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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Rebels Likely to Expand Control in East

Summary: March 23 Movement (M23) rebels will likely continue to expand their territorial control over the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which very likely lacks the leverage to oppose M23 or its backers in Kigali diplomatically or militarily.

Development: On 14 February, M23 rebels entered Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province and the second-largest city in the eastern DRC. As of 16 February, the rebels have reached the city center; Kinshasa has not confirmed whether the rebels fully control the city, but residents have reported seeing M23 troops and few clashes. In January, M23 seized Goma, the capital of the neighboring North Kivu province and the largest city in the region, and four other towns. M23 is a Congolese Tutsi rebel group with approximately 8,000 fighters that purports to protect the rights and interests of the Tutsi and other minority groups. According to the United Nations Security Council, Kigali exercises de facto control over M23 operations and has sent 3,000 to 4,000 Rwandan troops to fight alongside them; Kigali denies its involvement. M23 also collects approximately \$800,000 per month from controlling the region's extensive mineral resources, much of which it ships to Rwanda, according to *Al Jazeera*.

Analysis: M23 will almost certainly continue to advance in the Eastern DRC. It may advance to the nearby town of Bugobe next. Kinshasa very likely lacks the capability to oppose the rebels, as shown by the relative lack of fighting and rapid rebel advance into Bukavu. An imminent diplomatic resolution will likely not occur, as Kinshasa very likely lacks the leverage to force M23 and Kigali to negotiate. The African Union and other international actors may institute sanctions against Kigali and M23, but these would likely not compel Kigali to withdraw support from M23. M23's capabilities will likely continue to grow as its territorial control expands, as it will control more mineral resources, which it can use as a funding source. This may reduce its dependence on Kigali, which could reduce Kigali's ability to mandate a ceasefire should negotiations occur. However, the funding increase from expanded territorial control would almost certainly not be sufficient for M23 to fully assert independence from Kigali.

[Christina Muchow]

CHINA: Fighter Jet Intercepting Patrol Aircraft Likely Indicating Trend in Aggression

Summary: Chinese J-16 fighter jet deploying flares near an Australian P-8 maritime patrol aircraft, likely depicts a growing aggression in the South China Sea.

Development: On 11 February, a J-16 fighter jet with the People's Liberation Army Air Force intercepted a P-8 maritime patrol aircraft with the Royal Australian Air Force over the Paracel Islands, a hotly contested area in the South China Sea. The P-8 was on a routine patrol mission, when the fighter intercepting it released flares near, according to *The Straits Times*. Beijing maintains the P-8 strayed into its airspace and conducted the intercept lawfully and professionally. Beijing and Canberra both lodged diplomatic protests with each other over the incident.

Analysis: Beijing's aggressive actions will likely increase, as they attempt to exert more influence in the region. Beijing will probably conduct more interception operations in international waters. It remains unlikely that Beijing's actions will change the current situation in the South China Sea. It remains highly unlikely that Canberra's intelligence-gathering operations in the area will change as a result of this incident.

[Julian Spagnolo-Crowne]

MEXICO: Cartel Groups Highly Likely to Continue Escalation of Drone Usage

Summary: Cartels are highly likely to continue the escalation of drone usage due to increased efficiency and lowered risk. This escalation has come with ability expansion, moving from reconnaissance and smuggling to recent attacks on US personnel at the border.

Development: On 7 February, a suspected cartel drone flew into the fuel tank of a truck, causing an explosion with an unknown death count in Culiacán, Sinaloa. Cartels likely carried out this attack as part of ongoing operations in the region, according to *La Verdad Noticias*. In response to the growing threat, Mexico City announced plans to implement anti-drone technology in heavily affected regions like Sinaloa and Michoacán. Days before the attack they released a memo detailing the cartels' new authorization for the use of weaponized drones on US personnel, according to *Newsweek*. The cartel escalated its tactics with these newly equipped, explosive drones, according to *Newstarget*. This escalation builds on the historic use of drones for reconnaissance and smuggling, according to *The Latin Times*. Drones eliminate physical limitations associated with humans, enabling operational expansion, according to *News Nation*. Despite innovation in counter-drone technology, the cartels are developing countermeasures against government anti-drone technology, according to *Dedrone*.

Analysis: The cartels' drone deployment frequency will very likely increase as technology improves and becomes cheaper. This use of newly weaponized drones likely signals a shift toward more advanced tactics resembling those of a military force rather than their historical gang-like methods. By using drones to distribute hazards, the cartel will highly likely expand the scale of its operations without the limitations or risks of human involvement. Cartels will likely deploy drones only near the border to avoid major retaliation from the US.

[Anthony Rizza]

About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Currently, Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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Lauren Estrada, a Senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at editorsee@gmail.com or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 466, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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