



RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE | USALAMA PROJECT
UNDERSTANDING CONGOLESE ARMED GROUPS

MAI-MAI YAKUTUMBA

RESISTANCE AND RACKETEERING
IN FIZI, SOUTH KIVU

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in Fizi, South Kivu

JASON STEARNS ET AL.



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THE USALAMA PROJECT

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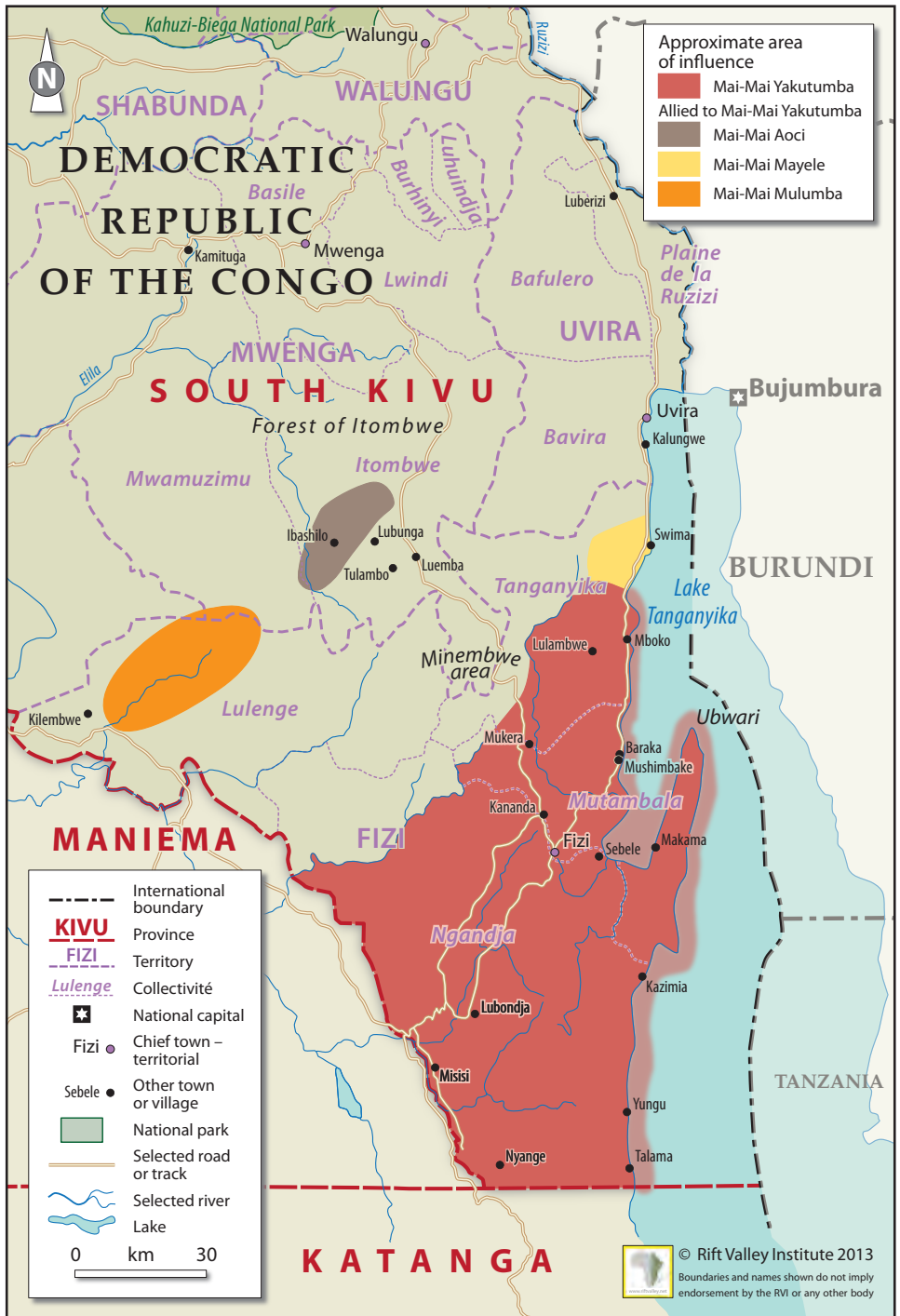
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Map 1. The eastern DRC, showing area of detailed map on following page



Map 2. Approximate area of influence of Mai-Mai Yakutumba and allies

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RVI Usalama Project publications

Reports

From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo

North Kivu: The Background to Conflict in North Kivu Province of Eastern Congo

PARECO: Land, Local Strongmen, and the Roots of Militia Politics in North Kivu

Ituri's UPC: The External Militarization of Local Politics in North-Eastern Congo

Ituri: Gold, Land, and Ethnicity in North-eastern Congo

Raia Mutomboki: The Flawed Peace Process in the DRC and the Birth of an Armed Franchise

FNI and FRPI: Local Resistance and Regional Alliances in North-eastern Congo

Banyamulenge: Insurgency and Exclusion in the Mountains of South Kivu

All titles are also available in French

Briefings

'M23's Operational Commander: A Profile of Sultani Emmanuel Makenga'
(December 2012)

'Strongman of the Eastern DRC: A Profile of General Bosco Ntaganda'
(March 2013)

'The Perils of Peacekeeping without Politics: MONUC and MONUSCO
in the DRC' (April 2013)

Preface: The Usalama Project

The Rift Valley Institute's Usalama Project ('peace' or 'security' in Swahili) is a response to on-going violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The protracted suffering of the inhabitants of this region in the past two decades has resulted in the expenditure of billions of dollars on conflict resolution. Yet the Congolese armed groups at the heart of the conflict are still poorly understood by the international organisations that operate in the DRC—and even by the Kinshasa government itself. The Usalama Project examines the roots of violence, with the aim of providing a better understanding of all armed groups, including the national army, the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

The Usalama research programme is guided by a series of questions. What is the history of these armed groups? Who supports and controls them? What are the relations of particular groups to the state, to neighbouring states, to business interests and to the Congolese armed forces? Why have some groups been so difficult to demobilize, while others have disappeared? And are there patterns to be discerned in the ways that groups proliferate, negotiate with the state, and then vanish again?

The project takes a primarily qualitative approach. It analyses historical sources and the small amount of quantitative data available, and traces the origins of armed groups through interviews with politicians, businessmen, representatives of civil society, and members of armed groups. The Project involves extended fieldwork by both international and Congolese researchers. The outcomes include reports on specific armed groups and wider geographical areas of conflict, and a series of seminars and workshops in the DRC.

Many of the interviews for this report were conducted on condition of anonymity. Where confidentiality was requested, identifying information in the report is limited to a number with a location and a date, e.g. Usalama Project Interviewee #105, Goma, 28 August 2012. In the course of the research, accounts of significant and potentially disputed events were confirmed by multiple sources with first-hand knowledge of the events under discussion.

Summary and policy considerations

One of the predictors of where a new insurgency will emerge in the DRC is to look for past movements: armed groups beget armed groups, as commanders take advantage of networks of former combatants and rekindle relations with smugglers, arms dealers and miners.

The *territoire* of Fizi, in the southern part of South Kivu, has seen a succession of rebel movements since the start of the post-colonial period. In 2007, yet another armed group emerged: the Mai-Mai of William Amuri Yakutumba (or Yakotumba), which is currently holding out against demobilization.¹

Insurgencies in Fizi have drawn on its strategic location on Lake Tanganyika and on the self-image of the Bembe, Fizi's main ethnic group, as a people striving for self-determination against outside domination, whether by a distant government in Kinshasa or, more recently, by the neighbouring Banyamulenge community. The brutal legacy of the Congo Wars has sharply reinforced these identity-based tensions.

The long history of armed mobilization in Fizi has created a reservoir of experienced fighters who are easily remobilized. Many of the Yakutumba Mai-Mai are combatants who demobilized after the Second Congo War (1998–2003) but struggled to find alternative livelihoods, highlighting the challenge of demobilization in a context of widespread poverty.

But while some of the factors contributing to armed mobilization have remained constant, there are also important differences between the historical rebellions in Fizi and the current insurgency.

Over the past decade, new insurgencies have been increasingly triggered not by communal tensions but by political and military elites,

¹ The term 'Mai-Mai' (from the Kiswahili *maji*, 'water') has been adopted by many community-based self-defence militias that use traditional religious rituals in their recruitment and training.

who draw on these grievances for armed mobilization. This is well illustrated by the trajectory of Yakutumba's group, which is the product of two trends that developed during the period of transitional government (2003–6): the failure to integrate armed groups into the national army, and the use of violence for political gain.

Yakutumba's group was formed from a Mai-Mai faction that refused integration. This refusal has been exploited by political elites in Kinshasa and the Fizi diaspora, who have tried to harness the Mai-Mai to further their own agendas and ambitions. Successive peace processes in the DRC have done little to address this nexus of violence; they have even promoted it, allowing armed groups to be turned into instruments for gaining political power.

At the start of 2013, William Amuri Yakutumba committed himself to integration into the national army and began, ostensibly, to regroup his combatants. However, in August of the same year, renewed fighting broke out between the FARDC and a group of Mai-Mai that had remained intact due to delays in the integration process. This demonstrates the danger of relying on rebel integration as the sole solution to ending armed group activity in the eastern DRC.

Promoting inter-community reconciliation and cohesion

To promote democratic dialogue at the local level, the Congolese government and international donors could build on existing initiatives such as the *Cadres de concertation inter-communautaire* (CCI, Platforms for Inter-community Dialogue) and the revised International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS). But they should take account of the failings of earlier programmes, which suffered from lack of government ownership, feeble coordination among donors, and minimal involvement by the affected communities and civil society.

Demilitarizing politics

To date, no Congolese politician has ever been arrested for backing an armed group, yet a body of evidence exists that would enable

prosecutions to be mounted against key figures involved. A few targeted, well-researched cases could have a far-reaching impact. The impunity of politicians implicated in militia activity should be treated with as much urgency as the recruitment of child soldiers, which is a symptom rather than a root cause of armed mobilization. Similar efforts should be undertaken to document politicians' use of hate speech, especially in the context of election campaigns. Local investigative journalists and NGOs who document such incidents of hate speech and the role of politicians and businessmen in supporting armed groups need support and protection.

Sustainable demobilization

Demobilization is a long-term process that involves the reconfiguration of social networks. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes need to include local communities in their design and implementation and make sure that combatants who are demobilized find alternative sources of income. They also need to address all armed groups at the same time, as mobilization often happens in response to insecurity. And all such programmes need to be undertaken in the context of a comprehensive political and military strategy for dealing with armed groups.

1. Introduction

The Mai-Mai Yakutumba, which first appeared in 2007, can claim a rich rebel pedigree. The area controlled by the armed group has been among the most turbulent in the country since the 1960s. It was to the rugged mountains of Fizi territory, located at the southern tip of South Kivu, that Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara came to launch his foray into African rebel politics in 1965, and it was here that he met the future president, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who then went on to maintain the longest insurgency of the Mobutu era.

William Amuri Yakutumba’s movement, the *Parti pour l’action et la reconstruction du Congo-Forces armées alléluia* (PARC-FAAL, Party for Action and the Reconstruction of the Congo-Allelujah Armed Forces), draws on this heritage. Indeed, some of his officers can still remember fighting alongside Che Guevara. But the movement is also the product of two recent trends that have fuelled instability in the eastern DRC: the militarization of politics, leading to the continued reliance on armed groups as a means to acquiring political clout, and the failure of military integration efforts. Yakutumba’s movement was formed even as national army was in the process of absorbing other armed groups in the wake of the Sun City peace process (2002-6). The fact that he struck out on his own is probably because he felt the government would not guarantee his interests or those of his allies. At the same time, taking advantage of the new democratic opening, politicians from Fizi backed his insurgency in order to boost their own popularity and retain leverage at the national level.

