

# MRRRC

Le Mouvement pour la Renaissance  
et la Reconstruction du Congo

## **Kabila decision to embrace Rwanda angers Congolese**

AFP

23 jan. 09 - 10.40h

**KINSHASA (AFP) — President Joseph Kabila's decision to allow Rwandan troops into eastern DR Congo for a joint military operation to rid the region of armed militias has sparked anger and apprehension across the country.**

The decision incensed lower house speaker Vital Kamerhe, who said the president had not informed parliament of the "grave" decision to allow troops associated with past atrocities back into the country.

Kamerhe said he was concerned about the "morale of the Congolese populations who have just emerged from a traumatic time at the hands of the Rwandans," who twice invaded its much bigger neighbour in the 1990s and backed local rebels.

"It's very difficult to understand Kabila's exact motives, but what's sure is that he is taking an enormous political risk," said a diplomat based in Kinshasa.

The joint operation is ostensibly to eradicate a Rwandan Hutu militia that have been at the heart of regional unrest for over a decade, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

It is the second time in months that Kabila, whose army proved powerless in the face of a rebel assault in eastern Congo in October, has resorted to neighbouring states to oust armed groups sheltering in the region.

In December, his forces, along with those of Uganda and Sudan, launched a three-pronged assault on Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army hideouts in the extreme northeast, allowing thousands of Ugandan troops into Orientale province.

Now, just two days into the operation with Rwanda, the UN, aid groups and civilians have all expressed concerns it could take a turn for the worse, pointing to LRA reprisals which the UN says has killed hundreds of unprotected civilians in the remote border region.

"If the Rwandans stay more than 15 days, or if there are massacres of civilians, it will be catastrophic for him (Kabila)," the diplomat said, adding that the president needed "an information campaign" to quell public concerns.

"He won't get them to swallow it (the operation) just like that," he said.

Dealing with Rwanda is risky for several reasons.

Kigali has supported three different rebellions in its giant neighbour since 1996, the first of which overthrew long time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Memories are still fresh in eastern Congo of atrocities linked to the Rwandan forces, ethnically different from the local population.

But the move may yet be considered a masterstroke by Kabila, who came to power in landmark elections in 2006.

The deal agreed in December effectively provides mutual assistance in ridding each other of dangerous and pernicious rebel movements, whose presence in mineral-rich eastern Congo has dogged international peace efforts for years.

In exchange for its cooperation in the mission to eradicate the FDLR, Kinshasa has won Kigali's support for the dismantling of the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) movement led by renegade general Laurent Nkunda, a Tutsi close to the Rwandan regime.

"The speed of the turnaround in alliances is very impressive," the diplomat said.

A United Nations source said Kabila's main objective was "the removal of Nkunda and re-taking his headquarters" near Rutshuru.

The source said that once the military operation is terminated, **the government could create a new administrative entity for ethnic Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi, living in Congo.**

The resulting buffer zone would give Kigali an unprecedented degree of security on its western border, as well as boost the mineral and crop-rich province.

The UN source agreed Kabila was taking a big risk. "He needs the head of Laurent Nkunda to appease public opinion, and a Congolese flag flying in Rutshuru instead of the CNDP one."

Source: <http://www.monuc.org/news.aspx?newsID=19949>