



Democratic Republic of the Congo – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 January 2013

Information on an attack on the village of Saki by the army or rebels between October 2012 and January 2013

Numerous sources reported fighting between Congolese government forces and the M23 rebel group in the town of Sake, near Goma, in November 2012.

An Associated Press report states:

“Pressing ahead with their seizure of cities in mineral-rich eastern Congo, the M23 rebels said Wednesday they are fighting to control all of this sprawling country and to topple President Joseph Kabila's government. Following their capture of the strategic city of Goma a day earlier, the rebels took the nearby town of Sake on Wednesday as they moved toward the provincial capital of Bukavu.” (Associated Press (21 November 2012) *M23 rebels vow to take Congo, as troops defect*)

This report also states:

“Strewn with bodies, burned out vehicles and abandoned tanks, the road between Goma and Sake showed evidence of Tuesday's fighting. M23 soldiers in vehicles patrolled the streets of Sake, 27 kilometers (17 miles) south of Goma. As in Goma, most residents accepted the rebels' presence.” (ibid)

A BBC News report states:

“Simone Schindwein, a reporter for the German newspaper TAZ, who is now in Sake - the town 27km outside Goma which has also fallen to the rebels - says she saw the bodies of several Congolese soldiers on the way there, an abandoned tank and bombs and grenades lying around.” (BBC News (21 November 2012) *DR Congo's M23 rebels threaten to march to Kinshasa*)

A Deutsche Presse-Agentur report states:

“Fighting broke out in the east Congolese town of Sake on Thursday between M23 rebels and government troops reportedly supported by militias, prompting many civilians to flee the area. Sake is located about 30 kilometres west of Goma, the regional capital of North Kivu province that was taken by M23 rebels earlier this week.” (Deutsche Presse-Agentur (22 November 2012) *Fierce fighting erupts in rebel-held Congolese town*)

An Associated Press report states:

“Congolese soldiers and rebel fighters battled for hours over the eastern town of Sake on Thursday, forcing thousands of people to flee as the militants seeking to overthrow the government vowed to push forward despite

mounting international pressure. Meanwhile, the leader of the rebel group known as M23 headed to neighboring Uganda where emergency talks were held this week between the presidents of Congo and its neighbors Uganda and Rwanda. Fighting broke out Thursday just before noon in the town of Sake, which the rebels had seized Wednesday after capturing the strategic provincial capital of Goma, about 17 miles (27 kilometers) away.” (Associated Press (22 November 2012) *Congo rebels, military battle over eastern town*)

A CNN.com report states:

“Anti-government rebels on Friday continued their march through the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, withstanding an army counterattack to maintain control of the strategically important town of Sake. The town is on the road to Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, and a group of fighters started to march in its direction, journalist Phil Moore told CNN. Moore and U.N. spokesman Kieran Dwyer said the M23 fighters held Sake after two days of battling government troops in the town they first entered Wednesday.” (CNN.com (23 November 2012) *Rebel march continues in Eastern Congo*)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“The rebels captured Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, on Tuesday before taking the key town of Sake 20 kilometres (12 miles) to the west the next day, forcing thousands more people to take flight. A UN source said the rebels appeared to have halted just south of Sake after battles with government forces and an allied local militia.” (Agence France Presse (24 November 2012) *Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): UN concern as thousands flee rebel advance in DR Congo*)

An International Herald Tribune report states:

“In the past week, a rebel force has marched into a string of towns in eastern Congo, culminating in the capture of Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province, and raised serious questions about the future of this vast and often troubled country. In most of the battles, demoralized government troops abandoned their positions and literally ran for the hills. But on Thursday, the army tried a comeback, pounding the rebel-held town of Sake with mortar fire and battling the rebels with machine guns. Tens of thousands of civilians fled.” (International Herald Tribune (24 November 2012) *Retreat over, Congo forces strike back at rebels; Shelling of eastern town could be a step toward retaking regional capital*)

A Voice of America New report states:

“The town of Sake, west of Goma, has been deserted since M23 rebels took control following a two-day battle with Congolese forces. The shops have all closed, as rebel soldiers patrol the streets and take their positions in the hilltops above. Tens of thousands of people fled the town in the past days, streaming toward Goma, clutching their belongings and complaining about a conflict they have nothing to do with. Jean Musubato Kapitola, a local administrator, hangs around the M23 rebels, who are drinking beer by a shuttered restaurant on the north side of town. 'The M23 are here, everybody has to follow their rules, to live with them so they don't die. So they cooperate

with them but there is no work here,' said Kapitola. Kapitola says the town's residents all fled as the battle between M23 and the Congolese army, known as FARDC, began to heat up. Several homes were damaged in the crossfire. In one, an unexploded mortar was still jammed nose-down in the earth floor, after crashing through the wall. Many of Sake's residents have ended up in displaced people's camps on the road toward Goma." (Voice of America News (23 November 2012) *Civilians Suffer in Crossfire of DRC Conflict*)

An Irish Times article states:

"Rebels in eastern Congo pushed south along Lake Kivu yesterday after repelling a counterattack by government forces near the new rebel stronghold in the city of Goma on the Rwandan border. Others moved north from the strategic road junction at Sake. The rebels were in control of Sake after a battle on Thursday that was the first sign of a government fightback. The army had abandoned Goma on Tuesday to the M23 movement, widely thought to be backed by Rwanda. Local people and fighters said Congolese troops and allied militia had pulled back from Sake – which lies 20km west from Goma along the lake – to Minova, 15km farther south along the main highway in the direction of M23's stated next objective, the city of Bukavu at the southern tip of the lake. The rebel group said after taking Goma it would march on the capital, Kinshasa, 1,600km away, to defeat President Joseph Kabila. The fighters met no resistance as they probed several miles south from Sake yesterday." (Irish Times (24 November 2012) *Congo rebels advance after beating off attack*)

A Global Post Africa report states:

"Men in Red Cross bibs and surgical gloves collected the bodies over the weekend, lifting them onto already blood-stained stretchers, and carrying them to hastily dug graves. Outside the eastern Congolese town of Sake, the gravediggers removed ID cards in the hope that whatever relatives the dead men might have would eventually be told of their son's, or their brother's, or their father's death. The corpses were left on the side of the road for two days after M23 rebels repulsed an attack on Thursday by the Congo army in a firefight that forced tens of thousands of Sake residents to flee." (Global Post Africa (26 November 2012) *In Congo conflict, there are no good guys; The M23 rebels, the government, the region and the UN have all failed to stop the fighting. Civilians say all they want is peace*)

A Voice of America News report states:

"Residents of the town of Sake in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo say M23 rebel soldiers have been looting homes and extorting money from businesses as they prepare to withdraw from the area. On a side street in the town of Sake, out of sight from the M23 soldiers guarding the checkpoint out of town, a group of residents complain about roving gangs of rebels who ransacked the town overnight." (Voice of America News (29 November 2012) *DRC Rebels Looting Before Goma Withdrawal*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to

the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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