The third aspect of the movement—the exploitation of ethnic difference—is perhaps the most evident in the discourse around the insurgency. In his public statements, Yakutumba has consistently railed against the threat posed by the neighbouring Banyamulenge community and their desire for administrative autonomy. This sense of difference has been exacerbated by the deployment of many officers from the Hutu and Tutsi communities to Fizi since 2009, which has increased support for the PARC-FAAL among peasants and politicians alike.

2. Fizi's long history of insurgency

Those who seek to understand militia politics in Fizi should come equipped with a rich sense of history. Yakutumba has built on a legacy of insurgency that goes back over 40 years, although there are significant differences between his movement and those of his predecessors. The current insurgency, for example, has more developed ties with elites in Bukavu, South Kivu's capital, and in Kinshasa; it emerged in a different political context and has refined its financial support system—its taxation practices and smuggling networks. To understand these differences, it is necessary first to trace the historical trajectory of insurgencies in the Fizi region, starting with the first episode of large-scale armed mobilization, which took place in the wake of independence.

Revolutionary godfathers: The Simba rebellion and the *Kabila maquis* (1960–90)

Seven months after gaining independence on 30 June 1960, the Congo was plunged into chaos with the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. A variety of insurgencies surfaced over the next five years, pitting nationalists against federalists and secessionists. Given the backdrop of the Cold War, these cleavages quickly took on an ideological dimension, as some of Lumumba's followers veered toward socialism, while others in the government sought help from the United States and the United Nations.

One of the most important revolutionary figures during this period was Pierre Mulele, the former Minister of Education in the Lumumba Government. After a brief spell of military training in China, Mulele launched an insurgency in his home district of Kwilu in Bandundu province in 1964. At the same time, a number of Lumumbists established the revolutionary *Conseil national de libération* (CNL, National Liberation Council) in neighbouring Brazzaville. This organization would come to play an important role in revolutionary events in Fizi and Uvira, the territory neighbouring Fizi to the north.

These national developments fed into local sources of unrest. The turmoil of the post-independence period saw sharp divisions emerge in South Kivu, centred on political and ethnic affiliation.² In Fizi, a Bembe political party called the *Union économique des Babembe de Fizi* (UNEBAFI, Economic Union of the Babembe of Fizi) had forged an electoral alliance with the Lumumbist *Mouvement national congolais* (MNC, National Congolese Movement) to contest the elections of 1960. This alliance was boosted by tensions that were also manifest in Uvira and which pitted a new generation of ambitious politicians striving for change against the guardians of the old order, the customary chiefs. The latter were accused of complicity with the colonial authorities and their unpopular policies of taxation, forced labour and land expropriation.

In 1963, the radical politician Musa Marandura, from the Fuliro community, initiated a cycle of increasingly violent protests in Uvira, targeting the customary chief of his ethnic group. From 1964 onwards, this protest movement joined up with the CNL, which had established a presence in Bujumbura in neighbouring Burundi, and created a military branch. This insurgency soon managed to capture the city of Uvira, with Fizi falling ten days later. Adopting the name *Simba* (lion), the rebellion drew most of its support from the Fuliro and Bembe ethnic groups, while also having Vira, Rundi and Tutsi immigrants in its ranks.³

Aspects of the military organisation of the Mai-Mai reflect that of the Simbas in the 1960s. A former Simba prisoner drew attention to continuities in the initiation rituals practised by Mai-Mai, describing ceremonies during which a witchdoctor tattooed the combatants on their foreheads and introduced a magical potion into a small incision. 'Afterward, they sprinkle very cold water on the back and stomachs of the men, who have

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2 Koen Vlassenroot, *South Kivu: The Background to Conflict in South Kivu Province of Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013).

3 Benoît Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo: Tome 1* (Brussels/Leopoldville: CRISP, IRES and INEP, 1966), pp. 264 and 268–72.

to repeat “Mai! Mai!” to become invulnerable.⁴ These rituals instilled a cohesion and fearlessness that was key to the Simbas’ initial military successes.

In its ideological orientation, the Simba insurgency was inspired by nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric that made use of Lumumba’s assassination to strengthen its cause. Only a small group of leaders adopted an explicitly communist ideology. This last group included those fighting alongside Cuban soldiers led by Che Guevara, who had secretly arrived in the area in 1965. Guevara was himself sceptical of the local combatants, describing the Congolese as ‘completely raw’, with no ‘structured political education’ and a lack of ‘revolutionary consciousness’.⁵

To Guevara’s dismay, ethnic rivalries gradually took centre stage and undermined the spread of the movement. These tensions mounted when the insurgents were pushed into the highlands, commonly called the *Hauts Plateaux*, where the Banyamulenge community constitutes the majority.⁶ Friction between ethnic groups in this area had existed for decades, for various reasons: the Banyamulenge, who are ethnic Tutsi, are cattle-herders with different traditions from their neighbours and different attitudes to wealth, marriage and labour. They also lived in relative isolation, creating social distance. The resulting friction was accentuated by struggles for political power. During the colonial period, the Banyamulenge had not been granted a customary entity of their own and were forced to pay tribute to the customary rulers from the Vira, Fuliro and Bembe ethnic groups in order to obtain access to land. This denial of authority and land was a source of resentment and fed on-going inter-community tensions.⁷

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4 Quoted in Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, p. 328.

5 Ernesto Che Guevara, *Congo Diary: Episodes of the Revolutionary War in the Congo* (North Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2011), p. 221.

6 The other ethnic groups living on the *Plateaux* include the Bembe, Fuliro and Nyindu.

7 Jason Stearns et al., *Banyamulenge: Insurgency and Exclusion in the Mountains of South Kivu* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013).

The Simba rebellion transformed these tensions into outright hostility. Once on the *Hauts Plateaux*, the mostly Bembe rebels began taxing and stealing cattle, triggering a counter-mobilization within the Banyamulenge community. A self-defence militia was created that was later trained and equipped by the Congolese army, fuelling communal fighting and large-scale displacement.⁸

While this wave of violence abated at the end of the 1960s, the insurgency continued in isolated pockets. In 1967, a few of its leaders in exile decided to return to Fizi to resuscitate the faltering rebellion. These included Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who had originally been sent to Bujumbura by the CNL to spread the revolution southwards from Fizi to his native northern Katanga⁹, and who had a more Marxist-Leninist orientation than other Simba leaders. Kabila established a revolutionary organization based in Hewa Bora, in the Lulenge sector of Fizi. His *Parti populaire pour la révolution* (PRP, Popular Party for the Revolution) and its military branch, the *Forces armées populaires* (FAP, Popular Armed Forces), persisted in the remote highlands of Fizi until 1984.¹⁰ With the aim of overcoming the failings of the Simba revolution, a list of seven errors was codified and became the main doctrine of the PRP.¹¹ It is still recited today by some of the older Mai-Mai, testifying to the strong influence of past rebellions on present-day armed mobilization. Ironically, despite Kabila's diagnosis that infighting, tribalism, and self-interest had caused

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8 Koen Vlassenroot, 'Citizenship, Identity Formation and Conflict in South Kivu: The Case of the Banyamulenge, *Review of African Political Economy* 29/93-4, 2002, pp. 499-515.

9 Shabani Ndalo was another Simba leader who returned to Fizi. Due to a quarrel with Kabila over leadership and ideological orientation, the less radical Ndalo went his separate way and established his own *maquis* in the hills above Mboko. Little is known about the history of this group.

10 After leaving Fizi in 1984, the PRP briefly re-emerged in Moba (northern Katanga), where it achieved a number of military successes against the Zairian army. In 1986, however, most of its leaders went into exile, leaving a rump group near Wimbi in Fizi that lasted until 1988. See Cosma B. Wilungula, *Fizi 1967-1986: Le maquis Kabila* (Brussels/Paris: L'Institut Africain/CEDAF and L'Harmattan, 1997).

11 See Appendix 1: Laurent-Désiré Kabila's 'Seven errors of the Simba revolution'.

the Simba rebellion to fail, his own movement and all of its successors would continue to suffer from the same flaws.

Mai-Mai renaissance amid ethnic tensions (1990–8)

After the turmoil and violence surrounding independence, the insurgencies in Fizi became more or less decoupled from national politics. While Kabila continued his struggle—based mostly in Tanzania during the 1980s—he posed little threat to Mobutu's regime. It was not until the 1990s that, due to the rebellion of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL, Alliance for Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire), Fizi insurgents rose again to national prominence, and Mai-Mai networks spread to Tanzania, Burundi, and Kinshasa.

The escalation of violence in the region, however, predated the arrival of the AFDL, as regional developments once again fed into local disputes. The 1980s had been marked by growing tensions over the question of Banyamulenge citizenship: their candidates were excluded from the 1982 and 1987 elections on the grounds of *nationalité douteuse* (doubtful citizenship), and a census organized in 1991 to identify Congolese citizens—specifically tailored to target Hutu and Tutsi populations—degenerated into widespread unrest.¹²

The democratization process launched by Mobutu in 1990, which heralded the end of his one-party system, further exacerbated these tensions. An assembly was convened to steer through a transitional process towards a multiparty democracy: the *Conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS, National Sovereign Conference), which in turn ushered in a transitional parliament. In April 1995, this latter body adopted a resolution calling for the expulsion of what it labelled 'Rwandan refugees' from the territory of Zaire, explicitly including the Banyamulenge in this category. Célestin Anzuluni Bembe, the vice-president of the parliament, a Bembe from Fizi, was instrumental in proposing this resolution

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12 Jean-Claude Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu* (Brussels/Paris: L'Institut Africain/CEDAF and L'Harmattan, 1997).

and ratcheting up ethnic tensions in the region. In September 1995, he toured Fizi and Uvira, giving inflammatory speeches and calling on the population to take up arms against the Tutsi.¹³

Meanwhile, the climate had been further soured by regional events. The civil war in Rwanda that raged from 1990 onwards increased ethnic tensions, first by recruiting dozens of Banyamulenge youths into the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebellion, then by sending almost a million refugees across the border following the 1994 genocide, including most of the perpetrators. These mostly Hutu refugees joined tens of thousands of Burundians who had fled the civil war that had started there in 1993. The influx of these refugees, which included combatants, fuelled unrest and sharpened ethnic rhetoric, since the conflicts they had fled were mainly centred on ethnic identity.

Shortly after, in 1996, young Banyamulenge soldiers in the Rwandan army were sent across the border as a vanguard for the AFDL war. Their arrival led to clashes with Mobutu's army and incited the further mobilization of gangs of Bembe youths. Eventually the skirmishes between Banyamulenge and local militia led to a series of ethnically targeted attacks in late 1996. Among the most notorious massacres were the murder by Banyamulenge soldiers of Henri Spaack, the Bembe customary chief of Basimunyaka *groupement*, on 12 September; the massacre of 300 Banyamulenge in Baraka on 26 September; and a mass killing by Banyamulenge soldiers in Abala on 28 October 1996, when 101 mostly Bembe civilians were massacred during a church service.¹⁴

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13 See Vlassenroot, *South Kivu*.

14 For the Baraka massacre and other mass killings of Banyamulenge, see UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), 'Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993–2003. Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003' (henceforth 'UN Mapping Report'), paras. 181–8. The massacres of members of other communities in South Kivu, including the Abala killings, are treated in paras. 282–3.

