area.
- 160 This confrontation is odd in the context of otherwise neat collaboration. Two FARDC regiments (3402nd and 3301st) engaged NDC–R positions managed by Kamutoto, Bafosse, Nguba and Tondeuze in Kasugho and, a week later, Kagheri. Located in southern Lubero’s ‘gold belt’, these two localities are key pivots of local trade and situated at key roads to reach more remote mines. It therefore appears likely that the otherwise cordial relations have soured locally in a row over sharing the spoils, based on a deal with Colonel Bakavu and Deo Bafosse that dated back from 2017 when the NDC–R bribed Bakavu. Days after the Kagheri clashes, an FARDC delegation led by General Amisi arrived in the Kivus and a heated discussion occurred between General Mbangi and Amisi, the latter challenging Mbangi that Kinshasa had never authorised operations against the NDC–R. Allegedly, the NDC–R

For the Army, With the Army, Like the Army?

is also capable to run its banking operations freely in major FARDC-controlled towns, including in Rwanda. Interviews #54, May 2019, Goma area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area, #07, July 2019, Walikale area.

161 Interviews #42, September 2016, Goma area, #49, January 2017, Goma area.

162 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.

163 There were initial plans to divide APCLS via Colonel Tito but he refused. Later on, several North Kivu politicians approached Mapenzi and Poyo (who is a brother-in-law of Janvier). Interviews #60, June 2019, Masisi area, #81, #83, September 2019, Masisi area.

164 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2017): Military expenditure database, at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>

165 Interviews #14, July 2019, Goma area, #74, September 2019, Masisi area.

166 Interviews #74, #75, #76, September 2019, Masisi area.

167 Interview #01, July 2019, Walikale area.

168 Stearns, Jason (2013): From CNDP to M23. The evolution of an armed movement in eastern Congo. Rift Valley Institute, London.

169 Interview #02, July 2019, Walikale area

170 Interview #02, July 2019, Walikale area

171 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area

172 Interview #30, August 2019, Lubero area.

173 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.

174 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.

175 On 13 October 2019, the civil society secretary of Bunyatenge molested a woman. As the local chief sent for detaining the man, he resisted. Hence the chief requested help from NDC-R that sent troops to arrest him, requesting 200 USD for his release

176 Interviews #31, #32, August 2019, Lubero area

177 Interview #07, July 2019, Walikale area, Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area. 10,000 FC for soldiers, up to 50,000 FC for most commanders, and 200,000 FC for Guidon himself according to confidential UN documents on file with Congo Research Group

178 Interviews #73, #74, #78, #79, #80, #81, September 2019, Masisi area.

179 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.

180 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.

181 Interview #81, September 2019, Masisi area.

182 Interview #22, July 2019, Lubero area.

183 United Nations (2011): S/2011/738, paras. 301 and 556; United Nations (2017): S/2017/672.Rev1, paras. 133–134 and 138–142.

184 Interviews #73, #74, #75, #76, #80, #81, September 2019, Masisi area.

185 Interview #73, September 2019, Masisi area.

186 Interviews #32, August 2019, Lubero area, #87, September 2019, Goma area, #74, September 2019, Masisi area.

187 Interview #87, September 2019, Goma area.

188 Interviews #73, #74, #75, #76, #80, #81, September 2019, Masisi area.

189 Interviews #18, July 2019, Lubero area, #74, September 2019, Masisi area.

190 Irameso, Munjili, Mungwe, Mapera, Mpama, Matebe, Buroko, Oninga, Mafuchi, Kinshimba, Bukatcha, Mikaza, Kingua, Kifu, Bukubuku and Kasua. A good share of these mines is formally part of a larger concession bundle held by Canadian miner Loncor Resources. In order to access their southern Lubero concessions, the roads connecting Miriki and Bunyatenge are strategic, and for years were under control by the FDLR and Lafontaine.

191 Interview #16, August 2019, Walikale area.

192 See <https://www.ipisresearch.be/mapping/webmapping/drcongo/v6/>

193 Interview #25, July 2019, Lubero area.

194 Interviews #19, #21, July 2019, Lubero area, #32, August 2019, Lubero area.

195 Confidential UN report on NDC-R, 2017, on file with CRG.

- 196 Interview #23, July 2019, Lubero area.
- 197 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 198 Interview #32, August 2019, Lubero area.
- 199 Interviews #73, #75, #78, #79, #81, #83, #86, September 2019, Masisi area.
- 200 Interviews #32, August 2019, Lubero area, #87, September 2019, Goma area.
- 201 See Kivu Security Tracker (2020): “Balkanization,” Regional Tensions or State Weakness: The Real Threats to Stability in the Kivus (blog), at <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/balkanization-regional-tensions-or-state-weakness-the-real-threats-to-stability-in-the-kivus/>
- 202 Congo Research Group (2019): Congo Forgotten. The Numbers Behind Africa’s Longest Humanitarian Crisis. New York University, New York.
- 203 Over the past 20 years, examples include the FDLR, several smaller and larger Mai-Mai groups but also Nyatura factions and others.
- 204 Comaroff, John & Comaroff, Jean (2006): Introduction, in: Ibid (eds.) Law and Disorder in the Postcolony. University of Chicago Press: 1–56.



The Congo Research Group (CRG) is an independent, non-profit research project dedicated to understanding the violence that affects millions of Congolese. We carry out rigorous research on different aspects of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All of our research is informed by deep historical and social knowledge of the problem at hand. We are based at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University.

All of our publications, blogs and podcasts are available at

www.congoresearchgroup.org and www.gecongo.org

 GEC_CRG

www.congoresearchgroup.org

www.cic.nyu.edu

Center on International Cooperation

726 Broadway, Suite 543

NY 10003, New York