

## Rwanda accuses U.N. of fomenting regional tensions

Reporting by Jonny Hogg; editing by Mark John

GOMA, Congo (Reuters) - Rwanda accused the United Nations of stirring tensions in the Great Lakes region on Thursday after the world body said that men recruited in Rwanda had been tricked into fighting for a rebel group in neighboring Congo.

Rwanda has in the past backed rebels in Congo, citing a need to stamp out fighters who operate there and who are linked to its 1994 genocide. The two neighbors have enjoyed warmer ties since 2009 when the Rwandan-backed CNDP rebel group signed a peace deal and integrated into the Congolese armed forces.

However the eastern Congolese provinces of North and South Kivu have experienced new fighting in recent weeks after former CNDP elements launched a fresh rebellion, rallying behind the renegade Congolese general, Bosco Ntaganda.

Speculation of Rwandan involvement in the mineral-rich zone grew as the U.N. mission said this week 11 rebel fighters had given themselves up in Congo, saying they had been recruited in Rwanda and tricked into crossing the border to fight for the rebels.

Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikwabo rejected the assertions as untrue.

"She has requested Roger Meece to come to Kigali to explain why MONUSCO is spreading false rumors aimed at aggravating the volatile situation.. (and) undermining ongoing collaboration between Rwanda and DRC (Congo)," a [Foreign Ministry](#) statement said of the head of the local UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO.

There was no immediate reaction from MONUSCO but earlier this week one of its officials said it was clear from their contacts with the fighters that they were Rwandan, without going as far as implying direct involvement of Rwandan authorities.

"They gave us information about where they came from, where they were recruited, before being taken to the frontline... The fact that they're Rwandan, I think that it's undisputable," Patrick Cyrille-Garba, head of the UN disarmament programme in North Kivu, told Reuters.

Cyrille-Garba said three more fighters also alleging to have been forcibly recruited in Rwanda had since given themselves up and were now being questioned by MONUSCO with the 11 others.

Mushikwabo also criticized groups such as New York-based advocacy group [Human Rights Watch](#) which is investigating suggestions of Rwandan support to the mutineers.

"The irresponsible words of lobbies like [Human Rights](#) Watch are no less dangerous than bullets or machetes," she said.

Ida Sawyer, HRW's researcher in Congo, said the group was continuing its checks.

"Instead of attacking the UN or civil society groups, Rwanda should focus on investigating these allegations," Sawyer said.

