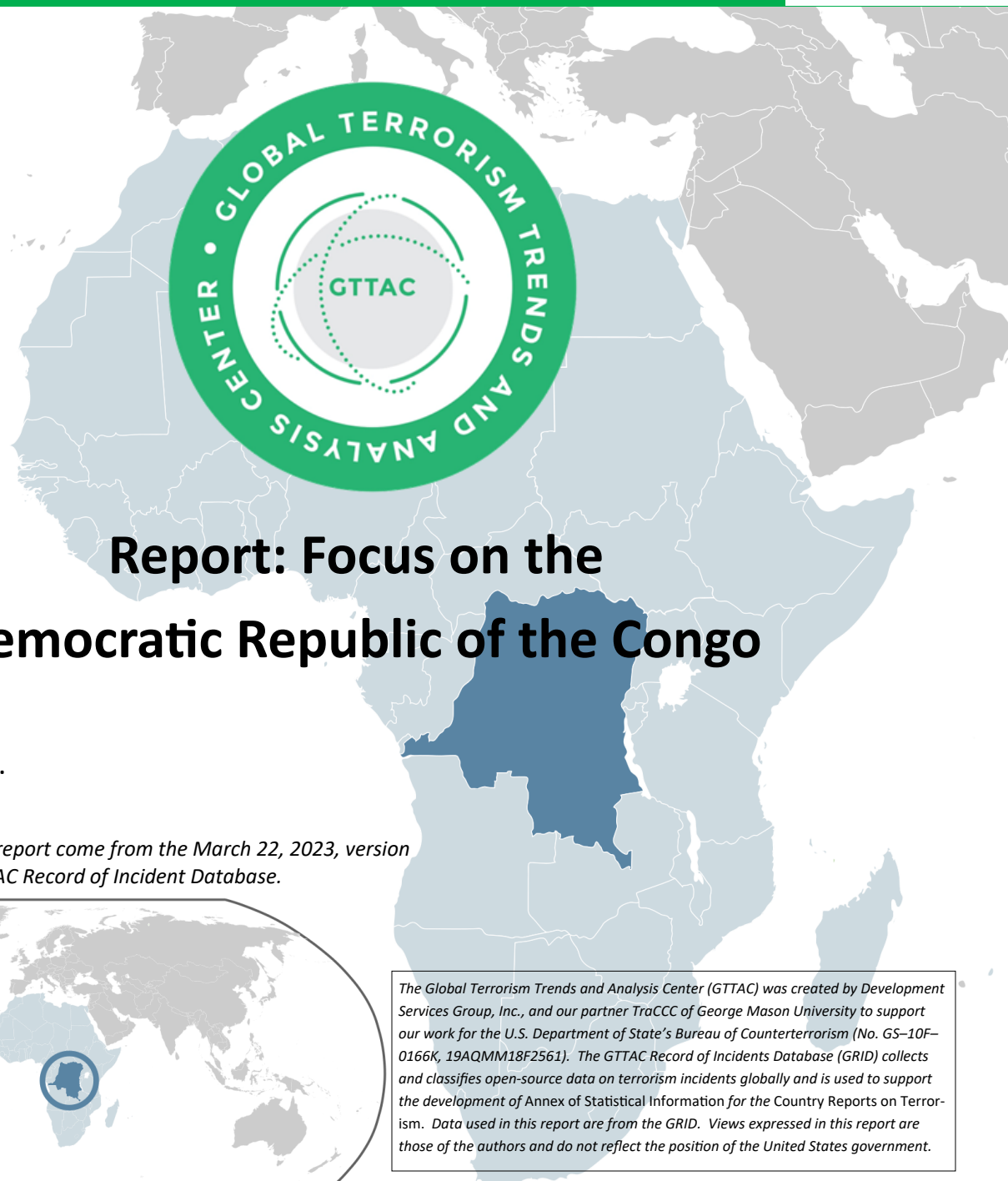




SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE



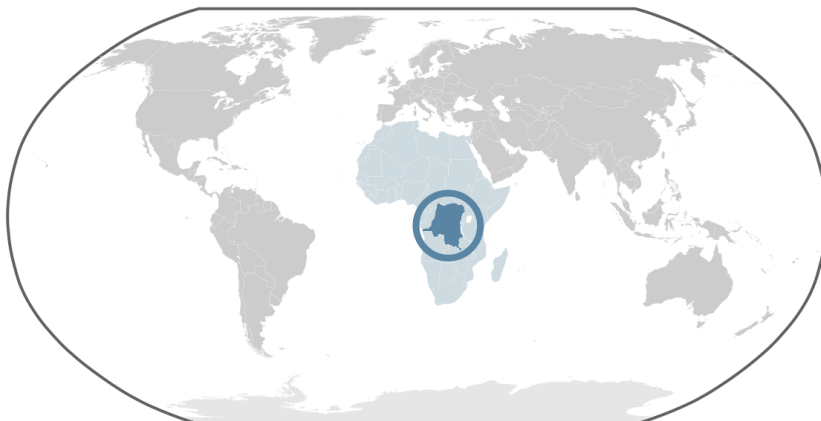
# Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center



## Report: Focus on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Natalie Anastasio

*The data from this report come from the March 22, 2023, version of GRID — the GTTAC Record of Incident Database.*

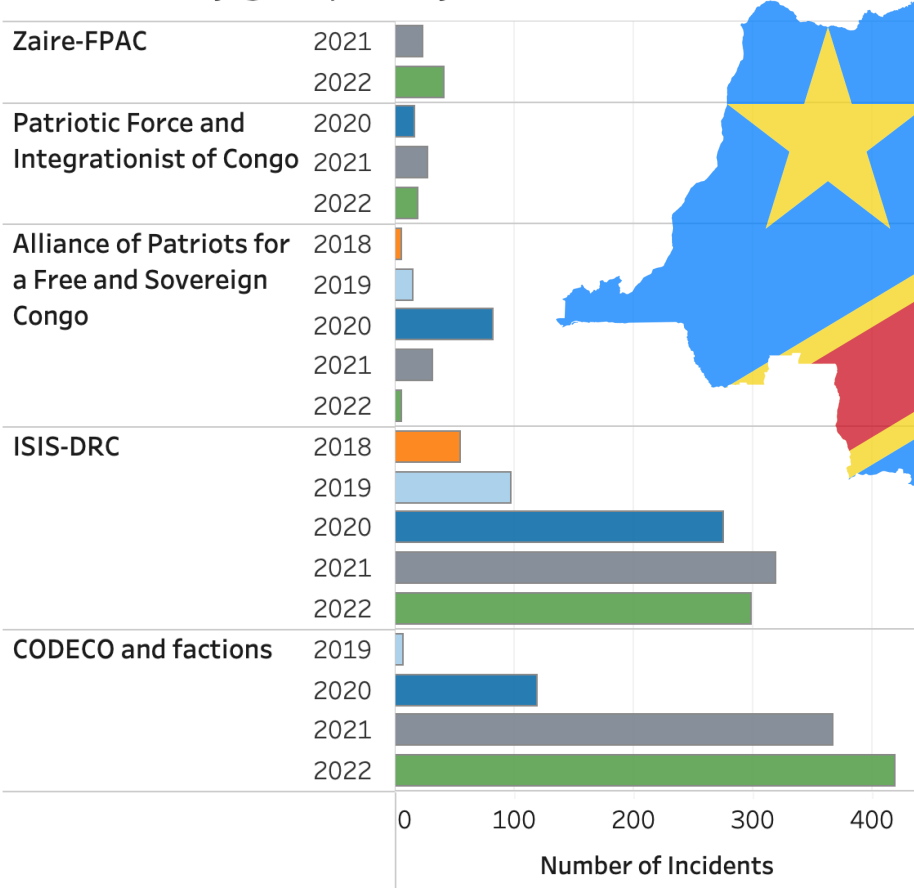


*The Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC) was created by Development Services Group, Inc., and our partner TraCCC of George Mason University to support our work for the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism (No. GS-10F-0166K, 19AQMM18F2561). The GTTAC Record of Incidents Database (GRID) collects and classifies open-source data on terrorism incidents globally and is used to support the development of Annex of Statistical Information for the Country Reports on Terrorism. Data used in this report are from the GRID. Views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the position of the United States government.*

