

Peace Process in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Issues for Congress

December 2, 2025

On [December 4](#), President Trump is slated to host President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda's President Paul Kagame in Washington, DC to highlight a [U.S.-mediated peace accord](#) the two countries signed in June. The Congolese and Rwandan leaders are also expected to sign a "[regional economic integration framework](#)" (REIF)—required under the accord—and [bilateral economic agreements](#) with the United States.

The meeting comes after the DRC government and the [Rwandan-backed](#) March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group [signed a framework](#) for a future peace deal on November 15, 2025. The framework, mediated by Qatar with U.S. support, commits to a cessation of hostilities but leaves substantive issues to be negotiated. These include humanitarian access, governance reforms, security arrangements, identity and citizenship issues, the return of displaced populations, socioeconomic recovery, and justice, truth, and reconciliation processes.

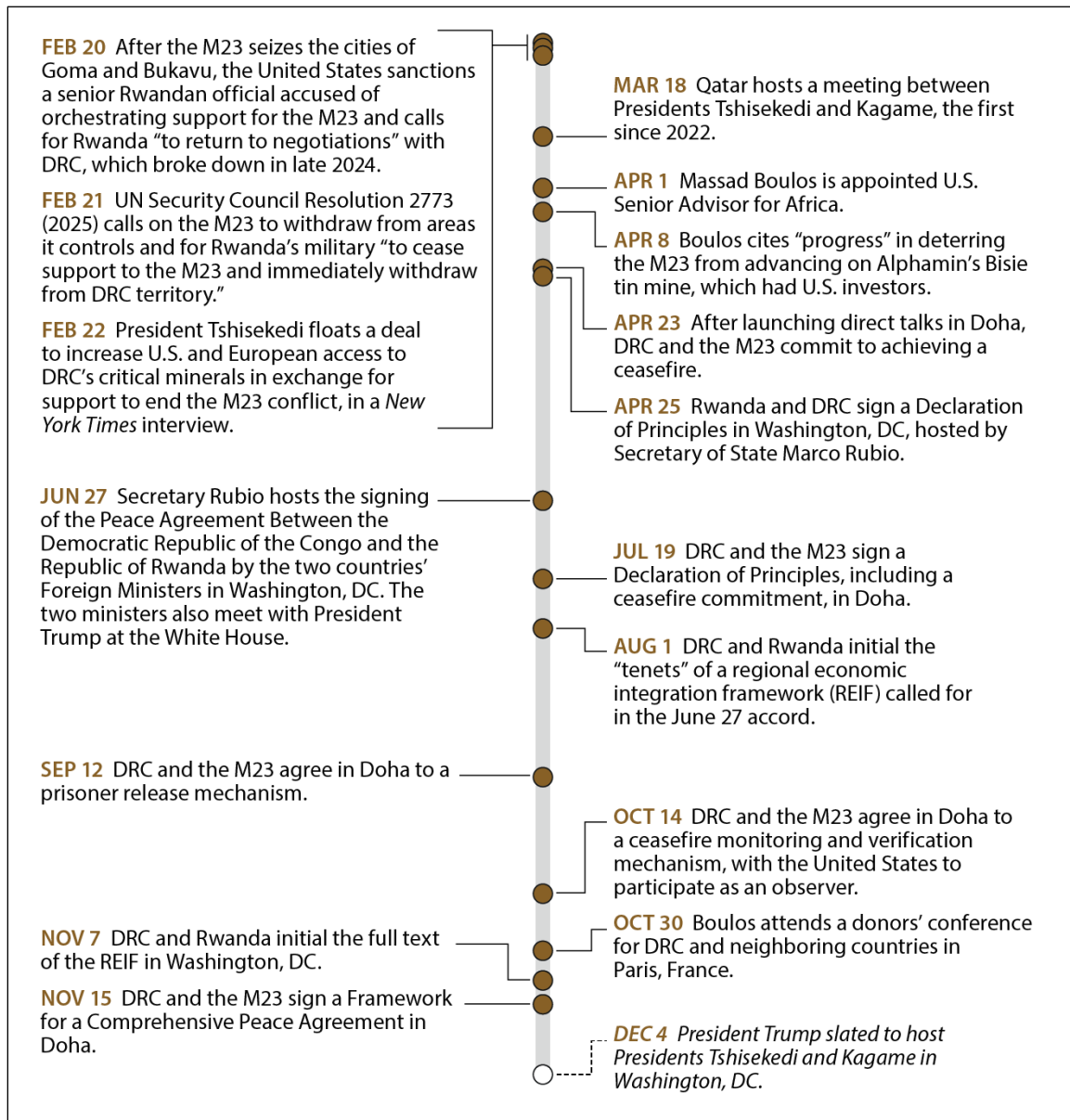
The Trump Administration has devoted high-level attention to addressing the M23 conflict (**Figure 1**), while pursuing access to the region's [critical minerals](#). U.S. Senior Advisor on Africa Massad Boulos has referred to a final DRC-M23 accord as "[the last piece of the puzzle](#)" in a complex, multitrack peace process. Clashes have continued since November 15, and the M23 has reportedly [expanded its territory](#).

