

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

DRC Monthly Briefing June 2026

DRC Summary 12 June 2026

World Health Organisation on 17 May declares the Ebola outbreak in DRC a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). The public health ministry confirms that as of 7 June, there are 649 confirmed cases, with 118 confirmed deaths. The United States (US) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publishes modelling on 6 June projecting a 65% chance of exceeding 20,000 cases within three months at current isolation rates. The M23 rebel group withdraws from over a dozen localities in the Ruzizi Plain (South Kivu Province) from 9 May under military and diplomatic pressure. M23 leader Corneille Nangaa writes to US secretary of state Marco Rubio on 7 May accusing the US of asymmetric mediation. On 2 June, the US' Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) intelligence commander Gustave Kubwayo and M23 intelligence chief John Imani Nzenze in the first double designation targeting commanders from both sides simultaneously. China-headquartered Zijin Mining's Manono lithium project targets 30 June commissioning as the DRC's first lithium mine, with Zijin marketing all output. The DRC Mining Week 2026 opens in Lubumbashi on 17 June for three days, with an expanded focus on industrialisation and investor engagement from the US, United Arab Emirates (UAE), European Union (EU) and the Gulf.

Ebola outbreak accelerates

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** public health ministry [formally](#) declared an **Ebola** outbreak in **Ituri Province** on 15 May, confirmed as caused by the **Bundibugyo ebolavirus (BDBV)**, a strain for which there is no approved vaccine or treatment, and which has not been seen since a 2012 outbreak in **Uganda**. On 17 May, the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** [declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern \(PHEIC\)](#), citing the unusual clustering of cases across multiple health zones, a rapid geographic expansion into **North Kivu Province**, and confirmed cases in Uganda where two imported cases were identified in **Kampala** on 15 and 16 May. The **Red Cross** [confirmed that three of its workers](#) who died between 5 and 16 May had contracted Ebola on 27 March during dead body management in **Mongwalu** (Ituri), indicating the virus had been circulating in the community for approximately seven weeks before the outbreak was officially declared.

An initial suspected case in **Kinshasa** was reported on 16 May but [tested negative on further confirmatory testing on 17 May](#). Early testing was complicated by a critical diagnostic gap - the **GeneXpert** system, the most used frontline tool in the DRC's outbreak [response](#), detects only Zaire ebolavirus and not Bundibugyo, substantially delaying case confirmation and isolation. The origin of the outbreak is unknown; the earliest known suspected case, a man in Ituri who began experiencing symptoms on 24 April and died three days later, predates the official declaration by three weeks.

The outbreak is accelerating sharply. As of 8 June, the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)** [reported](#) 515 confirmed cases and 91 confirmed deaths, with 283 individuals hospitalised in isolation. The 7 June update from the DRC's health ministry included 134 new confirmed cases and 27 new deaths since the 5 June update alone, a single-period increase of more than 35%. Ituri is by far the most affected, with 487 confirmed cases across 17 health zones. North Kivu has reported 25 confirmed cases from seven health zones, and **South Kivu Province**, three from one health zone. Uganda has confirmed 19 cases and two deaths as of 8 June. The [WHO raised its risk assessment to very high](#) at the national level for DRC on 28 May. [Suspected case counts](#), harder to

track in conflict areas, reached approximately 1,037 as of 29 May, with more than 349 associated deaths.

The **United States (US) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** [published modelling on 5 June](#) warning that the current outbreak could rival the 2014-2016 **West Africa** epidemic, the worst in recorded history. Under a scenario in which only 20% of patients are isolated, the CDC projects a 65% chance of case numbers exceeding 20,000 within just three months. DRC's government insists the situation is under control, repeatedly citing the country's successful management of 16 previous outbreaks. **Bunia Airport** (Ituri) had [briefly reopened on 2 June](#) after the WHO reported a decline in suspected cases from 906 to 116 but this apparent improvement reflected a reclassification of backlogged cases rather than genuine containment, and by 6 June the [DRC re-closed the airport](#) via an [official aviation notice](#) as case numbers surged. Earlier in the outbreak, [the US imposed entry restrictions](#) from 18 May for non-US citizens who had been in the DRC, Uganda or **South Sudan** within the previous 21 days, extended to green card holders on 22 May; travellers are rerouted to airports with enhanced screening at various US airports. Uganda has suspended all flight from the DRC and halted bus and boat border crossings for four weeks.