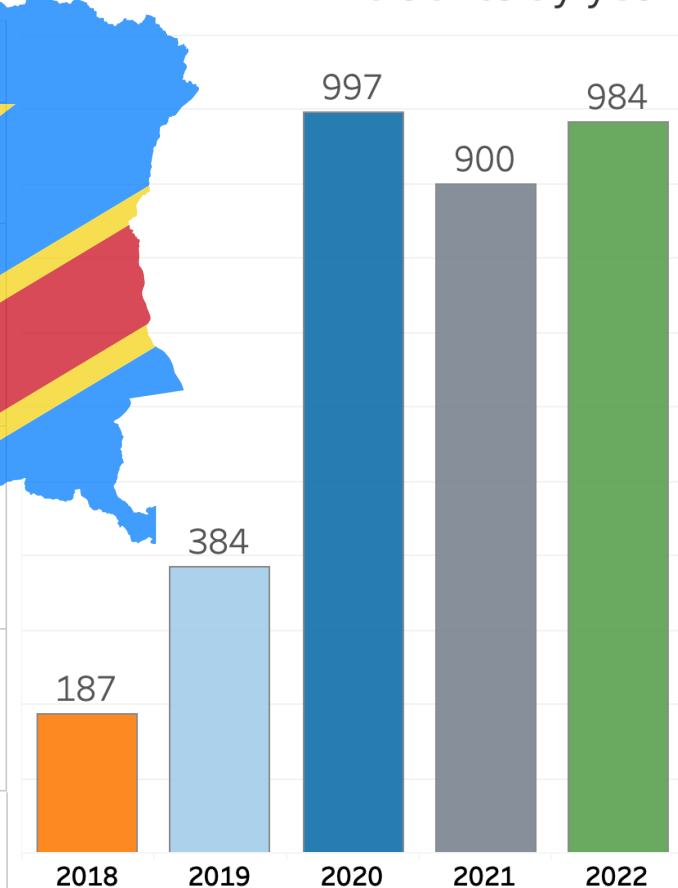


# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Incidents by group and year



Incidents by year



*For GRID an incident is deemed a terrorist act if it conforms with criteria laid out in the US Code. See page 8 for the definition.*

In 2022 there were 984 attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with 3,458 fatalities (13% of the global total of fatalities). This was the greatest number of incidents and fatalities of any country during 2022. This constituted a 9% increase in incidents from 2021, and a 12% increase in fatalities.

ISIS-DRC (aka Allied Democratic Forces) was responsible for 299 incidents (or 30%) in the DRC, making it the single most prolific perpetrator in the country during 2022.

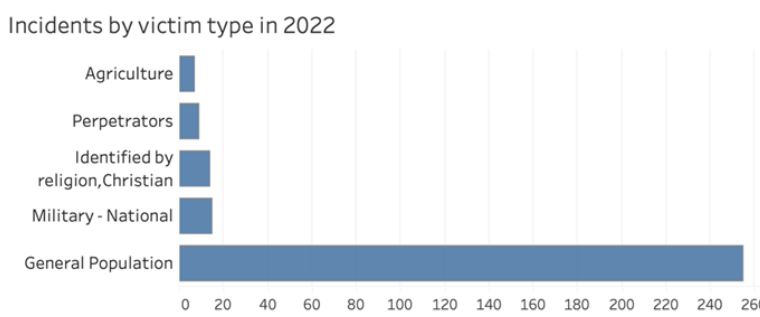
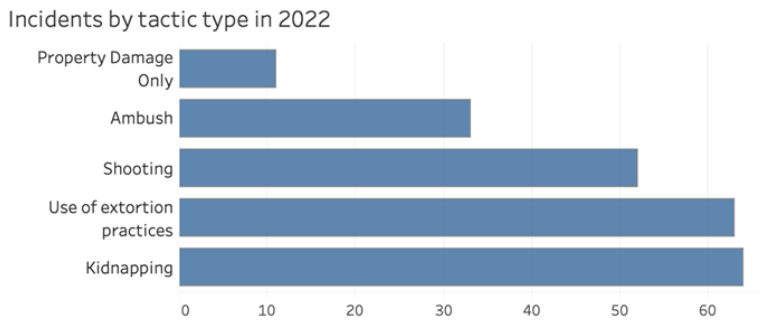
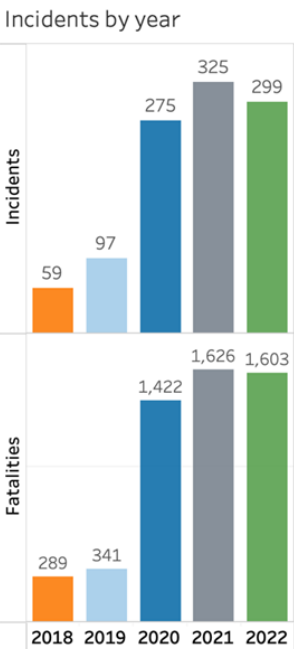
However, the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO) and all its factions were jointly responsible for 418 incidents (42% of all recorded DRC terrorism).