The M23, which says it is [fighting](#) for the rights of DRC's minority ethnic Tutsis, first staged a rebellion in the early 2010s. After reemerging in 2021, it has seized sizable territory, including the two largest cities in eastern DRC, Goma and Bukavu (**Figure 2**). The latest in a [series of Rwandan-backed rebellions](#), the M23 conflict has exacerbated a long-running [humanitarian crisis](#) in eastern DRC.

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Figure I. Trump Administration Engagement in the Peace Process (2025): Selected Events

Source: CRS graphic, based on U.S. government statements, UN documents, and news reports.

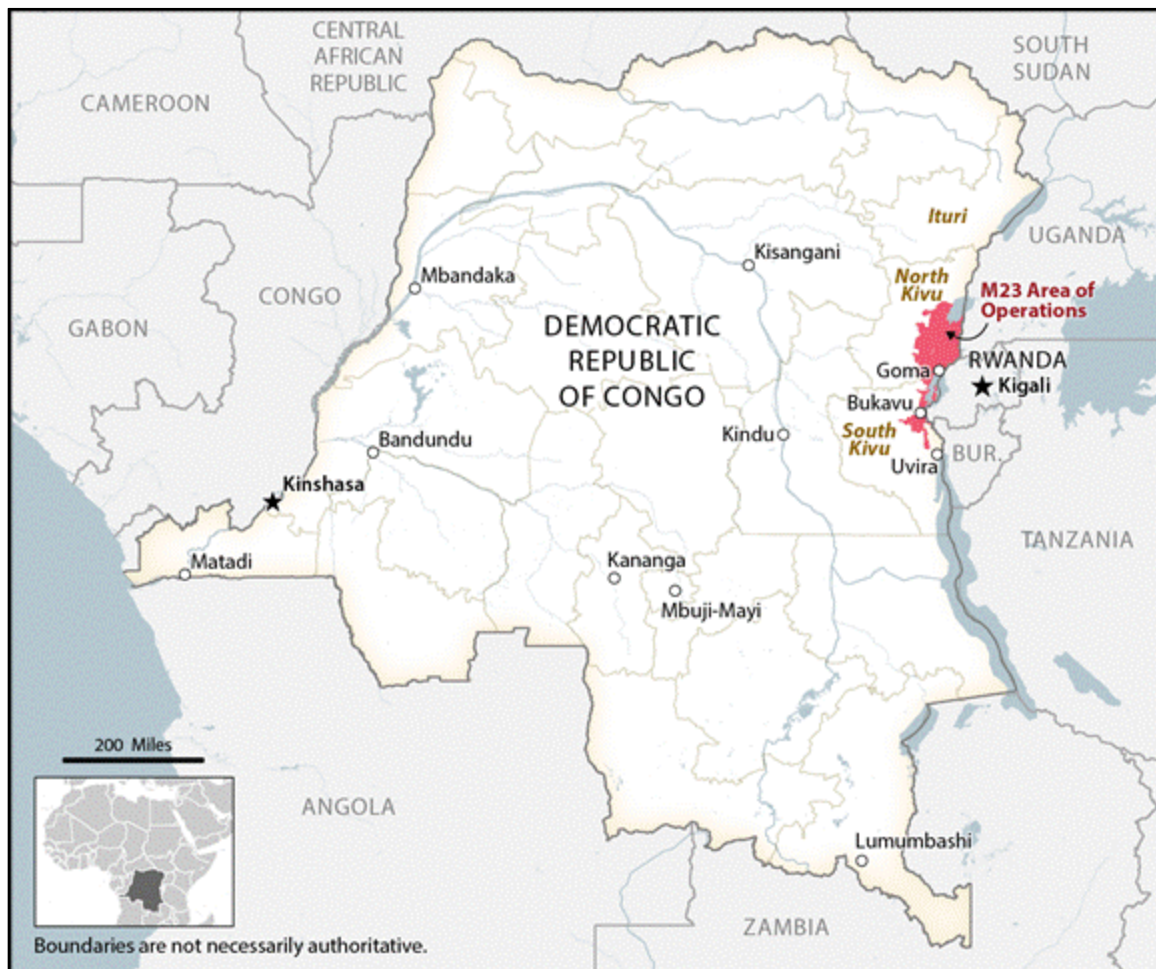
Key Issues in the Peace Process

Rwandan Military Presence. Rwanda has reportedly deployed [thousands](#) of troops to eastern DRC to support the M23. UN sanctions investigators [assess](#) that M23 expansion has “secured the access of Rwanda to mineral-rich territories and fertile land” and increased Rwanda’s influence. President Kagame has [denied](#) supporting the M23 and [sidestepped](#) accusations of military involvement, [blaming](#) Congolese collusion with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—a Rwandan-origin armed group in DRC—and [mistreatment of Tutsis](#) for the conflict. The DRC-Rwanda peace agreement [endorses](#) a “concept of operations” linking Rwandan military disengagement to DRC’s “neutralization” of the FDLR.