WHO director general **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** [warned on 27 May](#) that eastern DRC faces a "*catastrophic collision of disease and conflict*", with the outbreak outpacing response efforts. On 29 May, he [called for an immediate ceasefire](#) in eastern DRC to allow health workers to operate safely, framing the security environment as the primary obstacle to containment. Attacks on health facilities limit treatment access; mass displacement accelerates transmission; and **Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)** control over parts of the affected zone prevents coordinated government response. On 21 May, protesters in Ituri [set an Ebola treatment centre on fire](#) after being denied access to the bodies of relatives. On 4 June, an Ebola burial team was attacked in **Katana** in M23-controlled South Kivu, and 11 patients fled isolation facilities in Ituri on the same day.

The international funding response has been substantial. The US [committed over \\$162m in operational funds](#) alongside \$350m in humanitarian assistance on 3 June to lead the regional Ebola response across the DRC, Uganda and South Sudan. The **United Kingdom (UK)** [committed up to \\$26.87m on 20 May](#). **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)** [has deployed large-scale treatment capacity](#), with treatment centres in Mongbwalu (52-bed centre at **Mongbwalu General Referral Hospital**, plus a 65-bed centre under construction), Bunia (36-bed centre at **Elikya Hospital**, expanding to 70 beds), and **Goma** (80-bed centre, first patients admitted 28 May). The CBC model suggests that under the more optimistic scenario of 50% isolation, the probability of exceeding 5,000 cases within three months remains significant. The commercial implications for Ituri's significant gold-producing sector and for cross-border DRC-Uganda trade and logistics are increasingly material.

The security and public health crises in eastern DRC are also deeply connected to regional migration patterns, creating a fragile cycle of displacement. On 6 June, DRC and **Burundi's** governments, alongside the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**, [held talks](#) to evaluate whether security conditions in the eastern DRC are stable enough to allow for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of Congolese refugees. This roadmap seeks to [manage the consequences of the massive displacement](#) that occurred in late 2025 and early 2026, when tens of thousands Congolese civilians fled to Burundi to escape clashes in South Kivu.

[The voluntary repatriation programme](#) officially launched on 23 April, primarily targeting Congolese refugees registered at the **Busuma** site in Burundi's **Buhumuza Province**. By 31 May, five organised convoys had returned 5,461 Congolese refugees to designated resettlement zones in South Kivu (including Uvira, Fizi, Mboko, and the Ruzizi Plain), reducing the Busuma camp's population to 61,239.

M23 pulls from Ruzizi Plain while challenging US neutrality in mediation

From 9 May, thousands of M23 troops [began withdrawing northward](#) from at least a dozen localities in the **Ruzizi Plain** in **Uvira** territory (South Kivu). By 12 May, DRC's armed forces, the **Forces**

Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), had re-entered **Sange, Nyakabere, Mutarule, Luberizi, Bwegera** and **Luvungi**. M23 repositioned toward **Katogota**, [an area previously occupied in December 2025](#) before withdrawing under the **Washington Accords**. The **Security Council Report's June monthly forecast** described the Ruzizi withdrawal as a significant military development but fighting continued nonetheless, with [Wazalendo forces clashing with M23](#) near **Kavumu Airpoty** in the **Kabare** and **Kalehe** districts (South Kivu) throughout May.

In a letter to US secretary of state Marco Rubio [dated](#) 7 May, M23 leader **Corneille Nangaa** accused the US of conducting an asymmetric mediation. Nangaa cited the non-release of [317 prisoners](#) promised within ten days of the 18 April **Montreux Agreement**; condemned US sanctions on both former president **Joseph Kabila** (2001-2019) and the **Rwanda Defence Force (RDF)** as one-sided; and questioned whether the US critical minerals agreement had compromised its neutrality. Nangaa wrote the US had:

"Neither imposed any sanctions nor issued even a simple warning to the leaders in Kinshasa, whose intransigent and arrogant attitude calls into question the impartiality and neutrality of the American Facilitator."