Meanwhile, the AFDL, backed by Rwandan, Eritrean and Ugandan troops, was advancing southwards from Uvira towards Katanga. An incident then took place that is represented in Mai-Mai historical accounts as the first major operation undertaken during this war. A large group of youths, armed with machetes and a few guns and calling themselves Mai-Mai, blocked the advance of the AFDL.¹⁵

At this point, the Mai-Mai were very loosely organized under Kabusenge and Kasindi Sofeles, both experienced *maquisards* (bush fighters). 'Everyone was involved,' remembered one of the movement's political supporters; 'customary chiefs, some local politicians, everyone. But they particularly called on former Mulelist rebels, who knew how to fight.'¹⁶ Sofeles began by breaking into the government's armoury in Fizi, stripping weapons from fleeing soldiers, and stealing cars from local NGOs. Customary chiefs backed the militia and helped find the *féticheurs* (witch doctors) needed to prepare the *dawa* (medicine) to immunize Mai-Mai fighters against bullets.

The Mai-Mai resistance, disorganized as it was, managed to delay the progress of AFDL troops. The AFDL spokesperson was Laurent-Désiré Kabila, a well-known figure in Fizi and a former comrade of many of the Mai-Mai. In order to persuade the Mai-Mai to give up their resistance, Kabila dispatched some of his close Bembe collaborators who had joined the AFDL with him: Sylvestre Luetcha, Shabani Sikatenda, and Yermos 'Madoamadoa' Lokole, all former Mulelists from the Lulenge sector of Fizi. They reassured the Mai-Mai that their rebellion was not a proxy for Rwandan interests, 'rather, that they were just collaborating with the Rwandan "mercenaries" to liberate the country, then the foreigners would go home'.¹⁷

Despite Kabila's entreaties, not many Mai-Mai from Fizi were willing to join the AFDL, although many gave up active resistance to the militia.

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15 Usalama Project Interviewee #612, Uvira, 12 March 2013.

16 Usalama Project Interviewee #612, Uvira, 12 March 2013.

17 Usalama Project Interviewee #612, Uvira, 12 March 2013.

While Sofeles soon fled to Tanzania—according to some reports, after embezzling money given to him by Mobutu—most Mai-Mai remained under the leadership of Sofeles’ chief of operations, Dunia Lwendama, another former Simba fighter. The group still lacked coherence and resources, but both would come with the outbreak of a new war in 1998, when Kabila fell out with his Rwandan and Ugandan allies, who then launched another rebellion, the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy).

The RCD era: Large-scale Mai-Mai mobilization (1998–2003)

This second insurgency led to a protracted and bloody war that saw the Mai-Mai in Fizi take their place as proxies for Kinshasa, fighting against Kigali and its Congolese allies in the RCD. This period pushed the Mai-Mai to the peak of their power: Kinshasa sent arms and money to their leaders, while the RCD—which in Fizi and Uvira included many Banyamulenge deployed alongside Rwandan troops—became bogged down in a bloody counter-insurgency.

The RCD rapidly conquered large parts of the east and became the dominant power in Fizi and Uvira, taking over the civilian administration. But outside the main population centres and roads, the RCD’s control was tenuous and they faced widespread resistance. In part, their failings stemmed from a perception problem: the RCD was seen by the local population as part of a Rwandan conspiracy to dismember the DRC. This perception was reinforced by the highly visible role played by Congolese Hutu and Tutsi in its leadership, provoking outrage among the Bembe, who saw the RCD through the lens of their historical rivalry with the Banyamulenge.

The RCD’s governing style added to this acrimony. Embroiled in an expensive war, the rebels extracted taxes—and often engaged in outright pillage—but provided almost no social services, while sharply curtailing

civil liberties.¹⁸ Perhaps the greatest affront was the creation of a new administrative entity on the *Hauts Plateaux* in September 1999, the *territoire* of Minembwe, which encompassed the Banyamulenge's traditional living area. This provoked fierce resistance among other ethnic communities, who felt that the Banyamulenge were encroaching on their customary land.

Finally, the RCD employed a strategy of ruthless counter-insurgency. With Mai-Mai resistance mushrooming in the bush and commanding the sympathy of large parts of the population, the RCD felt permanently insecure. It responded by engaging in large-scale killings to suppress dissent and avenge deaths among its own troops. Perhaps the worst such incident was the Makobola massacre of the 1998–99 New Year, when over 800 civilians were killed in reprisal attacks following a deadly Mai-Mai raid against the RCD.¹⁹

The Mai-Mai worldview: *Indigènes* vs. foreigners

The broad popular support for the Mai-Mai during the Congo wars was in part related to the appeal of the Mai-Mai worldview. At the core of this set of beliefs is a sharp division between 'real Congolese' or *indigènes*, and 'foreigners' who are defined in ethnic terms, usually as 'Rwandans' or Rwandophones (speakers of the Kinyarwanda language). This group encompasses Hutu and Tutsi, who are portrayed as wanting to appropriate customary land and control the administration by violent means.

This prejudice often falls back on a confusing purported racial distinction between 'Nilotics' and 'Bantu', suggesting that Nilotics, to which the Tutsi/Hima are seen to belong, have different genetic origins than the Bantu. This racial theory is coupled with fanciful notions of what are considered to be quintessentially Tutsi traits: that they are cunning and

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18 On the RCD rebel administration, see Denis Tull, *The Reconfiguration of Political Order in Africa: A Case Study of North Kivu (DR Congo)* (Institut für Afrika-Kunde, Hamburg, 2005).

19 For the Makobola and other massacres in South Kivu in the RCD era, see UN Mapping Report 2010, para. 353.

deceitful, and have a desire to dominate other groups. According to a conspiracy theory that is widespread in the region, this lust for power is evidenced by their efforts to establish, with the help of western powers, a 'Hima Empire' stretching from Uganda through Rwanda and Burundi into the eastern DRC, leading to the 'balkanization' of the DRC.

There is scant factual basis for these theories. Nilotic and Bantu are linguistic, not racial categories. Furthermore, the Banyamulenge speak a variant of Kinyarwanda, a Bantu language; the only speakers of Nilotic languages in the DRC inhabit the far North-east, along the Sudanese border. Much of this mythology can be traced back to colonial anthropologists, clergymen and administrators, who conjectured that the Hamitic race (from which Nilotic groups have descended) was more refined and worthy of rule than the Bantu.²⁰

The AFDL and RCD insurgencies, both heavily supported by Rwanda, hardened these prejudices, as they were perceived as just such an attempt to create a 'Hima Empire'. In Fizi and Uvira, the creation of Minembwe territory was widely believed to be a first step towards the 'balkanization' of the DRC. The Mai Mai strongly drew upon the resulting resentment for the purposes of mobilization, using strong anti-Tutsi rhetoric to attract recruits and political support.

While popular support and a mobilizing ideology were important for the creation and functioning of the Mai-Mai, it was an alliance with Kinshasa that was crucial for turning them into a force of military significance. When the Second Congo War broke out, a pacification delegation from Kinshasa led by General Luetcha, a Bembe and one of Laurent-Désiré Kabila's close advisors, was visiting South Kivu. Luetcha was forced to flee into the bush with the Mai-Mai as the Rwandan army reinvaded. He then formed the first direct link between the militia and Kinshasa. These links were strengthened over the years through liaison

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20 Nigel Eltringham, "Invaders who have stolen the country": The Hamitic Hypothesis, Race and the Rwandan Genocide', *Social Identities* 12/4 (2006), pp. 425-46; Jean-Pierre Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History* (trans. Scott Straus) (New York: Zone Books, 2003), pp. 281-90.

officers in Kinshasa, and the appointment of Mai-Mai leaders as officers in Kabila's army, the *Forces armées congolaises* (FAC, Congolese Armed Forces). Kinshasa also sent supplies—albeit irregularly and in insufficient quantities—and encouraged a more centralized organization of the various Mai-Mai groups, which were symbolically added to the ranks of the government's forces. This led to the creation of an umbrella organization, the *Forces d'autodéfense populaire* (FAP, Popular Self-Defence Forces).

In Fizi, the Mai-Mai came under the overall command of Dunia, who was promoted to the rank of colonel in 1999 by Kinshasa. On paper, his control stretched into Uvira territory and the Itombwe part of Mwenga, traditionally inhabited by a number of Bembe clans, although the degree to which commanders outside Fizi actually obeyed his orders is debatable. Besides Luetcha, two other Bembe commanders in the FAC played an important role in organizing and supporting the Mai-Mai: General Shabani Sikatenda, the head of military intelligence for Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who was instrumental in organizing the Mai-Mai in his home base, the Lulenge sector of Fizi; and General Yermos Lokole, who was sent to Fizi around 2001 to help improve the Mai-Mai's military capabilities and set up supply chains to Lubumbashi, the capital of Katanga.

This support culminated in the establishment of the *Secteur opérationnel est* (SOE, Eastern Operational Sector), which officially regrouped the Mai-Mai of Fizi, Uvira, Mwenga and North Katanga. The SOE was led by Colonel Dunia, who established his headquarters on the Ubwari peninsula, a natural fortress with steep mountains sloping into Lake Tanganyika. It was around this time that the Mai-Mai solidified their alliance with the Burundian Hutu rebels of the *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie* (CNDD-FDD, National Council/Forces for the Defence of Democracy). The Burundians, who had a formal alliance with Kabila, helped conduct basic training on the Ubwari peninsula, while also providing occasional operational support. The Mai-Mai also collaborated with Rwandan Hutu rebels, now known as *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR, Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda), although significant tensions between the

groups also surfaced, further contributing to the volatility and fragmentation that characterized the Second Congo War.²¹

Although the SOE theoretically had a centralized hierarchy, with seven brigades under Dunia's command, the reality in the field was quite different, especially outside Fizi territory. While individual commanders coordinated their actions with Dunia, they were often at loggerheads with each other due to competition along ethnic, clan, community and personal lines. Furthermore, their military training and equipment were rudimentary, rendering the Mai-Mai an amateurish and unruly fighting force. As they became more dependent on Kinshasa and on regional networks of gold trade and cross-border smuggling, they became less accountable to the local population, and abuses increased.²²

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21 Koen Vlassenroot, 'Violence et constitution de milices dans l'est du Congo: le cas des mai-mayi', *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 2001-2002* (2002), pp. 115-52.

22 For the development of the relations between Mai Mai groups and civilian society during the wars, see Koen Vlassenroot and Frank van Acker, 'War as Exit from Exclusion? The Formation of Mayi-Mayi Militias in Eastern Congo', *Afrika Focus* 17/1-2 (2001), pp. 51-77.

3. The trajectory of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba

The 2002 Sun City peace negotiations ushered in the signing of a power-sharing agreement and a transitional government that united the country.²³ These events unleashed fierce power competition, as former belligerents struggled to obtain positions in the newly formed state institutions. A key factor in fostering tensions was the integration of armed groups into the new national army. Lacking the right political connections, the Fizi Mai-Mai were marginalized and failed to obtain positions of importance. At the same time, the democratic logic of the transition encouraged politicians to back armed groups in order to gain leverage and traction with their constituents and the central government. These two developments—faltering army integration and the militarization of politics—were key in the creation of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba.

Birth of the Mai-Mai *Réformé* (2003–2006)

When asked why they returned to the bush after the transition (2003-6), present-day Mai-Mai leaders often refer to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City in 2002 as the moment when it all went wrong. Many Mai-Mai groups saw the peace process as an opportunity to make their grievances heard at the national level, and to be rewarded for their ‘years of sacrifice for the nation’, as one combatant put it.²⁴ The Mai-Mai in Fizi organized consultations with customary chiefs on Ubwari, and selected a delegation to the peace talks that would represent grassroots Mai-Mai points of view. As with other Mai-Mai groups, however, the government in Kinshasa co-opted the representative of the Bembe Mai-Mai, Yaka Swedi Kosco, who had been Dunia’s liaison officer in Kinshasa. This meant that

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²³ Inter-Congolese Dialogue, *Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Pretoria, 16 December 2002.