The **FDLR** was founded by perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in which ethnic Hutu extremists sought to exterminate Rwanda's Tutsi minority. Rwanda has [identified](#) the FDLR and its "[genocide ideology](#)" as national security concerns. The UN estimates that the group has [2,000 combatants](#), although its size and capacity are [disputed](#). The group is under [U.S.](#) and [UN](#) sanctions.

M23 Territorial Administration and Status. Although the November 15 framework commits to the "restoration of state authority," whether or how the M23 might demobilize or cede territory remains in question. The group [reportedly comprised](#) 6,000-10,000 combatants as of mid-2025 and has boasted [thousands more recruits](#) since then. The M23's "[Congo River Alliance](#)" (AFC) maintains "[parallel government](#)" institutions in areas it controls. The M23 is under [U.S.](#) and [UN sanctions](#); the United States has also [sanctioned the AFC](#).

Figure 2. M23 Approximate Area of Operations



Source: CRS graphic, with data from the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute (as of November 21, 2025). Base map from U.S. State Department and ESRI.

Regional Economic Integration. Implementing economic integration is likely to require reforms and political will. Energy, infrastructure, and mineral supply chains have been identified as [priority areas](#) for cooperation, among others. The REIF—which could formalize the trade of DRC minerals through Rwanda—has come under [criticism](#) in DRC as "rewarding" Rwandan "aggression."

Other Challenges

Other Armed Groups. Dozens of other armed groups are not party to current talks, including groups allied with the [M23](#) and [DRC military](#), [Burundian-origin rebels](#), and an [Islamic State affiliate](#). Durable security may be unlikely absent broader stabilization efforts.

Other Foreign Troops. [Uganda and Burundi](#) have deployed troops to help counter the M23 and other armed groups, at Kinshasa's request. Uganda has also reportedly [provided some support to the M23](#). Both countries have complex relations with Rwanda. Neither is a party to agreements brokered to date. (A Southern African regional force [withdrew](#) in mid-2025.)

Inter-Congolese Dialogue. President Tshisekedi was reelected to a second term in 2023 but faces domestic opposition, including over his handling of the war. The government has prosecuted some opposition figures, including former President [Joseph Kabila](#), for allegedly colluding with the M23. Congolese religious leaders have called for [national dialogue](#), possibly including rebel and opposition groups. [Regional mediators](#) could also play a role in convening talks.

Issues for Congress

U.S. Deliverables. Congress may authorize, appropriate, and oversee U.S. resources to support the peace process and facilitate commercial investment. The Administration has indicated that U.S. investment will [support the REIF](#) and has [previewed](#) U.S. government-to-government economic agreements with DRC and Rwanda. The DRC-M23 framework also refers to anticipated support from “international partners” for implementation. The Administration's [foreign assistance review and dissolution of USAID](#) disrupted long-running programs in DRC. The U.S. [International Development Finance Corporation \(DFC\)](#) and [Export-Import Bank](#) may support investment.

Diplomatic Staffing. Congress may oversee U.S. diplomatic engagement, including staffing and other resources, amid ongoing challenges in the peace process. Members may consider the appropriate level of prioritization given competing crises and needs.

Sanctions. The United States maintains sanctions on [Rwandan](#) and [Congolese](#) officials accused of supporting the M23 and FDLR, on those groups and key figures in them, and on [entities](#) and [individuals](#) implicated in mineral smuggling. Security assistance for Rwanda is restricted under the [Child Soldiers Prevention Act](#) (Title IV of P.L. 110-457) due to [Rwandan support for the M23](#). Congress may consider tools to deter delays or spoilers, and may oversee any decisions to grant sanctions relief as part of the peace process.

UN Peacekeeping Operation in DRC (MONUSCO). Under the U.S.-mediated [June agreement](#), DRC and Rwanda committed to enable activities by MONUSCO, which is also expected to help [monitor](#) a DRC-M23 ceasefire. The Administration has [pledged](#) funds for MONUSCO, while [cutting U.S. funding for UN peacekeeping](#) overall. MONUSCO's mandate is up for renewal on December 20. Congress may authorize, appropriate, and oversee funds for MONUSCO, and may oversee the U.S. approach to MONUSCO's mandate negotiations in the UN Security Council.

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