

**High-level Rwandan military officers tied to Congo mutiny**  
**By Colum Lynch, Foreign Policy**  
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Rwandan Defense Minister James Kabarebe and other top Rwandan military officers played a central role in organizing, funding, and arming mutineers in the army of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), according to a report by the U.N. Group of Experts.

The U.N. panel also charged that Kabarebe's personal assistant, Celestin Senkoko, and other Rwandan officers mounted a "wide-ranging" effort to convince Congolese businessmen, politicians, and former rebels that had joined the ranks of the Congolese army to join the so-called M23 mutiny with the aim of prosecuting "a new war to obtain a secession of both Kivus," the eastern Congolese provinces that share ethnic and historical ties to Rwanda.

The Rwandan government issued a statement denying the allegations contained in the report, which was obtained by Turtle Bay, but which has not yet been made public. "This is a one-sided preliminary document based on partial findings and is still subject to verification," it stated.

"The UN Group of Experts has accepted our invitation to Kigali to do what should have been done before; carry out relevant consultations and obtain the facts. We intend to provide factual evidence that the charges against Rwanda are false. These, as well as Rwanda's own allegations, will hopefully be reflected in the final UN report due in November."

The U.N. report -- technically an annex to a separate U.N. report on enforcement of the U.N. embargo in eastern Congo -- focuses on the former Congolese rebel movement, known as the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), that was integrated into the Congolese military in 2009, and which formed the core of a Rwandan-backed mutiny within the ranks of the Congolese army.

Laurent Nkunda, the founder of the movement; Bosco Ntaganda, an accused war criminal who led defectors; and Col. Sultani Makenga, another former rebel who defected from the army, form the core leadership of the M23 mutiny. But the U.N. report -- excerpts of which were published by Turtle Bay last night -- claims that the Congolese mutineers coordinated their mutiny with top Rwandan leaders. Here's a new selection of previously unpublished excerpts that name Rwanda's alleged plotters.

"Rwandan officials have also been directly involved in the mobilization of political leaders and financial backers for M23. Based on interviews conducted with M23 members, ex-CNDP officers and politicians, intelligence officers, FARDC [Congolese Army] senior commanders, the Group [of Experts] has established that Rwandan officials have made extensive telephone calls and organized a series of meetings with Congolese politicians and businessmen to promote and rally support for M23.

Throughout the Group's investigations, it has systematically gathered testimonies from former M23 combatants, M23 collaborators, ex-RDF [Rwandan Defense Forces] officers, Congolese intelligence, FARDC commanders, and politicians which affirm the direct involvement in the support to M23 from senior levels of the Rwandan government.

a) General Jacques Nziza, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defense, supervises all military, financial, and logistic support as well as mobilization activities related to M23. He has recently been deployed to Ruhengeri and Gisenyi to coordinate M23 assistance and recruitment.

b) General James Kabarebe, the Rwandan Minister of Defense, with the support of his personal secretary Captain Celestin Senkoko, also is a central figure in recruitment and mobilizing political and military support to M23. Kabarebe has often been in direct contact with M23 members on the ground to coordinate military activities.

c) General Charles Kayonga, the RDF Chief of Staff manages the overall military support to M23. Kayonga is frequently in communications with Makenga and oversaw the transfer of Makenga's troops and weapons through Rwanda.

d) The military support on the ground has been channeled by General Emmanuel Ruvusha, RDF Division commander based in Gisenyi, as well as General Alexi Kagame, RDF Division commander based at Ruhengeru, Both facilitate recruitment of civilians and demobilized soldiers to M23 as well as coordinating RDF reinforcements in Runyoni with M23 commanders.

e) Colonel Jomba Gakumba, a native of North Kivu, who used to be an RDF instructor at the Rwandan Military Academy at Gako, was redeployed to Ruhengeri since the creation of M23, where he has been in charge of commanding locally military operations in support of M23."

Ex-RDF officers, politicians, M23 collaborators also informed the Group that Ntaganda and Makenga have been regularly crossing the border into Rwanda to carrying meetings with any of the above mentioned senior RDF officers at Kinigi, on several occasions. Those same sources also stated that former CNDP chairman General Laurent Nkunda, officially under house arrest by the Rwandan government since January 2009, often comes from Kigali to participate in these meetings.

Rwanda's ambassador the African Union, Joseph Nsengimana, vigorously denied the allegations in a June 21 statement to the African Union Peace and Security Committee. "I want to state categorically that Rwanda is neither a cause nor an enabler of the ongoing crisis in the DRC. To the contrary, a pattern of undisputable facts indicate that Rwanda cannot be an obstacle but a strong partner for peace in the DRC," he said in the statement, which was attached to the report.

"Direct high-level engagement between Rwanda and the DRC diplomatic and defense officials have been at the forefront of Rwanda's efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the worrying situation in the DRC since the beginning of the current rebellion in DRC in April 2012."

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