²⁴ Usalama Project Interviewee #601, Fizi, 15 March 2013.

Mai-Mai grievances and demands were not taken into consideration and their military officers were given short shrift in the process of military integration.

In total, Mai-Mai groups from across the eastern DRC were given 13 out of 620 parliamentary seats, four of the 63 ministerial positions, and one of the 11 provincial governorships. If one considers that these positions were split between around half a dozen Mai-Mai groups—and that some of those named were only nominally Mai-Mai leaders—the Fizi Mai-Mai did not fare poorly in the political arena. They dominated one of the new national political parties created by Mai-Mai groups at the start of the transition, the *Patriotes résistants Mai-Mai* (PRM, Resistant Mai-Mai Patriots). One of the leaders of this party, Pardonne Kaliba Mulanga, a Bembe from Lulenge who formerly served in Kabila's Hewa Bora *maquis* and then as a staff officer under Dunia, obtained a ministerial position in the transitional government.²⁵ At the same time, Kosko, the Sun City delegate, was appointed to the leadership of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission, one of the big national transitional institutions—but one that failed to take off.

The Fizi Mai-Mai fared much worse in the military arena—a disappointment that became one of the main reasons for renewed insurgency. In 2003, a new national army, the FARDC, was created out of the merger of all former belligerents. Dunia, who eventually obtained the rank of general, felt that his efforts entitled him to a high position in the FARDC. For example, Padiri Bulenda, leader of the largest Mai-Mai faction in South Kivu, had been appointed commander of a military region at the start of transition—while Dunia, by then already very old, failed to obtain a position of similar importance.

While age may have been a factor, Dunia's marginalization was mostly a result of the political logic of military integration, which was based on

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25 Kaliba was appointed Minister of Rural Development in 2003. In 2006, he was elected Member of Parliament for Fizi, and then obtained the position of Minister of Youth and Sport in 2007. He lost his position later that year.

patronage. Officers were often commissioned, deployed and promoted based on who they knew and how much clout they had within the political hierarchy. There was no strong political lobby to represent Dunia's group in Kinshasa, and their delegates were quickly outmanoeuvred—and allegedly bribed—on the military integration commission. This sent a clear message to Mai-Mai: without leverage or political connections, they would continue to be sidelined.

Growing divisions within the Bembe community also played a role. Existing Bembe commanders in the army—people like Luetcha, Sikatenda, and Lokole, all from the Lulenge sector of Fizi, tried to prevent Bembe commanders from the other three sectors (Mutambala, Ngandja and Tanganyika) from being promoted for fear of losing influence in Kinshasa. This led to the marginalization of Dunia, who is from Kananda (Ngandja). Growing tensions between Dunia and Kaliba, the head of the PRM who hails from Lulenge, further undermined Dunia's chances for promotion.

This marginalization made Dunia and his followers hesitate to integrate their troops into the national army. In Fizi and Uvira, this process, which was called *brassage* (literally, 'brewing'), started only in 2005. Until then, the Mai-Mai brigades continued to function more or less in their previous composition, although they were now officially part of the FARDC.²⁶

Lack of political clout was not the only obstacle to army integration. Many Mai-Mai officers were reluctant to leave their home turf, as this would probably imply a loss of income, status and influence. Initial salaries in the army ranged from around \$10 to a maximum of \$50 a month, and while there were certainly opportunities for enrichment, this again depended on political connections.

Mai-Mai foot-dragging met with sympathy among the local population as well. The cycle of massacres and the identity-based discourse during the war had created a climate of profound distrust between communities.

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26 See Appendix 2: Bembe-led ex-Mai-Mai FARDC brigades just before *brassage* (2005).

The Mai-Mai feared that if they gave up their military capacities, their Banyamulenge enemies—some of whom had also refused to join the national army—would seize the opportunity to dominate them.

Subsequent events bore out these suspicions. In June 2004, fighting erupted in Bukavu due to a mutiny of former RCD commanders against the government; then two dissident Banyamulenge factions emerged on the *Hauts Plateaux* in 2005.²⁷ This in turn made Kinshasa reluctant to redeploy the loyalist all-Banyamulenge 112th Brigade, also based in the *Hauts Plateaux*. As a result, a stalemate emerged in which Bembe and Banyamulenge groups refused to send their troops to *brassage* first, lest the rival group obtain the upper hand.

In the course of 2006, pressure grew on the remaining Mai-Mai brigades to send their troops to the integration centre at Luberizi, in Uvira territory. While most brigade commanders complied, several lower-ranking officers prevaricated, allegedly prompted by General Dunia, who wanted to maintain his influence in Fizi and feared that dismantling his military structures would leave him with no means to exert pressure on the government.

A key figure in this resistance was Captain William Amuri Yakutumba, a battalion commander in the 118th Brigade, one of Dunia's ex-Mai-Mai units, deployed in Baraka. Yakutumba, who had started his career in the Mai-Mai in 1996, was deeply concerned about the dissident Banyamulenge factions. 'In part, this was due to his ideology. He has a very strong anti-Rwandan, anti-Tutsi mentality', an officer in the Congolese army who knew him well during this period explained. 'In part, politicians and other Bembe officers were using him.'²⁸

This ideology became increasingly pronounced during the transition. In 2005, Yakutumba had campaigned against the new constitution, which would grant *de facto* citizenship to the Banyamulenge. For Yakutumba,

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 27 These groups would later merge to form a rebel group called FRF; see Stearns et al., *Banyamulenge*, pp. 22–5.

28 Usalama Project Interviewee #602, Baraka, 14 March 2013.

this was proof that the new president, Joseph Kabila, had turned against the Mai-Mai. ‘Kabila wasn’t like his father [Laurent-Désiré], who armed us. Joseph pushed for talks with Rwanda and marginalized Bembe officers such as Luetcha, Sikatenda and Lokole,’ one Mai-Mai political leader lamented.²⁹

To deflate ethnic tensions and finish the army integration process, the South Kivu military command organized a meeting in Baraka in October 2006 between dissident Munyamulenge commander Bisogo and the commander of the ex-Mai Mai 118th Brigade, Ngufu, hoping to convince them to send their troops to *brassage* simultaneously. Leading almost to an armed confrontation, the failure of this meeting made Yakutumba determined to persist in his refusal to integrate.

In January 2007, the 10th military region sent trucks to transport the remaining troops from the 118th Brigade to Luberizi, prompting Yakutumba to flee to the Ubwari peninsula, Dunia’s old headquarters, together with a small group of loyalists. On 23 January, Yakutumba and 34 other founding members created the Mai-Mai *Réformé* (Reformed Mai-Mai), a name that was chosen to distinguish themselves from previous Mai-Mai groups.³⁰ They felt that during the wars, the term ‘Mai-Mai’ had become an empty label, claimed by different groups regardless of their behaviour and ideological orientation. A key figure in defining the goals of the movement was Raphael Looba Undji, a Bembe politician who had failed in an attempt to enter parliament in the 2006 elections, becoming one of many *candidats malheureux* (failed electoral candidates) to join an armed group. Undji became the president of the Reformed Mai-Mai and is arguably the real ideologue and strategist of the movement.

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 29 Usalama Project interviewee #603, Uvira, 12 March 2013.

30 According to some members of the group, the Yakutumba Mai-Mai was created in 2005 following failed negotiations with members of the national government. However, according to UN sources and other members of the group, Yakutumba and his fellow officers were officially part of the national army until January 2007.

The initiative to establish a new rebel group was reportedly supported by some Bembe community leaders, as well as by Dunia, who directed the dissidents toward his arms caches.³¹ The group also attracted other Mai-Mai reluctant to join the FARDC, like Major Bwasakala, a battalion commander in the (ex-Mai Mai) 117th Brigade, and a number of troops who had already been sent to the Luberizi *brassage* centre.³² Other recruits were drawn from ex-combatants who had initially been demobilized, either through the official government programme or through ‘auto-demobilization’, with many of the latter migrating to the gold mining areas of Misisi and Mukera. Given the paltry employment opportunities, and the lack of follow-up by the demobilization programme, Yakutumba’s militia became an attractive option. Even as civilians, former soldiers performed vital functions for the rebels: as motorcycle taxi drivers or petty traders, they formed part of larger networks of support to the Mai-Mai, which also included NGO workers and local chiefs who sympathized with Yakutumba’s world view.

At first, the Congolese government tried to negotiate with the new group, persuading them to relocate from Ubwari to Fizi town in 2007. At this point, Yakutumba professed willingness to join the army, on the condition that Banyamulenge armed factions would integrate first. However, no progress was made on this demand, and Yakutumba managed to build good working relations with a newly arrived FARDC brigade, with which he became involved in the gold trade³³.

Yakutumba was not alone in his insurrection. The transition had produced many rebel groupings in Fizi and Itombwe, mostly splinter factions of former Mai-Mai militia that were reluctant to join the army,

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31 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, ‘Final Report of the UN Group of Experts on the DR Congo’, 2 December 2011, p. 55.

32 Other influential figures from the 117th Brigade later also joined Yakutumba, such as battalion commander Abdou Lwendama, brother of General Dunia.

33 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 56-58.

such as the Mai-Mai Mulumba and Aoci.³⁴ Many of these groups established an alliance with Yakutumba, formally becoming brigades in the Reformed Mai-Mai, which—on paper at least—also had units in Northern Katanga, Maniema and Shabunda.

As self-styled division commander, Yakutumba began to use the title ‘General’³⁵. This did not compensate for the loose structure of the Reformed Mai-Mai, which served more as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas and experiences than a military hierarchy. The group had a short life span. However, even after the Reformed Mai-Mai ceased to exist, Yakutumba maintained contacts with its components, as well as other Mai-Mai groups, in particular in the neighbouring territory of Uvira. Over the years, as the Mai-Mai Yakutumba grew to be the most important Mai-Mai group in southern South Kivu, it built up an ideological influence over these other groups, serving as a source of inspiration and guidance, if not organisational coherence.

Development of the political branch (2007–8)

The Congolese government’s initial response to the Yakutumba threat was to try to co-opt him, using several Bembe politicians as mediators. The attempt was typical of Kinshasa’s counter-productive approach to the insurgency: instead of weakening the movement, its efforts ended up bolstering Yakutumba as he became more closely aligned with the interests of Bembe politicians, who themselves were often fierce critics of the government.

In September 2007, Yakutumba and Looba Undji arrived in Kinshasa at the invitation of President Kabila. Although negotiations were the main stated objective of this invitation, the president only met the pair after six months and then for only 30 minutes. While this exasperated

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 34 See Appendix 3: Mai-Mai groups in Fizi and Itombwe emerging after the transition (2006–8).

35 In 2011, the Mai Mai abolished its military ranking system, leading Yakutumba to assume the title of ‘force commander’.

the Mai-Mai, the time spent in Kinshasa allowed them to solidify their network of contacts at the national level. They were assisted in this by Anzuluni Bembe, the radical Bembe politician who had played a lead role in ethnic hate-mongering in the 1990s. They also found a willing ear for their insurgent project in Jemsi Mulengwa, a Bembe businessman who had lived for a long time in Europe, returning to run for national parliament in Fizi during the 2006 elections.³⁶

While Yakutumba was in Kinshasa, important developments were underway in the eastern DRC that would influence his movement. The government, which had been relatively unconcerned by Yakutumba's insurrection, deployed thousands of soldiers to put down another rebellion in North Kivu, that of the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP, National Congress for the Defence of the People), led by Laurent Nkunda. In January 2008, the government convened a peace conference in Goma to address the cycles of violence in the Kivus, with most armed groups attending. Although Yakutumba officially boycotted the conference, as he opposed negotiations with the Tutsi-led CNDP, there was a delegation that represented the group's vision, led by Joseph Assanda, a former secretary of Looba Undji.³⁷

This vision had evolved during Yakutumba's stay in Kinshasa, where he developed a political wing, which would eventually become known as the PARC.³⁸ The party's ideology had become more sophisticated, embracing views on socio-economic development and local administration that were laid down in an elaborate political programme, although its public pronouncements were still limited to a narrow ethnic, anti-

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36 Jemsi ran first on a DCF-COFEDEC (Christian Democrat) ticket, before changing to the PANADER (linked to the *Majorité présidentielle* (MP, Presidential Majority) platform), for the 2011 elections. His father, Pastor Pagiél Mulengwa, belongs to one of the more radical voices of the Bembe diaspora.

