AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

DRC Monthly Briefing October 2026

DRC Summary 21 October 2026

Former President Joseph Kabila (2001–2019) announces that he will lead a new alliance with the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels in eastern DRC, lending the group political legitimacy but his leadership is unlikely to significantly strengthen M23's military capabilities. Police in Belgium raid several homes President Felix Tshisekedi (2019-present) and his family rent in Brussels as part of an investigation into money laundering linked to mines in Haut-Katanga and Lualaba provinces. The investigation places significant pressure on Tshisekedi, already facing mounting political and security challenges at home. The DRC's public health institute, the Institut National de la Recherche Biomédicale (INRB), announces on 18 October that the Ebola outbreak had spread to an eighth province, North Ubangi, raising further concerns about efforts to contain the country's worst outbreak of the disease.

Former president Kabila forms rebel group to challenge Tshisekedi

Former president **Joseph Kabila** (2001-2019), announced on 12 October that he would lead a new alliance with the **Rwanda**-backed **Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23)** rebel group in eastern DRC, offering the rebel group a new level of legitimacy but not the capacity to significantly enhance M23's operational capabilities or change its current trajectory of controlling two provinces. Flanked by M23 soldiers in **Goma (North Kivu Province)**, Kabila, in a serious challenge to President **Felix Tshisekedi**'s (2019-present) rule, announced that he would lead a new rebel group, the **Front pour la Refondation de la Nation (FRN)**. Since January 2025, the M23/AFC alliance has controlled large areas of territory in eastern DRC, including Goma, and **Bukavu**, the capital of **South Kivu Province**.

The FRN will replace the existing alliance between the M23 and the **Alliance du Fleuve Congo (AFC)** and bring together political and military leaders from both groups. Kabila will lead the coalition, while AFC leaders **Corneille Nangaa** and **Bertrand Bisimwa**, along with other senior figures, will also assume positions within the new movement. The FRN has emphasised its commitment to armed resistance, vowing to *"unify and coordinate all resistance forces"* and end what it describes as *"tyranny"* under Tshisekedi *"by all means, including force".*

Kabila's decision marks a seismic moment in the conflict in eastern Congo, given his status as a former president, and signals a major shift in his relationship with the rebellion, which he had not publicly linked himself too. However, a Congolese military court in September 2025 sentenced Kabila to death in absentia for treason and other charges linked to the rebellion. Kabila's family described the charges as *"unjust"* and *"politically motivated"*. The **United States (US)** in April 2026 also sanctioned Kabila for his support for armed groups cooperating in the DRC. Kabila's formal establishment of the FRN removes any remaining ambiguity about his open alignment with the anti-government rebellion. Notably, Kabila's father, **Laurent Kabila** (1997-2001), was also the head of a Rwanda-backed alliance that overthrew former dictator **Mobutu Sese Seko** (1971-1997) in the **First Congo War**, making way for him to become president.

Kabila's relationship with Tshisekedi is another important dimension. Kabila took power in 2001 after the assassination of his father. His relationship with Tshisekedi eventually

deteriorated after the latter assumed office in 2019, following a highly disputed election and a negotiated transfer of power. Kabila has since repeatedly accused Tshisekedi of corruption and attempting to extend his time in office beyond his current term, which ends in 2028. He has also been a vocal critic of the DRC government's agreement with the US over the country's mineral resources. A Congolese mining executive with direct access to the presidency and based in **Kinshasa** commented that the development is *"very dangerous for the guys here [in Kinshasa]"*, indicating that it is a very clear challenge to Tshisekedi's authority.

Significantly, the formation of the FRN comes as diplomatic efforts to end the conflict continue, and could signal the collapse of last year's peace deal between the DRC and Rwanda, M23's main backer. The US and **Qatar** have pursued separate initiatives involving the Congolese government, Rwanda and AFC/M23. While Kabila's new coalition says it will honour commitments made during the **Doha** negotiations, it remains unclear whether this will lead to progress towards peace.

However, ultimately these peace processes have been ongoing for months with limited success, and were unlikely to produce the results required to truly end the conflict, even less so now that Kabila is involved.

Moreover, Tshisekedi has not been in a strong position with the M23 rebellion, on both a military and political front. Losing Goma and Bukavu was a significant loss and has likely led to a decline in popular support for him. Tshisekedi's administration has also been working on constitutional amendments that could pave the way for him to serve beyond his two-term limit, which ends in 2028. A Great Lakes analyst outlined to ARC that this leaves Tshisekedi with three options - Tshisekedi can absorb M23 into the government, similarly to what was done in the first Congo War, DRC loses the Kivu's, which is not an option for Tshisekedi, or Tshisekedi gets a military win through a military escalation.