There are 42 active perpetrator groups in the DRC — such as the Reformed Nduma Defense of the Congo, RED-Tabara, and the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo. Two percent of incidents in the DRC could not be attributed to a perpetrator group.

Common tactic types in the DRC in 2022 included extortion (30%), kidnappings (17%), and shootings (9%).

Sixty-five percent of terrorist incidents primarily targeted the general population in 2022. Other prominent targeted groups included the military (11%) and other victims (11%) — consisting of other perpetrators or members of terrorist or militant groups.

The states in the DRC that experienced the most terrorism were Ituri with 598 incidents (61%), Nord-Kivu with 301 incidents (31%), and Sud-Kivu with 63 incidents (6%).



## ISIS-DRC

ISIS-DRC, also known as the Allied Defense Forces (ADF), was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization in March 2021. Its activity is largely focused in Nord-Kivu and Ituri. The Ugandan Islamist group has been under the leadership of Musa Baluku since 2015. In 2018 the group pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State, with the ADF becoming a faction of the Islamic State’s Central African Province.

- In 2022 there were 299 incidents involving ISIS-DRC, with 1,603 fatalities and 156 persons wounded. This constitutes a 5% reduction from 2021. The number of fatalities was three fewer than in 2021.
- All ISIS-DRC’s incidents in 2022 were concentrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (293 incidents) or Uganda (6 incidents).
- Common tactics ISIS-DRC employed in incidents included kidnappings (22%), extortion (21%), and executions (5%).
- In 2022 the victims in 85% of ISIS-DRC incidents were the general population. Other prominent victims of ISIS-DRC violence were the military (5% of incidents) and Christians (5% of incidents).
- Most ISIS-DRC incidents were concentrated in either the Nord/North-Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with 164 incidents (55%), or Ituri province, with 129 incidents (43%).

ISIS-DRC/ADF has a history of local and international financing. It was reported in 2018 that an Islamic State financier sent money to the group at least once.<sup>2a</sup> UN reports also found the group received material support, including weapons from corrupt officers within the Congolese Army.<sup>2b</sup> The ADF is known to have a network of mineral and logging operations around its headquarters in the Rwenzori Mountains.<sup>2c</sup>



MONUSCO conducts joint operation with Congolese forces in Beni. Credit: UN Photo/Sylvain Liechti, [Photo](#), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

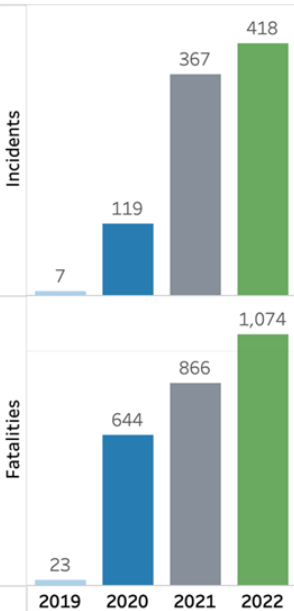


## CODECO

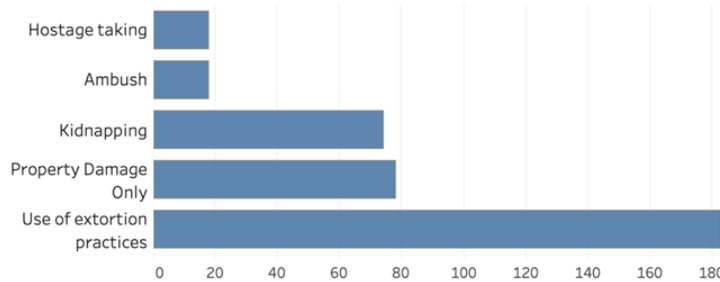
Following the death of its commander in 2020, the *Coopérative Pour le Développement du Congo* (CODECO) split into various factions, which have different levels of mobilization, cooperation, religious practice, and tendencies to violence. These factions have occasional intergroup hostilities.<sup>3a,b</sup>

CODECO is a network of Lendu militia groups operating in Ituri province (primarily in Djugu territory) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