The letter is a formal challenge to the foundational premise of the Washington Accords: that the US can function as a credible mediator while simultaneously pursuing a mineral supply chain partnership with the Congolese government.

On 2 June, the US' **Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)** [imposed sanctions on two armed group commanders](#) simultaneously: **Gustave Kubwayo**, commander of a **Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR)** intelligence and special operations unit; and **John Imani Nzenze**, M23's chief of intelligence. This is the first double designation targeting commanders from both sides of the conflict. US treasury secretary **Scott Bessent** restated that the US expects Rwanda to withdraw its troops and the DRC to neutralise the FDLR. The designation is the fourth in the sequence: the RDF and four officers (2 March), Kabila (30 April), and now FDLR and M23 commanders.

At the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, the [June agenda](#) includes a briefing by **United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)** special representative of the secretary general, **James Swan**, and a vote to renew the **1533 DRC sanctions regime** (expires 1 July) and the group of experts mandate (expires 1 August). The group's final report, due 15 June and reportedly already circulated, describes M23's parallel governance architecture in occupied territory and RDF support for M23's territorial expansion. **France**, the UK and the US have proposed six new individual designations and two entity designations under the non-objection procedure. The A3 Plus grouping (the three African members of the UNSC plus the **Caribbean** representative on the council), **China** and **Russia** prefer straightforward renewal without new designations. The DRC, as an elected UNSC member for 2026-2027, will push for the designations.

DRC enters the battery metals era under Chinese control

China-headquartered **Zijin Mining** is on track to commission the **Manono lithium project** on [30 June](#), making it the DRC's first operational lithium mine. The project [is a joint venture](#) between Zijin's overseas subsidiary, **Jinxiang Lithium Limited** (54.9%), state entity **Cominière** (35.1%), and the Congolese government (10%). The processing plant is designed to handle 500,000 tonnes of spodumene concentrate annually, producing approximately 95,170 tonnes of crude lithium sulphate. [CRU Group estimates](#) that at peak output Manono could account for roughly 5% of global mined lithium supply.

Under the terms of the joint venture, [Zijin will market all initial output](#), including Cominière's share. The arrangement means that the DRC's entry into lithium production is, in commercial terms, entirely managed by a Chinese state-linked entity, deepening the same pattern of Chinese dominance in DRC critical minerals that the US-DRC strategic partnership explicitly seeks to diversify. Notably, [spodumene prices fell more than 80%](#) between 2023 and 2024 and continue to trend downward, compressing the revenue available to both Zijin and the Congolese state from the project's launch.

Manono's commissioning occurs amid a significant shift in the DRC's fiscal policy. The [council of ministers approved a decree](#) on 29 May adding lithium, tantalum, niobium, tungsten, uranium, and rare earths to its official list of "*strategic minerals*". Under the **Mining Code**, minerals designated as strategic are subject to a royalty rate, tripling the standard rate applied to non-ferrous metals. This regulatory change reflects government's deliberate effort to exercise fiscal sovereignty and capture downstream value from minerals critical to the global energy transition.

The project also faces [legal and geopolitical disputes](#). **Australia's AVZ Minerals** continues to challenge the concession's ownership, pursuing international arbitration against the Congolese state after its exploration permit was revoked three years ago. The legal dispute creates significant title risk for Western buyers. The geopolitical dimensions are clear: [during a White House meeting in January 2026](#), US administration officials reportedly urged AVZ executives to sell their remaining interests in the southern portion of the concession to a US company. This would allow the US to develop a separate, competing mine to challenge China's dominance over Congolese lithium. Concurrently, the US is [attempting to secure alternative critical mineral supply chains](#) through the proposed transaction between **Swiss-headquartered Glencore** and the US-backed **Orion Critical Mineral Consortium (Orion CMC)**.