The third option is the most likely at this point, especially if Tshisekedi wants to push through constitutional reform; a military victory against M23 will garner him significant support. Several US private military contractors (PMCs) have recently been reported as working in the DRC, hired by the government, so there appears to be some form of a plan in the works. However, with Rwandan backing it is difficult for DRC's military to manage this. Should Rwanda retreat for some reason, there may be a great opportunity.

At the same time, M23 does not have the manpower to extend beyond the Kivu's right now. They are already struggling to sustain control, with reports that they are suffering setbacks in South Kivu, and it is unlikely that they would have the capacity to take a third province or spread further south.

While Kabila has added legitimacy to the cause, the new platform does not effectively change the situation on the ground; he has become a figurehead and it forms part of his wider push to regain power in some capacity but he cannot provide the manpower that the movement needs to extend its territorial gains.

Belgium police raid Tshisekedi's family homes over DRC mining revenues

Police in **Belgium** on 14 October raided several homes Tshisekedi and his family rent in **Brussels** as part of an investigation into money laundering linked to mines in the **Haut-Katanga** and **Lualaba** provinces. Belgian lawyer **Bernard Maingain** and **France**-based Congolese attorney **Hervé Diakese**, who represent **DESC/RDC**, a coalition of NGOs from Haut-Katanga, said the raids were carried out as part of an investigation launched after the NGOs filed a complaint in Belgium in 2025.

The complaint alleges that members of Tshisekedi's family and other individuals misappropriated mining revenues and resources from Haut-Katanga and Lualaba. The

allegations include corruption, embezzlement and the laundering of funds obtained from mining activities. The lawyers representing the complainants argue that funds intended to benefit the Congolese state and local communities may have been diverted for private gain.

Media reports say nine members of Tshisekedi's family and wider circle are under investigation, several of whom hold Belgian nationality. While Belgian authorities have not revealed the identities of those whose properties were searched by police, the filed complaint includes Tshisekedi's mother, wife and brother. However, the investigation has not established that the individuals involved committed any wrongdoing, and Tshisekedi himself has not been directly implicated in the searches. Meanwhile, his family has rejected the allegations, describing them as false and defamatory.

The investigation comes at a difficult time for Tshisekedi, who faces mounting political and security challenges at home. These include the worst **Ebola** outbreak in the country's history, the conflict in eastern Congo, and growing opposition over his reported intention to seek a third presidential term. While the investigation is ongoing and the allegations have yet to be proven in court, it adds significant pressure on Tshisekedi's administration at a time when his leadership is already being tested by multiple crises, further complicating efforts to maintain political stability and address the country's worsening security situation.

The case also highlights longstanding concerns about how the DRC manages its mineral wealth. The country is a major producer of copper and cobalt, both essential for electric vehicles, batteries and other technologies. Despite these resources, allegations of corruption and a lack of transparency continue to raise questions about how the country manages mining revenues and whether local communities benefit.

Ebola outbreak spreads to eighth province

The DRC's public health institute, the **Institut National de la Recherche Biomédicale (INRB)**, announced on 18 October that the **Ebola** outbreak had spread to an eighth province, raising further concerns about efforts to contain the country's worst outbreak of the disease. Health authorities confirmed two cases, including one death, had been recorded in **North Ubangi Province**, which borders the **Central African Republic (CAR)**. The outbreak has now affected North Ubangi, North Kivu, **Ituri**, **Haut-Uele**, **Tshopo**, South Kivu, **Bas-Uele** and **South Ubangi**. It has also spread beyond Congo's borders, with cases reported in **Uganda**, **Kenya** and **Nigeria**.

As of 19 October, the DRC has reported 9,552 confirmed cases of Ebola, including 4,602 related deaths, and a combined 937 patients hospitalised in isolation. Of those who tested positive for the Bundibugyo virus, authorities said 2,550 have recovered. Authorities also said 76.9% of identified contacts are being monitored in the affected provinces. The situation has continued to deteriorate, with weekly infections and deaths rising for a third consecutive week. Health authorities are struggling with limited treatment capacity, and some patients are dying in their communities before receiving medical care. North Kivu has also emerged as a major concern, reporting more new infections than Ituri, where the outbreak began. Ebola's spread to another province adds pressure to an already strained response and raises concerns about further cross-border transmission.

