

Mudacumura's death strong signal to other rebels – analysts

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The death of self-styled Lt. Gen. Sylvestre Mudacumura who was the Commander of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) sends a strong signal to many rebels and militia groups operating in the region, especially in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, analysts say.

Mudacumura's death was confirmed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) on Wednesday, saying the rebel leader was killed in a military operation in North Kivu Province.

He was killed along with a number of his close lieutenants on Tuesday night in "the chiefdom of Bwito" located in Rutshuru territory.

Tom Ndahiro, a Genocide researcher, says that Mudacumura was considered to be one of the most radical leaders of FDLR, which largely comprises of elements blamed for the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

"Mudacumura was some sort of a symbol of the resistance of genocidaires, because they had resolved to continue the business they had started which was the pursuit of genocide," he says.

Ndahiro recalls meeting Mudacumura as part of a delegation of the Juvénal Habyarimana regime in 1993

in Arusha, Tanzania when the Rwanda Patriotic Front was trying to negotiate a peace agreement with the government.

"He was not just part of the Habyarimana government but part of the extremist military during that time," he says.

Mudacumura was a member of defunct ex-FAR army which drove millions of Rwandans into DR Congo, then Zaire, after systematically executing the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, and Ndahiro, insists that Mudacumura, alongside Faustin Ntilikina, continued to be in charge of logistics in Goma and Bukavu where majority genocidaires had fled to.

Mudacumura's death is the latest blow to the FDLR, which has been weakened in recent years by arrests of several of its leaders and military pressure from the DRC's army and other armed groups.

Some of the members of FDLR, like Stanislas Nzeyimana, aka General Deogratias Bigaruka Izabayo, reportedly disappeared in Tanzania a few years ago, Paul Rwarakabije and others returned home.

Other members who have left the rebel group, include FDLR's LaForge Fils Bazeye and Lt. Col Théophile

Abega, who were arrested by Congolese authorities and sent back to Rwanda.

This is in addition to other members of other rebel groups like Capt. Callixte Nsabimana of the National Liberation Front (FLN) as well as Capt. Charles Sibomana and Maj. Habibu Madathiru of the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), who were killed in Congo jungles earlier this year.

“Some of the FDLR leaders who disappeared have been betrayed by their own rebels, while others who returned back home had no cause they were fighting for. When this started happening, it signaled the end of FDLR,” Ndahiro notes.

He adds that, through his research, he spoke to some of those who returned home trying to understand why they thought it was a good reason to come back home, and “most of them said they were living in perpetual self-deception.”

The researcher suggests that those who have been trying to come together to form alliances like the P5 as a result of “military setbacks” could soon lose everything they have.

The international Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Mudacumura in 2012 for alleged attacks against civilians, murder, rape and torture in eastern DR Congo.

Joseph Ryarasa, a political analyst

based in Kigali, believes the death of the FDLR leader reflects the fact that the militia group and other elements are losing track, as well as those who support their agenda.

“Perhaps those who have been following him will now realise that what they are fighting for is a myth and members of the international community who have been supporting him will realise they are supporting a losing battle,” he added.

Ryarasa highlights that the killing of Mudacumura, his lieutenants and the arrest of tens of other rebels, also says a lot about the growing willingness of the region to bring about stability.

For Dr Jean Damascène Bizimana, the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for the Fight Against the Genocide (CNLG), the development is a demonstration of the commitment of leaders like DR Congo’s President Félix Tshisekedi.

“The last time President Tshisekedi was here, after visiting Kigali Genocide Memorial, he made it clear what he thought was his commitment to come together in solidarity to fight this group who have been entrenching genocide ideology,” he says.

He thinks it is that kind of commitment that has been lacking for a very long time.