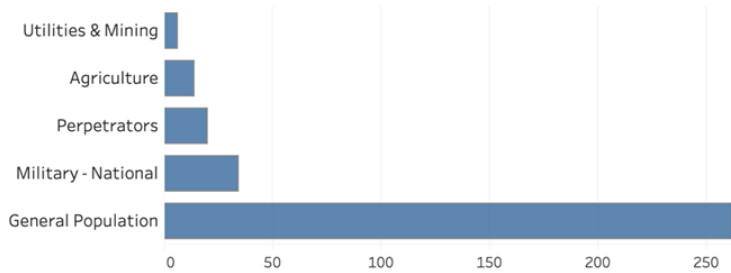
Incidents by year



Incidents by tactic type in 2022



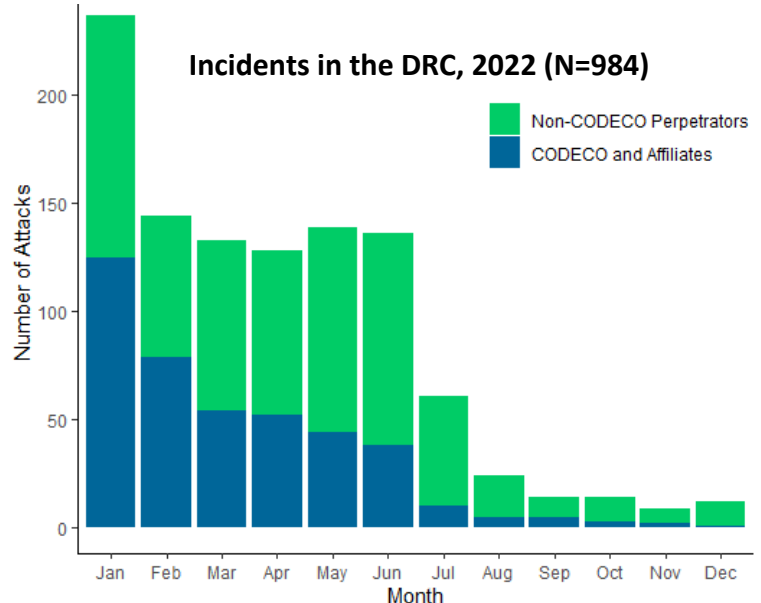
Incidents by victim type in 2022



The moniker was previously that of a 1970s cooperative that supported farmers and advocated for the traditionally agriculturalist Lendu people, particularly to oppose continual encroachment and repossession of their land by the rival pastoralist Hema ethnic group. In 2017 the sobriquet was adopted by militia leaders, mobilizing against Hema groups following the disappearance of a local priest.<sup>3c</sup>

Since 2019 (and especially during 2020), CODECO has become a serious threat to civilians in the Ituri region, frequently clashing with the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, the national military). CODECO militants are hard to distinguish from the general population in Djugu,<sup>3d</sup> with various factions enjoying popular support. Ituri province, like many areas in the DRC, has rich mineral deposits. Gold in particular is present in Djugu territory. GTTAC reported at least 10 incidents in 2022 in which CODECO attacked miners or mining facilities. CODECO has in several instances exerted formal or informal control over mines in Ituri.<sup>3b</sup>

In June 2022, CODECO signed a unilateral ceasefire with the military leadership of Ituri.<sup>3g</sup> GTTAC found a significant decrease in the number of incidents in the second half of the year. Further, in November 2022, some factions of CODECO agreed to leave their local area to receive military training with the FARDC and support the military in its conflict with the Rwandan-backed M23 rebels in Nord-Kivu.<sup>3h</sup>





## CODECO (*cont'd*)

Some CODECO factions include Christian-derived and animist beliefs, including the ritual use of narcotics. Captured and surrendered leaders of CODECO militias have included *féticheurs* (witch doctors),<sup>3b,e</sup> and victimized communities report mystical practices and the use of talismans and charms.<sup>3f</sup>

Cooperative for the Development of the Congo and Its Factions	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
CODECO-ALC	0	0	21	25	46
CODECO-FDBC	0	0	31	50	81
CODECO-URPDC	0	0	271	263	534
CODECO-Bon Temple de Dieu	0	0	13	0	13
CODECO	7	119	31	80	237
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>911</b>

- CODECO: the Cooperative for Development of the Congo
- CODECO-ALC: Alliance for the Liberation of the Congo
- CODECO-FDBC: Defense Force Against the Balkanization of the Congo.
- CODECO-URPDC: Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People
- CODECO-Bon Temple de Dieu