Planner

Oct 2026 (TBC) DRC, **Rwanda** and the **United States (US)** convene a trilateral planning conference to finalise the document guiding monitoring and verification under the **Washington Accords**;

Nov 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** The dialogue organising committee reports to the president, triggering a second ordinance formally convening the national dialogue;

20 Dec 2026 **New York (United States) United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**'s **(MONUSCO)** mandate under resolution 2808 expires;

Chronology

18 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters*. Health authorities say that the Ebola outbreak in DRC has spread to an eighth province, **North Ubangi**;

16 Oct 2026 **Brussels (Belgium)** *Africa Business Insider*. Belgian police raided the homes of relatives and associates of President **Félix Tshisekedi** in Brussels as part of a money-laundering investigation linked to mining revenues;

14 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Bloomberg*. International organisation **Forest Declaration Assessment** says trees in the DRC's vast **Congo Basin** are being cut down at a faster rate even as deforestation in other tropical regions slows;

14 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Africanews*. Health authorities say the DRC's worst-ever Ebola outbreak has passed 9,000 cases and more than 4,000 deaths;

14 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Binance.* **Swiss**-headquartered **Mercuria Energy Group** agrees to a $250m copper supply deal with units of **China**-headquartered **Shanghai Jayson New Energy Materials Group** in the DRC;

12 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Bloomberg*. **Banque Centrale du Congo (BCC)** (central bank) will soon require a range of payments to be made in Congolese francs instead of **United States (US)** dollars - including to mining subcontractors - to strengthen the local currency and encourage domestic investment;

12 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters.* Former president **Joseph Kabila** launches a new political-military coalition known as the **Front pour la Refondation de la Nation (FRN)** to replace the **AFC/M23** alliance fighting government forces in eastern DRC;

9 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters*. Forces operating under **Eric Prince**, a close associate of **United States (US)** President **Donald Trump**, reportedly suffered a major battlefield loss in eastern DRC in mid-September when enemy forces ambushed them, killing and wounding at least 20 people;

8 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Africa Intelligence*. **Eric Prince**, a close associate of **United States (US)** President **Donald Trump**, secures a $65m contract to maintain army aircraft in the DRC through his US-based company, **Vectus Global**;

7 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Times Live*. An **African Union (AU)** delegation that met **Rwanda**-backed **M23** rebels in eastern DRC calls for continued engagement in the peace process, as fighting persists despite ongoing mediation efforts;

6 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Bloomberg*. **Singapore**-headquartered **Trafigura Group** and partners have agreed to build a $300m high-voltage transmission line linking **Zambia**'s power grid to the DRC's copperbelt;

4 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *East African*. Planning minister **Guylain Nyembo** says that the DRC has secured $192m for its first population census in 42 years and the second since independence;

2 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters*. Government data indicates that the number of deaths in DRC's latest **Ebola** outbreak has surpassed 4,000, as the worst epidemic in the country's history resists containment efforts;

2 Oct 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *CNBC Africa*. Authorities say thousands of displaced residents at the **Ebola**-hit **Kigonze** camp in eastern DRC have fled after soldiers entered the site, raising concerns about Ebola spreading further;

29 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Channel Africa*. **Authority for the Regulation of Subcontracting in the Private Sector (ARSP)** director general **Beleshayi Kasanda Ted** says the DRC will subject major mining companies to annual audits of subcontracting practices and compliance with local-content requirements from 2027, as authorities step up efforts to increase business for Congolese-owned firms;

28 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters.* The ruling **Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS)** confirms that a senior party member was beaten to death by residents of his neighbourhood after taking part in a radio programme to raise awareness about the **Ebola** outbreak;

28 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters*. Government data shows that the number of confirmed **Ebola** cases in the DRC has risen above 8,000 for the first time in the country's ongoing outbreak, with 3,901 deaths;

24 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters.* The **United States (US)** pledges an additional $267m to support efforts to contain the **Ebola** outbreak in **Central Africa**, bringing total commitment to $886m;

22 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Monitor*. **Belgium** and **Rwanda** agree to resume diplomatic relations after expelling each other's diplomats in March 2025 amid tensions linked to the conflict in the DRC;

16 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Daily Nation*. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** says the Ebola response in the DRC is making progress, but the outbreak remains far from over;

15 Sep 2026 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Monitor.* Police disperse protests in Kinshasa against proposed constitutional reforms backed by President **Félix Tshisekedi**;

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