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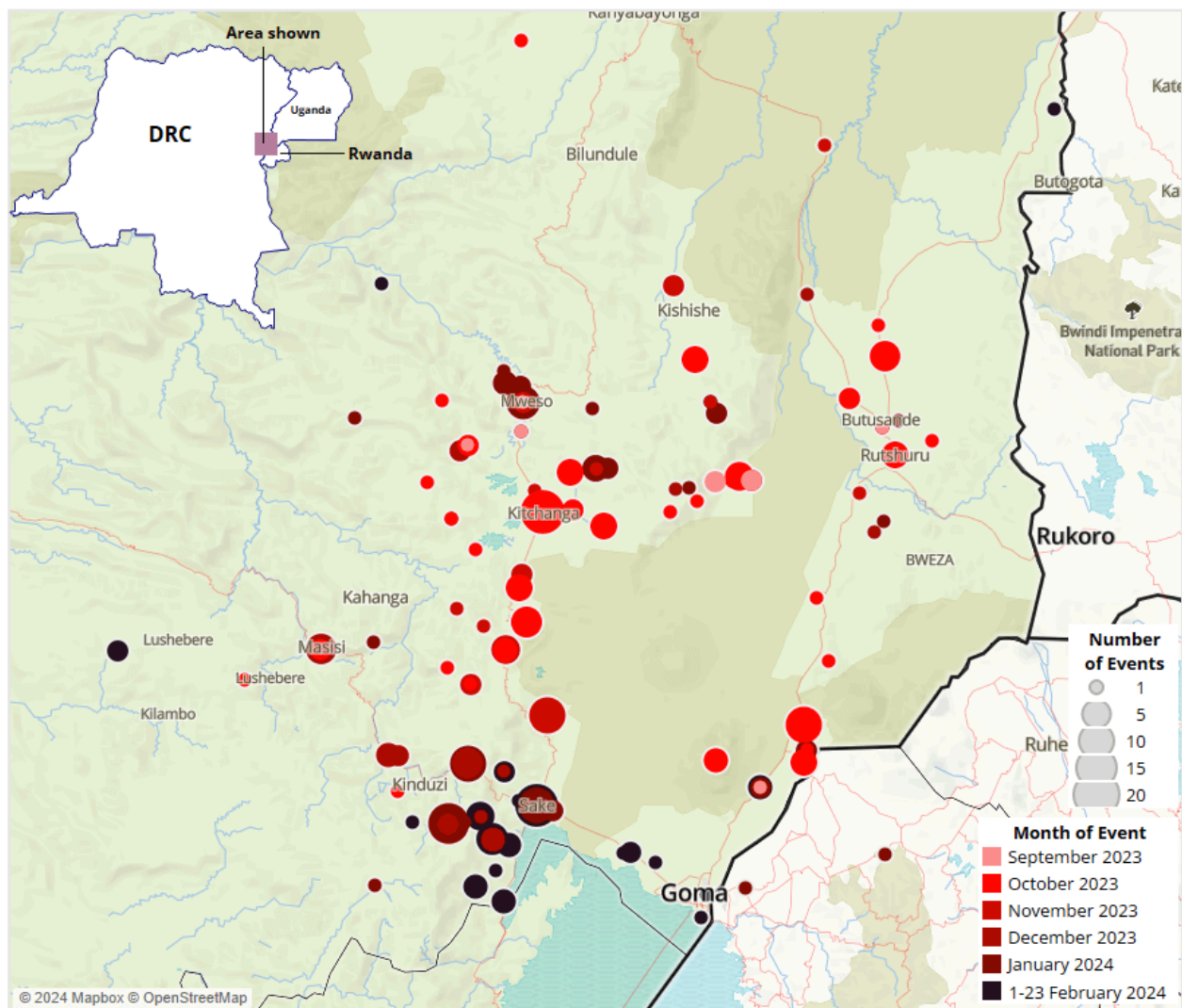
ACLED Brief | Rwanda-backed M23 Rebels Advance Toward Goma in Eastern DR Congo

As Rwanda-backed [March 23 \(M23\) rebels](#) and allied fighters push toward North Kivu's capital city of Goma, ACLED is recording a sharp rise in the use of explosives, remote violence, and the direct engagement of Rwandan military forces. The total number of political violence events in 2024 involving the Rwanda Defense Force (RDF) — primarily clashes against Congolese military forces and allied armed groups — has already surpassed the total for the entire year of 2023.

The surge in violence toward Goma, along with Rwandan leaders' recent remarks about their historic claims to parts of eastern DR Congo,¹[Gillian Mathys, 'Lines through the lake: Why the Congo-Rwanda border can't be redrawn,' African Arguments, 2 May 2023](#) increasingly signals the rebels' intention to take over the city.²[The Economist, 'Congo's M23 rebellion risks sparking a regional war,' 22 February 2024](#) If successful, this would be the M23's second occupation of Goma, after the group briefly seized control of the economic hub in late 2012. Fragile peace agreements between the M23 and the Kinshasa government broke down in October 2023, and by the end of the year, the M23 had become the most active non-state armed group in the DR Congo (*for more, see the [Conflict Watchlist 2024: DRC](#)*).

Rwanda-Linked Rebels Push Toward Goma

1 September 2023 - 23 February 2024



In January, the use of explosives and remote violence — primarily shelling and airstrikes — quadrupled compared to the average for 2023. Half of these explosive and remote violence events involved the M23 and Rwandan troops. In recent months, Congolese military forces and supporting armed groups were also involved in an increasing number of explosive and remote violence events. The United Nations called on the M23 to cease “indiscriminate bombing,” given the danger to civilians in populated areas around Goma.³ [United Nations News, ‘UN agencies sound alarm over renewed clashes in eastern DR Congo,’ 20 February 2024](#) Since October 2023, at least 55 civilians have reportedly been killed by explosives, shelling, and aerial bombardments in North Kivu province.

Political Violence Involving Rwanda-Linked Forces in Eastern DR Congo

1 January 2022 - 23 February 2024