DRC Mining Week to open in Lubumbashi

The **DRC Mining Week 2026 opens in Lubumbashi** on 17 June for three days, with an expanded focus on industrialisation and investor engagement from the US, **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, **European Union (EU)** and the **Gulf**. The event takes place against a backdrop of sustained security risk in the east, the Ebola epidemic, and an active minerals diplomacy agenda.

The **Autorité de Régulation et de Contrôle des Mines (ARECOMS)** (strategic minerals regulatory body) cobalt quota deadline of 30 June, by which Q1 2026 volumes must be shipped alongside Q2 allocations, falls just after the conference. This is the [second extension of the quota regime](#) within six months. Repeated extensions signal that the quota framework has not yet generated the transparent, functioning regime that the DRC's international mineral partners, particularly the US, require to build supply chain confidence.

The [Orion CMC proposed acquisition](#) of a 40% stake in Glencore's **Kamoto Copper Company (KCC)** and **Mutanda** operations also remain in due diligence. The OFAC sanctions on **Dan Gertler** – who is linked to royalty payments from both mines - remain the primary outstanding obstacle, requiring an OFAC waiver before any US-linked entity can complete the transaction. No waiver decision has been announced.

Planner

15 Jun 2026 **New York (United States) United Nations (UN)** group of experts on the DRC final report due to the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**;

17-19 Jun 2026 **Lubumbashi (DRC)** DRC Mining Week 2026;

30 Jun 2026 (TBC) **Manono (DRC)** **China's Zijin Mining** targets commissioning of **Manono** lithium processing plant, the DRC's first lithium production, targeting 120,000 tonnes LCE in 2026;

30 Jun 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** **Autorité de Régulation et de Contrôle des Mines (ARECOMS)** (strategic minerals regulatory body) deadline: Q4 2025 cobalt export quota backlog must be cleared or entitlements lapse;

June 2026 **New York (US)** **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** briefing by **United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)** special representative **James Swan**; vote to renew the 1533 DRC sanctions regime and group of experts mandate;

7-9 Oct 2026 **Kolwezi (DRC)** **DRC Critical Minerals and Industrialisation Forum and Battery Metals Forum**;

Dec 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) Inspection Générale des Mines (IGM)** (general inspectorate of mines) targets initial deployment of 2,500–3,000 **Mining Guard** recruits following six months of military-led training.;

Chronology

9 Jun 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) La Prosperite**. Prime minister **Judith Suminwa Tuluka** meets with **United High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Burundi** representative **Brigitte Mukanga** to discuss voluntary repatriation of over 100,000 Congolese refugees;

8 Jun 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) ECDC/ DRC Ministry of Health**. The **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)** updates its figures following a DRC health ministry report published 7 June: 515 confirmed cases and 91 confirmed deaths, with 283 individuals hospitalised in isolation; **Ituri Province** accounts for 487 confirmed cases;

7 Jun 2026 **Bunia (DRC) NPR**. DRC reimposes travel restrictions to and from **Bunia (Ituri Province)** via an official aviation notice, reversing its earlier posture of keeping transport links open, while the **Institut National de Santé Publique (INSP)** (national public health institute) warns that protective measures need to be scaled up quickly;

6 Jun 2026 **Atlanta (United States) CDC**. The **United States (US) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** publishes modelling warning the current Ebola outbreak could rival the 2014-2016 **West Africa** epidemic - under a scenario where only 20% of patients are isolated, the CDC projects a 65% chance of case numbers exceeding 20,000 within three months;

6 Jun 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) La Prosperite**. The DRC, **Burundi** and the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** finalise an operational roadmap to facilitate the dignified, voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration of refugees between the two neighbouring countries;

5 Jun 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) ECDC**. The **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)** reports 381 confirmed Ebola cases and 64 confirmed deaths in the DRC; 233 patients hospitalised, noting that **Ituri Province** accounts for 359 confirmed cases across 17 health zones;