37 Joseph Assanda Mwenebatu, 'Déclaration des Mai Mai de Fizi à la Conférence Nationale sur la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement dans les Provinces du Nord-Kivu et Sud-Kivu tenue à Goma en Janvier 2008' (unpublished), January 2008.

38 The 'A' in PARC initially stood for *auto-défense* (self-defence), but was changed to *action* to increase the chances of official recognition.

Rwandophone discourse. PARC mostly agitated against the creation of a Minembwe (Banyamulenge) *territoire*, citizenship for the Banyamulenge, and the activities of the Banyamulenge *Forces républicaines fédéralistes* (FRF, Republican Federalist Forces) rebel group. A rather drastic change in the Kivus' political-military landscape would soon provide an opportunity to capitalize upon this antagonistic rhetoric.

Consequences of CNDP integration and the Kimia II operations (2009–10)

The shaky cease-fire signed at the Goma conference collapse quickly and the CNDP advanced to the outskirts of Goma in October 2008. This escalation ended in a controversial peace deal between Kinshasa and Kigali, which forced the CNDP to integrate into the FARDC, but allowed these former rebels to maintain parallel chains of command in the Kivus. Together with joint Rwandan-Congolese operations against the FDLR, these developments played directly into the hands of Yakutumba and his anti-Rwandan rhetoric.

The launch of these joint operations, dubbed *Umoja Wetu* (Our Unity), prompted Yakutumba to stage an act of protest, moving his troops to cut off the Uvira-Baraka road, ostensibly to block the possible arrival of Rwandan troops in South Kivu. After negotiations led by then Colonel Nakabaka, one of the most important Mai-Mai commanders in Uvira during the RCD war, Yakutumba agreed to withdraw. Soon after, on 23 March 2009, along with the CNDP and other armed groups, he signed a peace agreement with the DRC government, committing himself to integrate his troops into the FARDC and to transform his armed group into a political party.

Initially, the Yakutumba group attempted to organize a political coalition of armed groups from the south of South Kivu to increase their leverage. This, however, fell through due to wrangling over leadership. Yakutumba sent a first group of soldiers to the integration site at Luberizi, but continued to oppose the process while the Banyamulenge FRF armed group refused integration.

Integration eventually failed, as the logic of the CNDP integration further eroded whatever little trust Yakutumba had in the central government. In mid-2009, the government embarked on a new offensive against the FDLR, Kimia II. A disproportionate share in command positions were allocated to the former CNDP and, to a lesser extent, the mostly Hutu former *Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais* (PARECO, Coalition of Congolese Resistant Patriots). According to FARDC estimates, two thirds of the Kimia II troops that arrived in Fizi, and most of the command of the 43rd sector and the 4th Operational Zone, under which these troops were placed, were Hutu and Tutsi.³⁹

The Yakutumba group declared the arrival of these troops to be a provocation and threatened to restart hostilities, withdrawing all its troops to the gold-mining area of Misisi, close to Lubondja, Yakutumba's village of birth. When a new series of negotiations followed, Yakutumba expressed his disapproval of military operations against the FDLR, a force with whom the Mai-Mai had always maintained friendly relations, stating that he believed that peaceful avenues would be more effective in neutralizing this group. He furthermore demanded to be given the rank of general and to be put in command of military operations in Fizi. As one of his officers explained, 'We were outraged that they would give Rwandophones all these positions, while our Mai-Mai commanders who had integrated the army were all jobless.'⁴⁰ The treatment of the recently integrated Yakutumba troops at the training base of Luberizi further corroborated feelings of marginalization and discrimination. Perhaps most importantly, the Kimia II operations confirmed a perception on the part of the Mai-Mai that the national army had been taken over by Rwandans disguised as ex-CNDP officers.

These tensions would eventually lead to violent clashes. First, however, there was another brief bout of negotiations in Misisi. These talks, mediated by Welongo Luhe'ya, Bishop of the Free Methodist

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39 Usalama Project Interviewee #604, via email, 2 June 2013.

40 Usalama Project Interviewee #610, Fizi, 16 March 2013.

church, initially had a positive outcome, in part due to the impact of this widely respected spiritual leader on the deeply religious Yakutumba.⁴¹ In October 2009, Yakutumba sent a contingent of his troops to the Mushimbake integration site in Baraka, but on 2 November 2009, heavy fighting broke out in Baraka between his troops and the 12th Integrated Brigade. According to Yakutumba, there was a premeditated plan to arrest him. General Dunia's presence in Baraka is alleged to have reinforced Yakutumba's antagonism towards the government. A witness to the integration exercise described how the clash was sparked by a banal incident, in which one of Yakutumba's commanders was approached by a civilian, whose sister had married but his family had not received the dowry.

The commander issued an arrest warrant to go and arrest the woman's husband. They arrested him but on their way they encountered military from the 12th Integrated Brigade on patrol. The latter ... arrested one soldier and two others fled. ... Yakutumba called the army commander by phone, telling him: 'If you don't free my soldier, I will take measures against you.' They got into an argument. After this, Yakutumba decided to escalate and ordered his men to start shooting.⁴²

Yakutumba withdrew to the Ubwari peninsula, officially ending talks with the government. Fearing a wider explosion in Fizi, the FARDC put pressure on General Dunia to leave his home base in Baraka for Bukavu, eventually placing him under *de facto* house arrest there.

The November 2009 fighting reflected the changed political and military environment in the wake of CNDP integration. For years, the Yakutumba Mai-Mai had operated in relative freedom and collusion with the FARDC's 12th Brigade, as there had been no policy of military operations against troops refusing *brassage*. With the Kimia II operations,

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41 Usalama Project Interviewee #604, via email, 4 June 2013.

42 Usalama Project Interviewee #604, via email, 4 June 2013.

this equilibrium was disrupted. The arrival of new troops presaged the launching of an offensive against armed groups refusing integration, henceforth considered ‘negative forces’.

The results of this approach were mixed. On the one hand, it appeared to weaken the Yakutumba group, as their scope for action was diminished and they were forced to live on the run, causing fatigue, a lowering of morale and increasing defections. On the other hand, losses inflicted by the operations were limited and the Mai-Mai’s reinforced presence in the Ngandja forest led them to closer collaboration with the FDLR battalion based there, in particular in relation to gold exploitation in remote mining sites such as Katchoka and Kabobo.⁴³

The new approach was also undermined by the government’s clumsy counterinsurgency tactics. Many of the troops in Fizi were former PARECO soldiers, who were new or poorly trained recruits, and whose commanders lacked experience in running large-scale operations. Furthermore, the military leadership was primarily concerned with self-enrichment and did not feel accountable to the local population. As a result, military operations resulted in looting, killings of civilians, and rape. For example, in April 2010, Fizi town was systematically looted, driving several shop owners out of business. On 31 December 2010, the killing of an FARDC soldier in Fizi town by the local population triggered a disproportionate response, leading to large-scale looting and widespread rape.

Not surprisingly, the indignation triggered by these events led to a surge in popularity for the Mai-Mai—although this renewed support did not automatically translate into more recruits. Over the years, people had become disillusioned with the Mai-Mai, who were often just as abusive as the forces they purported to be defending them against, and the population was extremely war-weary. This prompted Yakutumba to start looking elsewhere to maintain his military and financial strength.

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 43 UN Security Council, S/2010/252, ‘Interim Report of the UN Group of Experts on the DRC’, 25 May 2010, p. 11.

Racketeering and piracy (2010–11)

By mid-2010, the military capabilities of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba appeared to be on the wane, due to recruitment problems and diminishing popular support for armed rebellion. Two developments countered this trend: an alliance with Burundian rebels and the 2011 elections. These were to have important consequences on the way the Mai-Mai operated, as they started to engage in more explicitly criminal activities and roughened their political and military operations. This diminished their dependence on local community resources and reduced their sense of accountability to local leaders. It eroded the popularity of the Mai-Mai leadership, which gradually came to be seen as extremist and bent on self-enrichment. Furthermore, new alliances and sources of income unleashed strong internal tensions and centrifugal tendencies in the movement, with dissatisfied commanders starting to act increasingly on their own. This led to a further deterioration in the Mai Mai's conduct towards civilians.

In Burundi, the political opposition disputed the results of the 2010 elections, and the three main opposition leaders went into exile. These included Agathon Rwasa, leader of the *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL, National Liberation Forces), who decided to return to the bush. Rwasa crossed into South Kivu, where he sought to set up a rear base. The strategic coastal strip of Lake Tanganyika, controlled by Yakutumba, suited his purposes perfectly. Not only was it off-limits for the Burundian security services but it was also badly controlled by the Congolese authorities. The most important military force there was a unit of the First Naval Sector, controlled by Bembe General Lokole until his death in July 2010. A large part of the marines in this sector consisted of former Mai-Mai, who had been integrated after the war without any form of *brassage*, and whose loyalties to the national army were questionable.

Lake Tanganyika also presented ample opportunities for smuggling, specifically to Tanzania. Since their inception, the Mai-Mai Yakutumba had obtained a substantial part of their income from exploitation of natural resources, in particular through taxation and trade in gold from the mining areas of Misisi and Mukera, the copper deposits in Yungu, and

the hardwoods of the Ngandja forest. From 2011 onwards, when an important quantity of gold was discovered near the village of birth of Abwe Mapigano, Yakutumba's deputy commander, the Mai-Mai also exercised substantial control over the newly created mining site of Makama. All these areas of resources extraction are close to Lake Tanganyika, allowing for easy smuggling across the water. Looba Undji's frequent trips to the Tanzanian island of Ujiji, where the Mai-Mai have a liaison base, should be seen in this light.⁴⁴

The FNL similarly had extensive support and supply networks in Tanzania, including among police and army officers. Furthermore, both Yakutumba and the FNL recruited among Congolese and Burundian refugees in Tanzania. In 2010, there were still over 60,000 Congolese refugees in Tanzania, mostly Bembe, and over 47,000 recent Burundian refugees, in addition to the 162,000 having arrived in previous decades.⁴⁵ This confluence of interests and networks boosted the alliance between the two armed groups.

Yakutumba's alliance with the FNL, leading to the presence of an estimated 80–120 Burundian combatants in his ranks, transformed the Mai-Mai's armed wing. It gained access to more advanced weaponry, such as 12.7mm and 14.5mm machine guns, and the FNL provided military training, strategic advice and limited operational support. For example, in April and May 2011, a two-month training exercise was conducted for both Congolese and some Burundian combatants in Talama, on the coast of Lake Tanganyika close to the border between Fizi and Katanga, which had become the centre of Mai-Mai activities.⁴⁶

This training was not only military: Yakutumba and Looba Undji also insisted that ideology, including religion and national history, be taught. This new emphasis on religion was reflected in the addition of the word 'Allelujah' to the name of the group at the end of 2010, eventually

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44 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 53.

45 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Report 2010*, p. 45.

46 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 54.

leading to a formal re-baptizing of the armed wing as *Forces armées alléluia* (FAAL, Allelujah Armed Forces). At the start of 2011, the movement became known as PARC-FAAL, reflecting the increasing importance of the political wing.

