

The Siege of Goma: M23 Encirclement, Road Closures, and Displacement Camp Growth

Goma, North Kivu, DRC

01° 40' 46" S 29° 14' 01" E

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Incident Date: Late 2023 through early 2024

Fatalities: UNK

Injured: UNK

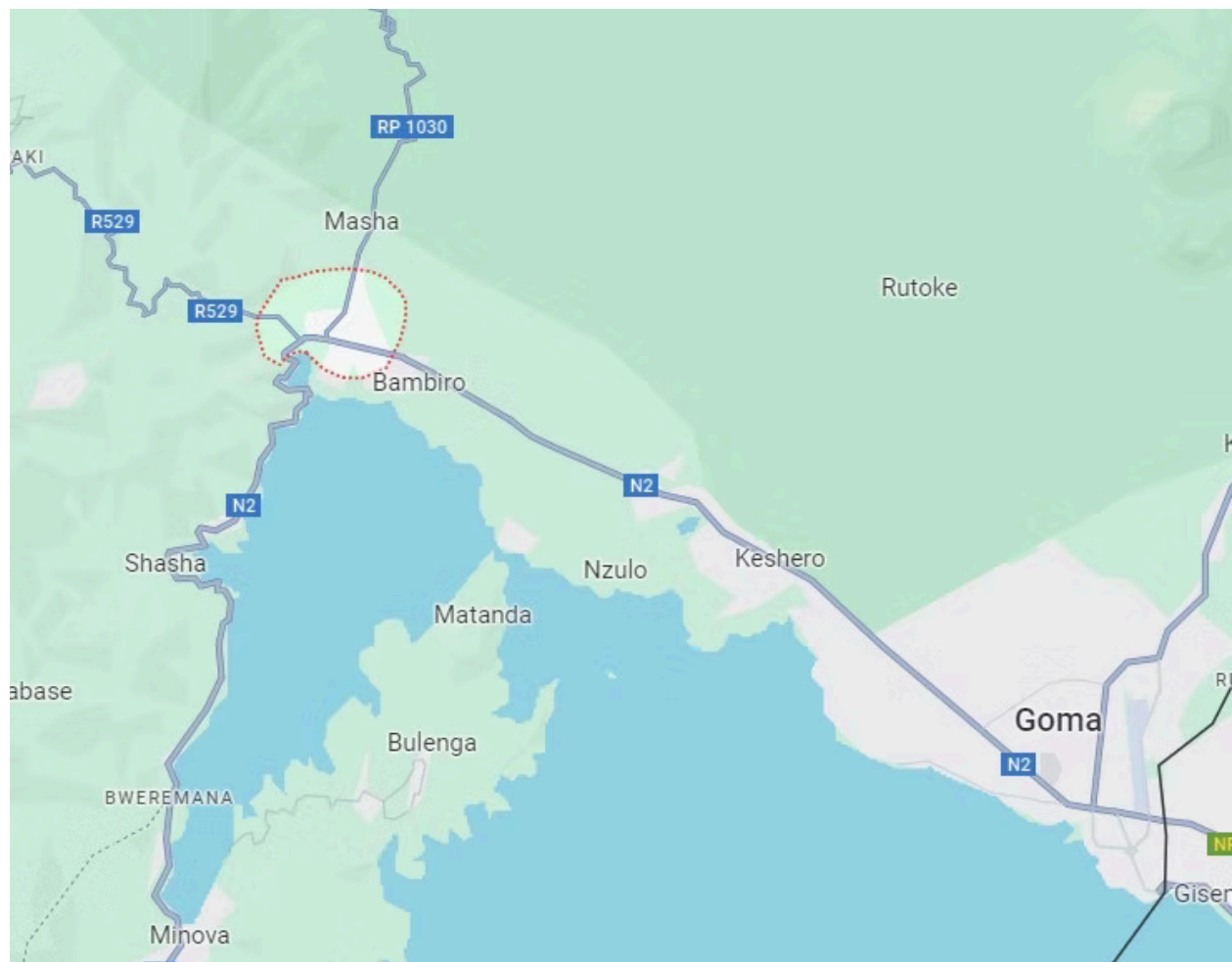
Aggressor(s): March 23
Movement (M23) and Rwandan
Defense Force (RDF)

Victim(s) Profile: Congolese civilians

From late 2023, M23 fighters progressively encircled Goma, the capital of North Kivu and home to roughly two million people, by seizing territory and cutting the two main roads leading out of the city. Renewed fighting on the Sake–Masisi axis in January 2024, and the M23's seizure of the Shasha road below Muremure hill on 27 January 2024, cut the Goma–Bukavu road and left Kinshasa-aligned authorities reliant on air or water routes to reach the city. The resulting insecurity drove a rapid expansion of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps on Goma's outskirts, visible in satellite imagery from November 2023 onward, as residents of Masisi and Rutshuru territories fled fighting toward the perceived safety of the provincial capital.

