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NEWS

DR Congo: European mercenaries surrender to M23, get safe passage through Rwanda



Close to 300 European mercenaries surrendered to M23 rebels and were allowed to cross into Rwanda before they were facilitated to take flights to their countries on Wednesday, January 29. PHOTOS BY EMMANUEL DUSHIMIMANA



Edwin Ashimwe

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

A total of 288 European mercenaries who had been fighting alongside the Congolese army coalition (FARDC) arrived in Rwanda on Wednesday afternoon.

The group, which comprises Romanian mercenaries, arrived in Rubavu District after being defeated and disarmed in Goma, the eastern DR Congo city that was captured earlier this week by M23 rebels.

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Upon arrival at La Corniche One Stop Border Post, the Rwandan authorities processed the group before escorting them by bus to Kigali International Airport, where they will be flown back to their country in Eastern Europe.

Public buses, accompanied by security convoys were seen transporting the group to Kigali at around 2:00 PM.

The mercenaries who are believed to be totaling over 2000, have been fighting alongside the Congolese government forces, FARDC and a coalition of other groups, including FDLR, the militia group formed by perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

The development is part of a series of events that are unfolding following the capture of Goma city.

On Monday and Tuesday this week, Rwandan authorities received thousands of people, most of them employed by the United Nations in Goma.

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They were received in the border district of Rubavu in western Rwanda, before being escorted to Kigali Pele Stadium where they were all processed.

Later on Tuesday, Rwanda's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ernest Rwamucyo, stressed the need to urgently neutralize the genocidal FDLR which is fighting alongside the Congolese army.

Rwamucyo issued the call while addressing a UN Security Council briefing on the security situation in the conflict-battered DR Congo.

FDLR, or the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, is a UN-sanctioned terrorist organization formed by the remnants of the former Rwandan army and other extremist groups linked to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda which claimed the lives of more than a million people.

At the same time, Rwanda received hundreds of militia members and FARDC troops who fled the fighting as M23 marched on Goma. They were disarmed and treated under international law, and those who are sick are being treated.

The conflict escalated last week after the rebels captured new territory, followed by the killing of North Kivu's Military Governor Peter Cirimwami, and threatened to march on Goma.

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The government coalition has since suffered more losses, including the deaths of the FDLR top commander 'Maj Gen' Pacifique Ntawunguka, alias Omega, and soldiers of the South Africa-led SADC mission and the UN mission.

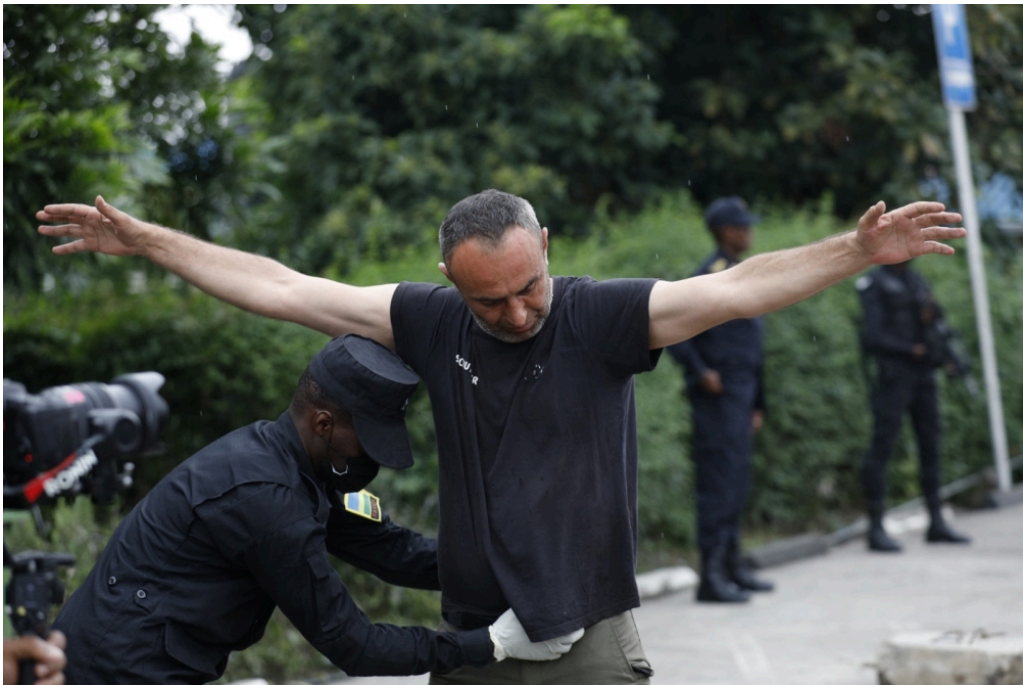
In recent weeks, the M23 captured the towns of Minova, in South Kivu, and Masisi, in North Kivu.

The rebels demand direct peace talks with the Congolese government, which has ruled out any possibility of talks with the rebels, calling them a terrorist movement. Regional initiatives have failed to end the war politically, with the Congolese government pursuing a military solution.



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