3 Jun 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) La Prosperite**. The **United States (US)** commits over \$162m, alongside an additional \$350m in humanitarian funds, to lead the regional response against the Ebola resurgence in the DRC, **Uganda** and **South Sudan**;

2 Jun 2026 **Washington (US) Reuters**. The **Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)** imposes sanctions on **Gustave Kubwayo**, commander of a **Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR)** intelligence unit, and **John Imani Nzenze, Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)** chief of intelligence, in the first double designation targeting commanders from both sides simultaneously;

29 May 2026 **Geneva (Switzerland) La Prosperite**. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** calls for an immediate ceasefire in eastern DRC to allow health workers to contain the rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak, which has also spread into **Uganda**;

28 May 2026 **North Kivu (DRC) Al Jazeera**. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** raises its risk assessment for the **Ebola** outbreak from high to very high as **Uganda** suspends all direct flights to and from the DRC and halts bus and boat border crossings for four weeks and weekly markets in border districts are also suspended;

27 May 2026 **Geneva (Switzerland) La Prosperite**. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** warns the **Ebola** outbreak in the **DRC** is outpacing response efforts, with over 900 suspected cases and 220 deaths;

26 May 2026 **Bunia (DRC) BBC**. **Ituri Province's** military governor **Johnny Luboya Nkashama** calls for an urgent international response to contain the rapidly expanding **Ebola** outbreak, citing 223 deaths and over 900 suspected cases;

22 May 2026 **Washington (United States) CDC**. The United States (US) extends entry restrictions to green card holders who have been in the **DRC, Uganda** or **South Sudan** within the previous 21 days; US citizens returning from affected countries are required to route through designated airports equipped with enhanced Ebola screening;

21 May 2026 **Ituri Province (DRC) BBC**. Protesters in **Ituri Province** set an Ebola treatment centre on fire after being denied access to the bodies of relatives who died from the disease, exposing the fragility of community trust in health response operations in conflict-affected areas;

20 May 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) Reuters**. The **United Kingdom (UK)** commits up to £20m (\$26.87m) to help international agencies contain the Ebola outbreak in the **DRC** and neighbouring **Uganda**;

19 May 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) Reuters**. The Ebola outbreak escalates to 131 confirmed deaths - the scale of the outbreak prompts multiple countries to impose travel restrictions;

18 May 2026 **Washington (United States) CDC**. The **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** and **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** announce enhanced travel screening and entry restrictions for the **DRC, Uganda** and **South Sudan**;

17 May 2026 **Geneva (Switzerland) BBC**. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** declares the Ebola outbreak in the **DRC** a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) after the virus spreads to neighbouring **Uganda**, with imported cases confirmed in **Kampala**;

15 May 2026 **Bunia (DRC) MSF**. Public health ministry officially declares an Ebola outbreak in **Ituri Province**, the country's 17th outbreak and its first with the Bundibugyo strain; confirmed cases are registered in **Bunia, Mongwalu** and **Rwampara** health zones;

14 May 2026 **Uvira (DRC) Human Rights Watch**. **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** publishes a report documenting killings, rapes, and abductions committed by **Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)** and **Rwanda Defence Force (RDF)** forces during the occupation of **Uvira** (South Kivu) in December 2025 and January 2026;

12 May 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) La Prospérité**. **China** donates a batch of medicines and medical equipment, valued at over 144m Congolese francs (CDF) (\$51,000), to the **DRC Sino-Congolese Friendship Hospital** in **Kinshasa**;

12 May 2026 **South Kivu (DRC) Xtrafrica**. **Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)** completes withdrawal from Ruzizi Plain localities including **Sange, Nyakabere, Mutarule, Luberizi, Bwegera, Lemera** and **Luvungi**, repositioning toward **Katogota** - the **Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)** re-enters **Sange, Nyakabere** and **Luberizi**;

9 May 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC) Washington Post**. **Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)** leader **Corneille Nangaa** writes to **United States (US)** secretary of state **Marco Rubio** accusing the US of asymmetric mediation, citing the non-release of 317 prisoners promised and questioning whether the US critical minerals deal has compromised its neutrality.

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