M23 had already cut off traffic on North Kivu's main roads since its October 2022 resurgence, but the encirclement of Goma specifically intensified from January 2024. Fighting was reported at Karuba, near Sake, between the M23 and a coalition of FARDC and Wazalendo self-defense

forces, extending along the Sake–Masasi axis with heavy gunfire in Bushuwe and other areas of Bahunde chiefdom. Sake itself, a strategic town roughly 20–27 km west of Goma controlling the last overland route to Kinshasa-aligned territory, came under repeated bombardment; a child was killed in a 27 January 2024 explosion in the town's Mahyutsa neighborhood, which residents attributed to M23. On the same day, M23 and allied forces seized control of the road at Shasha, cutting the Goma–Bukavu route and leaving air and water transport as the only way in or out of the city for supplies and reinforcements.



As fighting spread through Masasi and Rutshuru territories, displaced families moved toward Goma's outskirts in growing numbers, swelling existing camps such as Lac Vert, Mugunga, and Kanyaruchinya and prompting the establishment of new sites. Satellite imagery reviewed from November 2023 shows this expansion underway well before the city's formal encirclement was

complete, consistent with a pattern of anticipatory displacement as civilians sought to reach the city ahead of approaching front lines.



- This period (late 2023–early 2024) should be understood as the opening phase of a siege that continued to escalate: M23 and RDF forces went on to fully encircle and, on 26–27 January 2025, enter and capture Goma outright, per multiple independent sources (ACLED, Wikipedia's 2025 Goma offensive summary, contemporaneous wire reporting). Any case file covering only the 2023–2024 period should be read as a snapshot of an ongoing, worsening situation rather than a concluded one.
- Sake is consistently reported at 20–27 km west of Goma across sources; exact figures vary slightly by outlet and route measured.

- Camp names and boundaries in this area shift over time as sites merge, expand, or are abandoned; any camp-level figures should be dated precisely and re-verified against current satellite imagery before use.

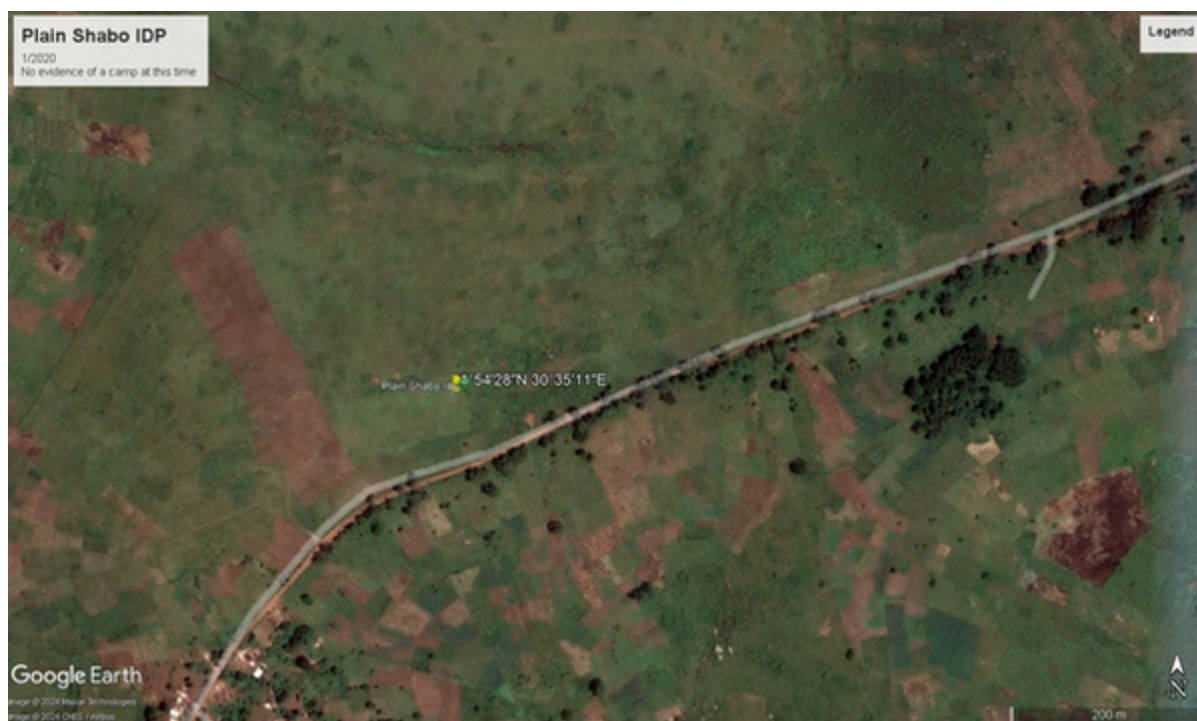


LaLa IDP Camp





Plain Shabo Camp







Rhoo Camp





References

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