- GTTAC started to report incidents with CODECO as a perpetrator in 2019; there has been a significant escalation ever since. The incidents attributed to CODECO and its factions are aggregated here, but most incidents were committed by CODECO-URPDC (the Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People), with 418 incidents in 2022.
- In 2022 there were 418 incidents involving CODECO and its factions (see table above), with 1,074 fatalities and 205 persons wounded. This constituted a 7% increase in incidents from 2021, as well as a 9% increase in fatalities from 2021.
- All CODECO incidents took place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Common tactics employed in CODECO incidents included extortion (44%), property damage (19%), and shootings (18%).
- Sixty-three percent of CODECO incidents in 2021 involved victims from within the general population. Another prominent victim of CODECO violence was the military (8% of incidents). CODECO terrorists were reported to have been killed in 7% of the incidents attributed to the organization during 2021.
- The vast majority of CODECO incidents in 2022 — 415 incidents (99%) — took place in Ituri.



Djugu, Ituri. Credit: Photo du Jour du Mardi 1 mars 2022, MONUSCO/Force, 2022, [Photo](#), CC BY-SA 2.0.



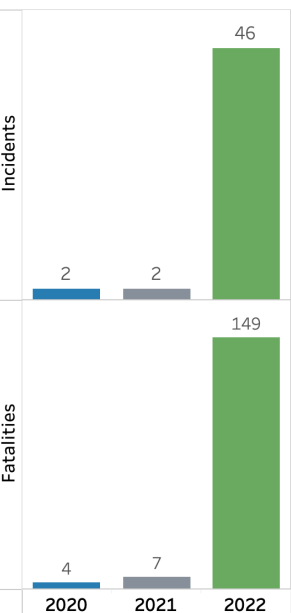
March 23  
Movement  
Incidents



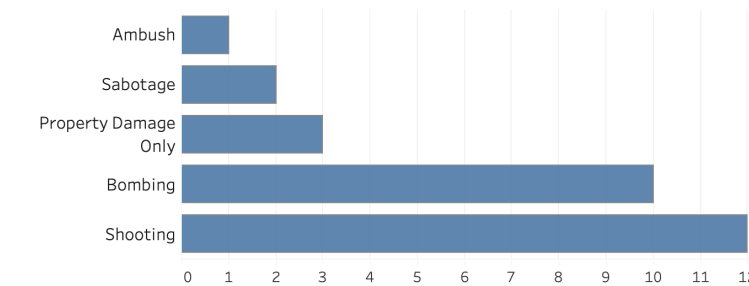
M23

The group M23 originally emerged in 2012 when defectors from the FARDC in North and South Kivu, led by Rwandan Tutsi General Bosco Ntaganda, rebelled and created their own group called the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23).<sup>5a,b</sup> Membership of the group is contested, with some suggesting it consists of former members of the *Congrès National Pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP), while others assert the group is made up of Hutus.<sup>5a</sup> However, M23 states that it is composed of multiple Congolese ethnic groups and was backed by both Rwanda and Uganda.<sup>5a,c</sup>

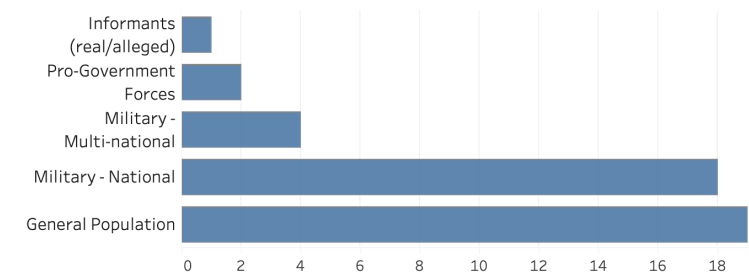
Incidents by year



Incidents by tactic type in 2022



Incidents by victim type in 2022



M23 formed with the goal of pressuring the Congolese government to implement fully the peace agreement it had signed with the CNDP.<sup>5a</sup> The Congolese government was able militarily to defeat M23 in 2013.<sup>5a</sup> However, the group did not dissolve and thus reemerged in the DRC in 2017, commencing military operations in fall 2021.<sup>5b,d</sup> Recent operations largely have been economically motivated, with targeted territory covering coltan-rich areas.<sup>5e</sup> An M23 attack in March 2022 against DRC forces near the borders of Rwanda and Uganda caused a rise in hostilities between the DRC and Rwanda, with the DRC accusing Rwanda of supporting the M23 rebels and Rwanda accusing the DRC of backing Rwandan rebels.<sup>5b,e,f</sup> M23 made even more ground when it captured the DRC city of Bunagana, causing further conflict between the two countries.<sup>5b</sup> This ongoing renewed conflict has repositioned FARDC forces and encouraged new alliances, notably between the army and CODECO, to fight what is seen as Rwandan incursion into the DRC.