The FNL's influence became evident during 2011, as Yakutumba became involved in increasingly brutal piracy on Lake Tanganyika. In June 2011, his troops captured the ship *Ulindi*, demanding a cash ransom of \$15,000. The next month, PARC-FAAL sent a letter to the president of the ship-owners' association in Uvira, demanding a contribution of \$500 per ship for every passage over the lake.⁴⁷ This led ship-owners to reroute their boats as much as possible through Tanzanian territorial waters, but could not prevent further incidents. Later in July, FAAL launched a surprise attack on the port town of Wimbi, just south of Talama, capturing military equipment from the FARDC.⁴⁸ In September 2011, the FAAL again managed to hijack two big ships. In return for their release, they received considerable sums of cash and amounts of fuel. This shows how the diminished dependence on community contributions made the Mai Mai increasingly resemble criminal racketeers.

Radicalization in a rough electoral climate (2011–2012)

2011 started with a restructuring of the FARDC in the Kivus. This so-called 'regimentation' process—regrouping brigades into regiments—was intended to reduce the influence of the ex-CNDP, but produced the opposite result.⁴⁹ The increased prominence of Rwandophone officers in the army once again served to validate Yakutumba's conspiracy theories, and proved useful in ethnic identity-based electoral campaigning. Around the same time, in January 2011, the Congolese army succeeded

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47 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 214.

48 MONUSCO internal report, 16 July 2011, on file with the Rift Valley Institute.

49 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 81–3. See also Jason Stearns, *From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2012), pp. 39–40.

in brokering an integration deal with the Banyamulenge FRF rebels.⁵⁰ Yakutumba had long invoked the existence of the FRF as one of the main reasons for his group's resistance: after the movement was disbanded, the FARDC issued a deadline to Yakutumba to integrate. Expressing some initial interest—perhaps aware that negotiations can be a lucrative business—the PARC-FAAL issued a new list of political demands; but no substantial negotiations followed.

As the presidential and parliamentary elections approached, the government initiated a new push to neutralize armed groups ahead of the polls. While this weakened Yakutumba militarily, the same electoral pressures reinforced his political position. The electoral hopefuls that supported the Mai-Mai relied on them to boost their popularity: they had to make it seem that these politicians, as one civil society activist explained, were the 'guarantors of security' in Fizi.⁵¹

To understand the impact that Yakutumba had on the 2011 electoral process, it is necessary to consider relations between the group and civilians in general. The Mai-Mai Yakutumba are embedded in civilian networks in Fizi through family, clan and political relations. These relations are shaped by a wide variety of often fluctuating motives, and oscillate between persuasion and coercion: while some cooperate voluntarily, either for personal gain or out of commitment to the movement and its ideology, others merely contribute out of fear, sometimes as a result of intimidation and social pressures from Mai-Mai networks.

A number of influential customary chiefs in Fizi are known to be supporters of Yakutumba, including the *chefs de localité* of the mining areas of Misisi and Mukera.⁵² At the village level, important support is given by members of so called *comités de base* (grassroots committees) that PARC has organized in places where there are concentrations of supporters, such as in Mukera, Lubondja, Ubwari, and the coastal strip from Kazimia

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50 Stearns et al., *Banyamulenge*, pp. 36–8.

51 Usalama Project Interviewee #605, via telephone, 31 March 2013.

52 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 56 and 58.

to Wimbi. At times, heads of these local committees reportedly have to collect \$50 a month in contributions. Villages without such committees are also expected to contribute. Refusing such support is dangerous: the *groupement* chief of Ubwari, Nilingita Mvano, was forced to flee the peninsula in June 2008 following threats from Yakutumba. His successor, Mwami Kisesa, encountered similar problems in 2011.⁵³

Authorities appointed by the central government, such as the sector chiefs or territorial administrators, have not been spared either. The sector chief of Ngandja was briefly kidnapped in 2009, after he participated in a mission to convince youth not to join the Mai-Mai. A more serious case occurred in August 2011, when the deputy administrator of Fizi, Kashindi Kati, was kidnapped in Ngalula and held hostage for weeks. As a protégé of Pardonne Kaliba, an enemy of Yakutumba and head of the PRM political party, he was a clear target.

The incident with Kashindi Kati shows how PARC-FAAL, due to their dense social networks, reputation, and the ability to use violence, became a valuable asset for candidates in the 2011 elections. ‘Most of the candidates for parliament here in Fizi supported Yakutumba, they felt you had to,’ one civil society activist argued, a view supported by United Nations reports and other local leaders.⁵⁴

The most prominent case is that of Jemsi Mulengwa, a Bembe politician and businessman who used to be the leader of the *Emo ‘ya m’mbondo*, a Bembe community group, in Kinshasa. Numerous informants assert that Mulengwa has supported Yakutumba’s rebellion.⁵⁵ In July 2011, in the run-up to the election, he is alleged to have provided financial support during a period when the government was courting Yakutumba

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53 According to some, it is also significant that the chief is from the Babwari ethnic community, who have had tense relations with the Bembe in the past.

54 Usalama Project interviewees #606, Fizi, 15 March 2013, and #607, 15 March 2013; see also UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 56.

55 Usalama Project interviewees #605, Uvira, 12 March 2013, and #606, Fizi, 15 March 2013.

for integration.⁵⁶ According to a civil society activist who attended one of his election rallies in Fizi, Mulengwa argued against the recreation of an administrative unit for the Banyamulenge, the Minembwe *territoire* which had previously existed under the RCD occupation of South Kivu:

Jemsi said: ‘Don’t choose anyone else than Jamesi. The other candidates who are coming asking for your vote support the Banyarwanda, they want to create Minembwe territory [i.e. a Banyamulenge stronghold]. If you choose Louise Munga [another candidate], you choose Kabila, who is backed by Rwanda. I’m behind Yakutumba, he is our son and our *mkombozi* [saviour]. Without him, we will be victims of the Banyarwanda.’⁵⁷

Jemsi was not alone. According to a member of Yakutumba’s command, there was another parliamentary candidate, Dr Ambatobe Nyongolo, who asked Yakutumba for protection during his campaign.⁵⁸ Anzuluni Bembe, who is less wealthy than the other candidates, provided little financial help but endorsed Yakutumba’s cause.⁵⁹ All of these candidates ran on an anti-Kabila platform, condemning the president as a Rwandan stooge. According to members of the PARC-FAAL, as well as Congolese intelligence officers, Mulengwa and others have also discouraged Yakutumba from integrating into the army.⁶⁰

Mulengwa’s involvement illustrates the popularity that Yakutumba enjoys among Bembe organizations in Kinshasa and the diaspora, who provide various forms of moral, political and sometimes financial support.⁶¹ One vehicle through which such support is organized is the

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56 UN Security Council, UN S/2011/738, p. 56.

57 Usalama Project interviewee #605, Uvira, 12 March 2013.

58 Usalama Project interviewee #605, via telephone, 23 March 2013.

59 UN Security Council, UN S/2011/738, p. 56.

60 Usalama Project interviewees #605, Uvira, 12 March 2013, #606, Fizi, 15 March 2013, and #602, Baraka, 13 March 2013.

61 Usalama Project interviewee #605, via email, 31 March 2013.

mutualité (self-help organization). Key ethnically-based structures for the Congolese diaspora in neighbouring countries such as Burundi, and commonly involved in electoral campaigning, *mutualités* are also used to foster support and collect contributions for armed groups.⁶²

In the run-up to the elections the pressures of radical political elements from Kinshasa and the diaspora converged with extremist voices inside the movement, where the influence of the hard-liner Looba Undji was growing. This was manifested in a more aggressive attitude towards the Banyamulenge, leading to a rise in cattle rustling.⁶³

Given their strong attachment to cattle—not to mention the value of cows as a commodity—one of the most effective ways to inflict harm upon the Banyamulenge is by stealing their livestock. These raids often occur during *transhumance*, the temporary migration of cows to better grazing grounds during the dry season. During *transhumance*, cows often trample farmers' fields, exacerbating communal conflict. In the run-up to elections, there was a pronounced increase in cattle raids: in August 2011, the FAAL raided between 200–400 cows in the Ngandja forest, killing two herders in the process. Due to the tense climate surrounding the elections, the incident caused a significant stir.

On 4 October 2011, a vehicle from the humanitarian organization Eben-Ezer was ambushed in Kalungwe village, near Fizi town. After the passengers were separated according to their ethnic origins, seven Banyamulenge were killed, while those of other ethnicities were set free. Eyewitnesses clearly identified Mai-Mai Yakutumba under the command of Ebuela Kitongano, as the culprits. From the phone conversations overheard and the way in which the operation unfolded, it was obvious that the ambush had been organized in advance. Moreover, those

62 ADEPAE/Arche d'Alliance/RIO, 'Au-delà des «groupes armés». Conflits locaux et connexions sous régionales. L'exemple de Fizi et Uvira (Sud Kivu, RDC)', Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala, 2011, pp. 109–11.

63 Interview with anonymous source, Uvira, 14 January 2012; interview with anonymous source, Baraka, 25 February 2012.

executing the operation were reporting to and coordinating with others, indicating that they were not acting on their own initiative.⁶⁴

The incident may have been intended to galvanize electoral support for the rebels' backers by stoking ethnic animosity, or caused by internal tensions in the movement. Either way, the massacre strengthened support for Yakutumba among sympathizers, although many others in Fizi disapproved of the act. Refusing to believe that Yakutumba was behind the murders, they spoke of a conspiracy to smear him, pointing out that the massacre had occurred close to an FARDC base. In this manner the massacre ended up reinforcing the belief, held by many of the Mai-Mai's supporters, that the international community and the Congolese government were being manipulated by Banyamulenge. The announcement made by the commander of FARDC operations in South Kivu that the army would now ensure 'the definitive end' of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba, confirmed their suspicions that the incident had been provoked in order to find a reason to crack down on the rebels.

Mai-Mai Yakutumba on their way out? (2012–present)

The Eben-Ezer massacre was followed by a round of military operations that weakened the FAAL, as it pushed them out of some of their strongholds and constrained their movements. It is possible that this motivated PARC-FAAL to enter into yet another round of talks with the government, as negotiations often lead to a temporary lull in military pressure.

In March 2012, the rebels sent a delegation to Bukavu to talk with the government, but the negotiations stalled. Shortly after, in April 2012, a mutiny broke out among FARDC troops in Fizi and Uvira territories, the precursor to the M23 rebellion.

Yakutumba took advantage of the distraction to retake some of the positions from which he had been driven, including the Ubwari peninsula,

64 Human Rights Watch, 'DR Congo. Awaiting Justice One Year After Ethnic Attack', 4 October 2012; Usalama Project interviewee #607, Fizi, 15 March 2013.

Kazimia port and the mining zones of Makama and Talama.⁶⁵ More surprisingly, given the group's historical antipathy toward Rwanda, the PARC-FAAL briefly flirted with an M23 alliance, allegedly meeting with leaders affiliated to the M23 and the Rwandan government.⁶⁶ According to PARC-FAAL members, the talks failed because of ideological differences and limited prospects for Yakutumba to exercise influence on the movement.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Yakutumba staged an attack on Fizi town in June 2012, an operation that Congolese authorities claim was linked to M23 advances in North Kivu, but which met with only limited success.

The Congolese government, intent on preventing the M23 from gaining allies, began making entreaties to Yakutumba again in late 2012. This time, the talks gained more momentum than in previous rounds. One reason for this is that FAAL had been militarily weakened by the withdrawal of the FNL in late 2012. The reasons for this withdrawal have never become entirely clear. Some suggest that it had been provoked by the pressure exerted on Yakutumba to separate himself from all foreigners after the M23 rebellion began.⁶⁸ In addition, some of his officers, in particular his deputy Abwe Mapigano, were frustrated with the rising importance of the FNL within the movement: at one point, a substantial part of Yakutumba's personal bodyguard consisted of Burundian fighters. Others suggest that the FNL had their own motives for leaving the area and moving northwards, including internal fissures. Whatever the motive, by the end of 2012, Yakutumba had lost some of his most battle-hardened fighters, although the renewed appearance

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65 UN Security Council, S/2012/348, 'Interim report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 21 June 2012, p. 15.

