



Who's pulling the strings in the DR Congo crisis?



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The DR Congo is so vast - two-thirds the size of Western Europe - that it is a member of both the East and Southern African blocs. The two regional groupings are joining forces to hold an emergency summit on Saturday to try and end the fighting. So, who are the main players and what do they want?

First and foremost is the Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi. He wants to regain territory lost to the rebels, including the largest eastern town of Goma, and to prevent them from seizing more. He blames Rwandan leader Paul Kagame for backing the M23 with weapons and troops, accusing Kigali of invading Congolese territory with the aim of looting the country's mineral wealth and orchestrating regime change.

The case that Rwanda is supporting the M23 offensive is based on evidence presented in a UN report and broadly accepted by many African and Western governments, who have demanded that Kagame withdraw his forces. However, to Tshisekedi's frustration, none have matched their rhetoric with action and responded to Kinshasa's calls for sanctions and other tough measures. The Congolese leader is also worried about keeping his seat.

"I think the political survival of his government is at stake," said Jason Stearns, a former UN investigator in DR Congo and currently a professor at Simon Fraser University. There is concern that the M23 campaign might embolden internal opposition forces or trigger a coup in his army, which has a reputation for being fragmented and undermined by corruption. Who's pulling the strings in the DR Congo. soldiers in the captured city of Goma, in eastern DR Congo. AFP The Rwandan-backed M23 group has said they want to liberate DR Congo

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Democratic Republic of Congo - 'The besieged giant' Getty Images President of DR Congo Félix Tshisekedi wearing a light grey suit and a blue tie. Getty Images DR Congo President Félix Tshisekedi says his country has been invaded. First and foremost is the Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi. He wants to regain territory lost to the rebels, including the largest eastern town of Goma, and to prevent them from seizing more.

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What's the fighting in DR Congo all about? DR Congo's failed gamble on Romanian mercenaries Who is DR Congo's President Félix Tshisekedi? Rwanda - 'The elusive player' Reuters A picture of President Paul Kagame against a dark blue background Reuters Rwanda's President Paul Kagame says he is fighting genocidal militias this conflict, Rwanda's long-time leader Kagame is the centre of attention, but he's practised at deflecting it. He has a long history of military intervention inside DR Congo linked to the aftermath of the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

Rwanda does not admit to providing military support to the M23, but repeatedly insists it will do anything necessary to defend itself. Kagame maintains that Rwanda's priority is to destroy an armed group formed by the Hutu genocide perpetrators, who massacred Rwandan Tutsis and then fled to what is now eastern DR Congo.

He has accused DR Congo's army of joining forces with them and others to not only slaughter Congolese Tutsis - who the M23 claims to be fighting to protect - but to threaten Rwanda. At a diplomatic level, Rwanda wants confirmation of its narrative – that the conflict is a Congolese problem, and Kigali is simply defending its borders against the spill-over of a civil war.

It's demanding that Kinshasa negotiate directly with the M23, which it refuses to do. But what it's really after, said Mr Stearns, is "to maintain a sphere of influence in the eastern DR Congo"

