

Focus | AFRICA



# CONGO UNDER FIRE

A man rests as he flees the eastern Congo town of Sake on Friday. Thousands fled the area controlled by a rebel force as the rebels advanced to the next town of Minova.

JEROME DELAY, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Civilians flee as rebels hold off weakened government soldiers and continue to advance.

By JEFFREY GETTLEMAN

THE NEW YORK TIMES

FROM GOMA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Congolese Army has tried a new tactic in the war against the rebels: fighting back. In the past week, the rebel force has marched into a string of towns in eastern Congo, culminating in the capture of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province. In most of the battles, demoralized government troops had abandoned positions.

But Thursday, the army tried a comeback, pounding the rebel-held town of Sake with mortar fire and battling the rebels with machine guns. Tens of thousands of civilians fled.



The New York Times

**“Chaos breeds chaos. There are hardly any places left that are safe from conflict and violence.”**

TARIQ RIEBL  
AN OFFICIAL WITH THE OXFAM AID AGENCY IN EASTERN CONGO

Cholera and other fatal waterborne diseases could spread if the fighting and refugee crisis continues, an aid official said.

One of the militias that has allied itself with the government to attack Sake has been accused of massacring hundreds of villagers in recent months. The rebel force, called the M23, has a long history of executing civilians.



JEROME DELAY, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Women run as Congolese soldiers and rebel fighters battled for hours over Sake on Thursday. The woman in orange, identified only as Mamou, said she lost her husband to a fatal wound to the head from a mortar round.



JEROME DELAY, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

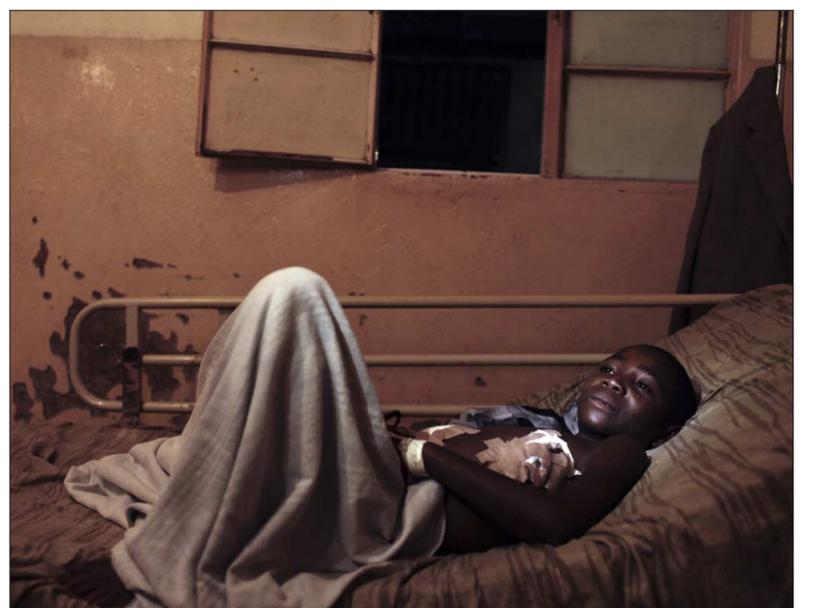
Congolese policemen gather at the Mugunga police training center near Goma on Friday. The officers were summoned by rebel officials to receive an ideological briefing.

The Congo war is another case of Third World civilians caught in the cross-fire. Although there have been rumors about negotiations, government and rebel forces are still talking tough. If the army recaptures Sake, many residents in Goma fear the government may try to forcibly take back the city, which could mean that its up to 1 million residents would be stuck between opposing forces.



JEROME DELAY, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Congolese flee Sake on Friday. The militants seeking to overthrow the government vowed to push forward despite mounting international pressure.



JEHAD NGA, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Daniel Ushundi, 11, who was shot in the fighting as rebels captured Goma, lies in a hospital in the city Friday. Humanitarian workers fear the spread of disease.