

Crime

22

FEB
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DRC Alert: Italian ambassador killed in attack on UN humanitarian convoy near Goma in Nyiragongo Territory, North Kivu Province, on February 22

Please be advised

- Reports indicate that three people have been killed, including one victim identified as Italy's Ambassador to the DRC, in an attack by unidentified armed men on a UN humanitarian convoy at around 10:15 (local time) near Kanyamahoro, Nyiragongo Territory, North Kivu Province, on February 22.
- Emerging reports indicate that the assailants allegedly attempted to kidnap the Italian ambassador, who had been present in the province for several days, in the attack.
- The attack was foiled by the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) and the Virunga National Park forest guards.
- Unconfirmed reports indicate that the convoy was reportedly carrying other diplomatic officials along with several humanitarian workers.



Assessments & Forecast

1. While North Kivu Province hosts several prominent active armed groups engaged in conflict against government authorities, the attack's location 15 km north of Goma in Nyiragongo Territory is notable given the relatively limited frequency of armed activity in these areas. This can be attributed to FARDC as well as international support forces being concentrated around Goma due to its importance as the provincial capital. With that said, though Goma and Nyiragongo Territory have not featured as conflict focal points, their proximity to the Virunga National Park continues to represent a prominent security threat due to the presence of several armed groups such as Mai-Mai militias operating across the reserve. Thus, the attack highlights the continued security threat posed by the armed groups to the environs of the provincial capital.
2. Though armed groups are known to target humanitarian convoys with foreign nationals because they represent lucrative kidnap-for-ransom targets, the incident is especially notable given the victim's high-profile diplomatic designation. To that point, reports describing the attack as an abduction attempt suggest the possibility of the perpetrators planning the attack after being alerted by the increased presence of foreign personnel in Goma. At the same time, there exists the possibility of the perpetrators targeting the food convoy for its resource value rather than attempting a pre-planned kidnap-for-ransom scheme. The attack also highlights the relative confidence of criminal elements operating in the area given that the Italian ambassador was likely allotted an extensive security detail, and to this point, the incident highlights the ability of the armed groups to act with relative impunity.
3. **FORECAST:** Given the deceased diplomat's prominence, the incident is likely to elicit widespread domestic and international criticism over the government's perceived lax security provisions in a provincial focal point for armed conflict. Going forward, security forces are likely to launch intensified operations against suspected perpetrators to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian operations. Additionally, security forces are likely to further strengthen their presence around Goma and could restrict movement in and out of the concerned localities as part of anticipated military operations.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Kinshasa and Lubumbashi can continue while adhering to stringent security precautions regarding armed criminal activity.
2. If confronted by armed assailants, it is advised to cooperate fully and not engage in any behavior that could escalate tensions and lead to violence.
3. As a general security precaution, it is advised to avoid all large public gatherings and protests in DRC given the high potential for unrest and other associated security risks.