66 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, 'Final report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 15 November 2012, p. 24; Usalama Project interviewees #602, Baraka, 13 March 2013, and #608, Fizi, 15 March 2013.

67 Usalama Project interviewee #605, via email, 12 April 2013.

68 Usalama Project interviewees #608, Fizi, 15 March 2013, #602, Baraka, 12 March 2013, and #606, Fizi, 15 March 2013.

of Burundian fighters during hostilities in the course of 2013 indicates that a small group might have remained or returned.⁶⁹

Even more important for progress in the talks was growing dissatisfaction among his supporters. ‘The population is tired of the war. This time around, Yakutumba is under a lot of pressure from his constituency to integrate into the Congolese army,’ one local administrator suggested.⁷⁰ In December 2012, the group started to hint at their willingness to integrate, which they confirmed at a radio speech in January 2013. ‘When he decided to join an integration process, it was like New Year’s here in Fizi,’ a civil society activist said; ‘people went into the streets to celebrate.’⁷¹ The elections were over and support from political elites had declined, while the pretext of a Banyamulenge insurgency had also disappeared. Among a war-weary population, this increased the attraction of a peaceful end to the cycle of insurgencies that has hampered the economic development of Fizi territory for decades.

On 5 February 2013, Yakutumba began sending troops to an integration camp in Sebele, approximately 30 km south of Baraka. Soon around 250 troops had gathered there, well over half of his estimated numbers. By July 2013, despite equipment, and probably some money, provided by the government to help regroup his troops, most of Yakutumba’s men had left to take up positions on Ubwari and in nearby mining areas, and the Congolese army declared the process a failure. Officials close to the talks suggest that Yakutumba was merely seeking respite from military pressure and to benefit from the financial opportunities offered by negotiations, while Looba Undji refused to integrate as long as PARC has not been recognized as a political party.⁷² Yet since the government

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69 Radio Okapi, ‘Sud-Kivu: Des combats opposent les FARDC aux miliciens Yakutumba à Fizi’, 9 August 2013.

70 Usalama Project interviewee #609, Baraka, 13 March 2013.

71 Usalama Project interviewee #611, Bukavu, 27 July 2013.

72 Usalama Project interviewee #611, Bukavu, 27 July 2013.

continued to insist that army integration is a precondition for the registration of the party, the same stalemate emerged as in 2009.

Yakutumba was also worried about his personal future. ‘He knows that he will probably be arrested if he hands himself in,’ said a civil society member who speaks with him regularly.⁷³ The Eben-Ezer massacre of 2011 is a particular concern, as are the cattle-raids and his piracy on Lake Tanganyika. He was also afraid that he would lack the troops necessary to push through the steep demands he was making for integration: he claimed to have no fewer than 11,000-16,000 troops, but is unlikely to have more than 500. When he embarked on a hasty recruitment of young fighters to inflate his numbers in early 2013, he received only a paltry few dozen— a clear sign of his waning popularity.

Finally, Yakutumba’s and Looba’s deep suspicion of Rwandophones persists, as does the prevalence of Rwandophones in the army, reducing the likelihood of integration. As one Congolese army officer put it:

Yakutumba is based south of Baraka, where the 1st Battalion of the 104th Regiment is based. The commander of the battalion is a Munyamulenge. His superior commander, the regiment commander, is Colonel Kazungu Mupenzi, another Munyamulenge.⁷⁴ His deputy is Raturara Jaguar, a Hutu. The commander of the sector is Colonel Rutamura Alexi, another Munyamulenge. Then, of course, the commander of the military region is General Patrick Masunzu, a Munyamulenge. So you can see why Yakutumba is reluctant to join.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, the Congolese army remained hopeful that internal divisions within Yakutumba’s leadership and increased military pressure would eventually persuade him to leave the bush. However, these assumptions proved unfounded. Yakutumba soon started to use his

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73 Usalama Project interviewee #606, Fizi, 15 March 2013.

74 Note that the term ‘Munyamulenge’ is used here to indicate any Rwandophone, whether from North or South Kivu.

75 Usalama Project interviewee #602, Baraka, 14 March 2013.

newly-won freedom of movement, including the car he was given to gather his troops, to harness support in all corners of Fizi, even crossing into Maniema and Shabunda to forge alliances with armed groups there.

On 8 August, heavy fighting broke out between the FARDC and Yakutumba's forces in Katanga, Sebele and Malinde (near Baraka), leading the FARDC to declare that they now considered Yakutumba an enemy. A few days later, on 13 August, Yakutumba attacked the town of Baraka, allegedly to release 12 Mai-Mai taken prisoner in the earlier fighting. While the outcome of these developments is far from clear, it appeared that the integration process had definitely collapsed, demonstrating once more the limitations of army integration as sole approach to ending armed group activity.

4. Explaining the persistence of insurgency in Fizi

The fact that rebellion has persisted in Fizi territory for most of the 43 years since Congolese independence is a due to a particular array of factors. Perhaps most noticeable are the local grievances linked to resistance by the Bembe community to the government in Kinshasa and the neighbouring Banyamulenge community. Since the Second Congo War, another factor has been added: memories of violence carried out by Rwandan-backed rebellions in Fizi between 1996 and 2003. These resentments have been kept alive by the prevalence of Hutu and Tutsi in Congolese army units until today.

But it was not these grievances that triggered the emergence of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba in 2007. To understand this, it is necessary to look to a different social stratum: elite networks within the army and politics. Mai-Mai Yakutumba has become a prime example of the kind of militia politics that arguably forms the crux of violence in the eastern DRC: an increasing tendency by military and political elites in the region to support armed rebellions to gain clout and leverage. The attempted peace processes in the DRC have done little to address this nexus of violence and power, and have even promoted it, allowing armed groups to be turned into key instruments of political and military entrepreneurs' power projects.⁷⁶

Finally, in order to understand the long history of insurgency in Fizi, one needs to look at the enabling factors: Fizi's strategic location along Lake Tanganyika, and its abundance of natural resources, as well as the legacy of past rebellions, which, together with rampant poverty, has created a ready pool of experienced recruits and officers. Just as former

76 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Judith Verweijen, 'The volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse. Rebel-military integration and conflict dynamics in eastern DRC', *African Affairs* (forthcoming, October 2013).

Simba rebels and Hewa Bora *maquisards* played a key role in mobilization during the AFDL and RCD wars, Yakutumba draws upon those who served in the Mai-Mai during the Congo wars and even before. This highlights the failure of demobilization efforts.

Grassroots grievances

Perhaps nowhere else in the eastern Congo is communal conflict as clearly on display as in Fizi territory. The antipathy between Bembe and Banyamulenge communities is alarming, and draws on decades of conflict. In part, this conflict can be traced back to struggles over local power: the Banyamulenge have long demanded a territory and officially recognized customary chiefs, and Yakutumba's emergence was partially due to the persistence of Banyamulenge armed groups on the *Hauts Plateaux*. The fact that cattle belonging to Banyamulenge often trample the crops of Bembe farmers during the *transhumance* season compounds this feud.⁷⁷

The conflicts are nourished by a belief on the part of the Bembe that they are the original inhabitants of Fizi and that they have always resisted outside intervention, whether by Arab slave traders in the nineteenth century, by Mobutu's western-backed campaigns in the 1960s, or by alleged Rwandan irredentism since 1996.⁷⁸ These self-portrayals rest on idealized notions of the Bembe as proud warriors. The inhabitants and customary chiefs of Ngandja, the Mai-Mai Yakutumba's heartland, declare themselves to be most authentic Bembe, and Yakutumba is the flag-bearer for these values.

The absence of strong leadership from Kinshasa and Bukavu has allowed power struggles in Fizi to fester. There has been almost no reconciliation between local communities, leaving each group with growing prejudices toward the other. What little reconciliation work has been done has been spearheaded by NGOs and churches, not by the

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77 Stearns et al., *Banyamulenge*, pp. 24–5 and 49.

78 Vlassenroot, *South Kivu*.

government. No one has been brought to justice for crimes committed here during the spates of violence since 1990. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2004–6) left no mark.

It is striking that these grievances have most consistently fuelled support for insurgent movements in the parts of Fizi that are most isolated and poor. In the 1960s and 1990s, armed groups mobilized mainly in the sectors of Ngandja and Lulenge, where since the colonial days there have been fewer mission churches and schools, as well as fewer plantations and roads.

Militia politics

Like other local militia in the eastern Congo, the Fizi Mai-Mai have developed increasingly strained relations with their local social base. It was not grassroots pressures that led to the group's creation in 2007, but the failure of the integration process: Dunia, Yakutumba and many of the Bembe Mai-Mai commanders felt snubbed by the new Congolese army. Seizing on the democratic moment—Yakutumba's defection came just months after the country's first multiparty elections in 35 years—the group was able to stitch together alliances with Bembe politicians in Kinshasa, Bukavu and the diaspora. The initial impetus for the group, therefore, came from military elites and politicians, not from local inhabitants.

While Yakutumba continues to rely on local chiefs for tax collection and recruitment, these chiefs are often collaborating out of fear. Furthermore, there are indications that, while the suspicion felt towards all Kinyarwanda-speakers in Fizi has not subsided, many among the local population feel that the Mai-Mai have become more a liability than a protection force, as the insecurity caused by on-going clashes has severely impaired their livelihoods.

Meanwhile Yakutumba has become more reliant on allies from outside the narrow confines of Fizi. His short-lived alliance with the Burundian FNL, his continuing contacts with the FDLR in Ngandja, and his ties with Bembe elites in Kinshasa and abroad are all indications that his main source of support is not the local community—although the latter

remains crucial for enabling his operations. These war-weary populations and the few civil society organizations in Fizi and Uvira that have dared to speak out against the Mai-Mai's abuses will be crucial allies in any efforts to tackle elite networks.

Failed demobilization

One of the best predictors of where a new insurgency will emerge in the eastern DRC is to look for past movements: armed groups beget armed groups, as commanders can take advantage of networks of former combatants and rekindle relations with smugglers, arms dealers and miners. As one local leader put it: 'We Bembe are doomed to be in eternal rebellion.'⁷⁹

A key factor in this reproduction of rebellions has been the availability of former combatants. According to some sources, a large percentage of Yakutumba's combatants and officers are former recruits. The country's main demobilization program between 2004–7 demobilized over 100,000 soldiers, but perhaps up to 30 per cent of them never benefitted from a substantial integration package. Even those who did receive such packages were often left unemployed, due to the chronic lack of economic opportunities as well as the limitations of the programme itself.

Insurgency has become a way of life for thousands of young men—women combatants are very rare—in the eastern DRC. Despite the poor conditions in which many of them fight, soldiering provides a rare avenue of social mobility, allowing youths not only to get access to quick money, but also to the possibility of moving away from home and obtaining a position in government. Perhaps most importantly, joining an armed group allows young men to combat the humiliation and poverty that

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79 Usalama Project interviewee #605, via telephone, 15 April 2013.

characterize much of everyday life, as it provides a sense of empowerment and direction.⁸⁰

The Congolese government has hitherto been reluctant to launch another demobilization exercise, fearing that this could foster perverse incentives to mobilize new groups. While this fear is well-founded, given past experiences, it should not leave the remaining armed groups—which were estimated to number around 4,000 combatants before the M23 crisis—with no option other than fighting or army integration.⁸¹ But given how armed group mobilization usually proceeds in the region, with the impetus often coming from military elites or politicians, the risk for counter-productive effects applies mostly to commanders and not rank-and-file soldiers.