While not all incidents meet GTTAC inclusion criteria, below is a summary of reported activity in 2022.

- In 2022 there were 46 incidents involving M23, with 149 fatalities and 41 persons wounded.
- All M23's incidents in 2022 were concentrated in the DRC, specifically in Nord-Kivu.
- Common tactics M23 employed in incidents included shooting (26%) and bombing (22%).
- In 2022 the victims in 41% of M23 incidents were the general population. The other prominent victims of M23 violence are the national military (39% of incidents).



M23 troops, Bunagana. Credit: Al Jazeera English, [Photo](#), CC BY-SA 2.0.



## Mineral Exploitation and Conflict

The DRC is an incredibly mineral-rich country. While Ituri has rich veins of gold, the Nord- and Sud-Kivu provinces contain large coltan reserves. Tantalum, derived from the tantalite in coltan, is an important element used in the manufacture of electronics — cellphones in particular. The increased demand for cobalt owing to greater worldwide production of batteries and digital devices makes the materials even more sought after.<sup>6a</sup> The DRC contains the vast majority of the world's reserves of cobalt, mainly in the Haut-Katanga province, in the Southeast. The country also is home to the Copperbelt and has many exploitations of tin, diamonds, manganese, lead, zinc, coal, and uranium.<sup>6b</sup>

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the DRC accounts for 70% of cobalt mined globally<sup>6c</sup> and more than 40% of the world's mined tantalum reserves.<sup>6c</sup> The country is estimated to contain the majority of the global reserves of both these elements.

With a high demand for many of these minerals, reports from the DRC note that Chinese exporters in particular are not overly concerned about the provenance of the coltan.<sup>6e</sup> Troublingly, foreign exploitation is contributing to poor local economic conditions, with miners having to sell their cobalt at values significantly beneath market value.<sup>6a</sup> More so, around 90% of the production and export of gold and over half of the cassiterite and coltan in the DRC is informal in nature, exacerbating the vulnerabilities faced by the country's artisanal industry.<sup>6f</sup> Challenges with formalizing this trade lie in issuing property ownership, with some artisanal miners not desiring stricter property rights and others not seeing any issue with their illegal operations.<sup>6f</sup>

Because of these widely unregulated practices, mining operations in the DRC have become significant contributors to conflict in the area. Many mines are either controlled entirely by armed groups or face heavy taxes from militants to stay in operation.<sup>6g</sup> This poses issues both on a humanitarian front, especially the poor treatment of miners and local people, and across security fronts, as armed groups are sustaining themselves financially off these operations.

The combination of mineral wealth and foreign armed groups—such as Rwandan Tutsi (M23, for example) and Hutu (e.g., *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*, or FDLR) insurgent forces that fled to the DRC in the 1990s, as well as the Ugandan Islamists of the ADF/ISIS-DRC—has led to the illicit cross-border transfer of vast quantities of the country's mineral wealth. The mineral wealth also has continued to fuel bitter interethnic violence, as is the case with the control of gold mining in Ituri between the Lendu CODECO militias and the Hema Zaire group.



SRSR visits coltan mine in Rubaya. Credit: MONUSCO/Sylvain Liehti, [Photo](#), CC BY-SA 2.0.



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### **GTTAC—Defining Terrorism**

An incident is deemed a terrorist act if it conforms with Title 22, Section 2656f, of the U.S. Code. It is therefore defined as a violent act carried out by nonstate actors that meets the following inclusion criteria:

The violent act aims to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal.

The violent act includes evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to an audience (or audiences) larger than the immediate victims.

The violent act occurred outside the precepts of international humanitarian law, as far as it targeted non-combatants.

The Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC) includes only those incidents for which all three criteria were met. In some cases, where terrorists *initiate* an action that targets military forces rather than non-combatants, this would be considered an incident.