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80 Luca Jourdan, 'Being at War, Being Young: Violence and Youth in North Kivu', in *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo* (eds. Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymaekers) (Ghent: Academia Press Scientific Publishers, 2004), pp. 157–76.

81 Usalama Project Interviewee #417, Bukavu, 13 March 2011.

5. Policy considerations

Finding solutions to the entrenched problems that are at the root of insurgencies in the DRC will likely take decades, especially dealing with the long-term challenges of reconciliation, state building and development. However, there are more immediate possibilities for tackling the instability in Fizi. The following is an outline of key challenges and possible solutions.

Promoting community reconciliation and cohesion

There is an urgent need to intensify reconciliation efforts between the Bembe and Banyamulenge communities. Such reconciliation work needs to address past grievances as well as bridging rifts between the younger generation of each group. It should address thorny issues like accountability for past violence, conflicts over the *transhumance* of cattle, and provide suggestions for administrative reforms. Such a process will require the Kinshasa government to step in to prevent local politicians or chiefs from hijacking any talks.

Several initiatives provide new avenues for addressing these challenges. The Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework ('The Framework Agreement') signed by 11 countries in the region in February 2013 commits the DRC to 'further the agenda of reconciliation, tolerance and democratization'. One of the measures currently being weighed up by the Congolese government for the implementation of the Framework Agreement is the strengthening of the *barza communautaire*, a community-based forum in which representatives from different communities meet. The existing examples of the *barza*, however, are weak or dormant, and the results of past efforts have been disappointing: they do not have the power to investigate or try past crimes, and have scant resources. Moreover, many of the communities that are represented in these forums lack cohesion and their delegates are often short on legitimacy. The Congolese government should therefore go beyond the *barza* model and work towards building representative and cohesive platforms.

The other initiative that could further reconciliation is the revised stabilization strategy currently being elaborated by international donors and the Congolese government. The revised ISSSS is pushing for a democratic dialogue at local level. Strengthening initiatives such as the CCI (*Cadres de concertation inter-communautaire*/Platforms for Inter-community Dialogue) which are active in Fizi, and turning them into broad-based platforms involving moderate local authorities and national politicians, is a potentially promising avenue, especially if it is backed by development projects that foster social and economic interdependency.

Reconciliation programs should take account of the failings of Kinshasa's *Programme de Stabilisation et de Reconstruction de l'Est du Congo* (STAREC, Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme for the Eastern Congo) and the first ISSSS programme which suffered from lack of ownership by the Congolese government, feeble coordination among donors, and minimal involvement by the affected communities and civil society.

Demilitarizing politics

To date, no Congolese politician has ever been arrested for backing an armed group. Yet political elite networks have been the crucial factor in sustaining the Mai-Mai Yakutumba. A first step to addressing these networks would be for the Congolese military and civilian justice system to investigate support for Yakutumba from Congolese politicians. A body of evidence exists that would enable prosecutions to be mounted against key figures involved. Impunity of this kind should be treated with as much urgency as cases of human rights abuse, such as recruitment of child soldiers, which are the symptoms rather than root causes of armed mobilization. A few targeted, well-researched cases could have a far-reaching impact. Donors should also provide support and protection to local investigative journalists and NGOs who document the role of politicians and businessmen in supporting armed groups.

Finally, more effort should be invested in documenting the use of xenophobic and discriminatory rhetoric in the context of electoral campaigns, and holding political actors who employ hate speech to account. This is especially important in the context of the proposed local

elections, which are likely to trigger a new wave of ethnic identity-based mobilization. Those same donors supporting democratization processes should also be committed to mitigating their negative effects.

Sustainable demobilization

The large pool of poorly demobilized combatants is a formidable obstacle confronting efforts to foster security and demilitarize the region. Under its new mandate, the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RDC* (MONUSCO, UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC), is charged with assisting the Congolese government to design a single overarching strategy for demobilization. Talks are currently underway regarding funding for the reintegration into society of 4,000 soldiers from armed groups. This proposal, which at the time of writing had not been finalized, would include vetting for serious human rights offenders, as well as special demobilization packages for senior commanders in armed groups.

There are further considerations. Demobilization is a long-term process that involves the reconfiguration of social networks and identities, requiring extensive follow-up by local authorities and close involvement of local communities. DDR programmes need to make sure that combatants who are demobilized find alternative sources of income and are accepted into civilian life. They also need to address all armed groups at the same time, as mobilization often happens in response to insecurity. And new programmes should be made conditional upon the existence of a comprehensive political and military strategy towards armed groups. As long as there is no clear cut-off date for demobilization, and no sanctions provided for recidivists, such programmes will likely only provide further incentives for mobilization.

Appendix 1: Laurent-Désiré Kabila's 'Seven errors of the Simba revolution'

The 'Seven errors' were identified by Laurent-Désiré Kabila in December 1967:⁸²

FIRST ERROR: We had no adequate political education during the First Revolution.

SECOND ERROR: Without knowing to trust first our own forces, we have counted on external support and advice.

THIRD ERROR: We have started a war without sense and clear objectives, without knowing or understanding why we were fighting, or who was our true enemy. We have hurried to occupy the big towns of different territories and to attack the citizens, forgetting to first occupy the small villages and to collaborate with farmers and workers, so as to advance the revolution.

FOURTH ERROR: We have conducted a war that was tribal and sectarian, that is to say each man for himself and his own community and territory (a war of ethnicity and fractions)

FIFTH ERROR: Because of a lack of discipline, esprit de corps, and mutual understanding, we competed for power and personal honour. Each man wanted to rule, and to obtain positions for himself and his friends.

SIXTH ERROR: We have failed to arrive at mutual understanding and agreement between the combatants and the masses.

SEVENTH ERROR: We carried out a war without a Revolutionary Party.

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82 Wilungula, *Fizi, 1967–1986*, 1997, pp. 47–8.

Appendix 2: Bembe-led ex-Mai-Mai FARDC brigades before brassage (2005)

NAME	COMMANDER	LOCATION HQ
115th Brigade	Colonel Godefroid Ngomanya	Kilembwe (Lulenge sector, Fizi)
117th Brigade	Colonel Rashid Mayele	Swima (Tanganyika sector, Fizi)
118th Brigade	Colonel Ngufu Jumaine	Baraka (Mutambala sector, Fizi)
107th Brigade	Colonel Georges Alunda Maukya	Kamituga (Mwenga territory)

Appendix 3: Mai-Mai groups in Fizi and Itombwe emerging after the transition (2006–8)

NAME AND ETHNIC GROUP	PREVIOUS POSITION	LOCATION
Amuri Yakutumba (Bembe)	Battalion commander 118th Brigade of Colonel Ngufu	Fizi centre
Mulumba (Nyindu)	Second lieutenant 115th Brigade of Colonel Ngomanya	Kasolero (Lulenge sector of Fizi)
Assani Ngungu Ntamushobora (Fuliiru)	(Uncertain)	Milimba (Fizi)
Aoci Behekelwa (Bembe)	Company commander 107th Brigade of Colonel Alunda (succeeding Itachanga in 2008)	Mbandakila/Basimunyaka Nord (Itombwe, Mwenga)
Kapopo Alunda(Bembe)	Battalion commander 107th Brigade of his father, Colonel Alunda Lubumba	(Itombwe, Mwenga)

Glossary of acronyms, words and phrases

AFDL	<i>Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre</i> /Alliance for Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre
<i>barza communautaire</i>	community-based forum for dialogue (coll. French)
<i>brassage</i>	integration of militias into Congolese army; lit., 'brewing' (French)
<i>candidats malheureux</i>	failed electoral candidates (French)
CCI	<i>Cadres de concertation inter-communautaire</i> /Platforms for Inter-community Dialogue
<i>chef de localité</i>	local customary chieftain (French)
CNDD-FDD	<i>Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie</i> /National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy
CNDP	<i>Congrès national pour la défense du peuple</i> /National Congress for the Defence of the People
CNL	<i>Conseil national de libération</i> /National Liberation Council
CNS	<i>Conférence nationale souveraine</i> /National Sovereign Conference
<i>comité de base</i>	grassroots committee (French)
<i>dawa</i>	medicine (Swahili); magical amulet or potion used by local militia to protect themselves against harm
<i>Emo 'ya m'mbondo</i>	Bembe community group
FAAL	<i>Forces armées alléluia</i> /Allelujah Armed Forces
FAC	<i>Forces armées congolaises</i> /Congolese Armed Forces
FAP	<i>Forces armées populaires</i> (Popular Armed Forces, armed wing of Kabila <i>maquis</i>) or <i>Forces d'autodéfense populaire</i> (Popular Self-defence Forces Mai Mai umbrella organization during Second Congo War)
FARDC	<i>Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> /Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

FDLR	<i>Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda</i> /Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda
<i>féticheur</i>	witchdoctor (French)
FNL	<i>Forces nationales de libération</i> /National Liberation Forces
FRF	<i>Forces républicaines fédéralistes</i> /Republican Federalist Forces
<i>groupement</i>	administrative sector
<i>Hauts Plateaux</i>	Highland territory (with Banyamulenge majority)
<i>indigènes</i>	Original indigenous population of the eastern DRC; a term with overt political overtones
ISSSS	International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, also known as I4S
<i>Mai-Mai</i>	community-based self-defence militias; from <i>maji</i> , ‘water’ (Kiswahili)
<i>maquis</i>	bush (French); hence movement based in the bush
<i>maquisard</i>	bush fighter (French)
MNC	<i>Mouvement national congolais</i> /National Congolese Movement
MONUSCO	<i>Mission de l’Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RDC</i> /UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC
MP	<i>Majorité présidentielle</i> /Presidential Majority
Mulelist	Follower of Pierre Mulele, Congolese rebel in the 1960s
<i>mutualité</i>	self-help organization
<i>nationalité douteuse</i>	doubtful citizenship
PARC	<i>Parti pour l’action et la reconstruction du Congo</i> /Party for Action and the Reconstruction of the Congo
PARECO	<i>Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais</i> /Coalition of Congolese Resistant Patriots
PRM	<i>Patriotes résistants Mai-Mai</i> /Resistant Mai-Mai Patriots
PRP	<i>Parti de la révolution populaire</i> /Popular Party for the Revolution
RCD	<i>Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie</i> /Congolese Rally for Democracy
<i>Réformé</i>	Reformed (French)
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front

Simba	lion (Swahili)
SOE	<i>Secteur opérationnel est</i> /Operational Sector East
STAREC	<i>Programme de Stabilisation et de Reconstruction de l'Est du Congo</i> /Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme for the Eastern Congo
<i>territoire</i>	administrative entity at level between <i>collectivité</i> and district
<i>transhumance</i>	temporary migration of cows during dry season
<i>Umoja Wetu</i>	Our Unity
UNEBAFI	<i>Union économique des Babembe de Fizi</i> /Economic Union of the Babembe of Fizi

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THE USALAMA PROJECT IS OF GREAT VALUE BOTH TO US IN THE CONGO AND TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY—TO ALL THOSE WHO SEEK TO HELP RETURN LIFE IN THE DRC TO NORMALITY. THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON TO BE DRAWN FROM THE USALAMA REPORTS IS THAT WE SHOULD LEARN FROM HISTORY: THOSE WHO IGNORE THEIR OWN HISTORY WILL REPEAT THE ERRORS OF THE PAST.

—KIZITO MUSHIZI, UNC, MP FOR BUKAVU



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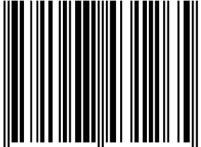


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