WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned six individuals for contributing to the most recent escalation of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Today’s sanctions reflect the United States’ commitment to advancing efforts toward resolution of the crisis, promoting accountability for human rights abuses including conflict-related sexual violence, and addressing the dire humanitarian situation.

“The United States is committed to promoting a peaceful resolution to the escalation of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “Treasury will not hesitate to hold accountable actors committing human rights abuses and exacerbating this already dire humanitarian situation.”

The current escalation of conflict began in November 2021, when the Rwanda-backed M23 (March 23 Movement) occupied portions of the North Kivu province of the DRC, prompting the Congolese military (FARDC) and several non-state armed groups, including the sanctioned Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), to respond. The United States stands in solidarity with the people of DRC against those who commit human rights abuses and destabilize the region. These actions further demonstrate the United States’ commitment to holding perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict accountable, consistent with the Presidential Memorandum signed by President Biden in November 2022.

**DEMOCRATIC FORCES FOR THE LIBERATION OF RWANDA (FDLR)**

The FDLR is a predominantly ethnic Hutu-armed militia group operating in the DRC. On January 3, 2013, OFAC sanctioned both the FDLR and M23 pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13413 for having committed serious crimes involving the targeting of children in the conflict in the DRC, including recruitment as well as killing, maiming, and sexual violence. M23 was also designated for receiving arms and materiel related to military activities that contributed directly to the conflict at the time.

**Apollinaire Hakizimana** (Hakizimana), a Rwandan national, is the FDLR’s defense commissioner.
Brigadier General Sebastian Uwimbabazi (Uwimbabazi), a Rwandan national, is an FDLR leader in charge of intelligence.

Ruvugayimikore Protogene (Protogene), a Rwandan national, leads the FDLR-affiliated Maccabe group, formerly known as the Commando de Recherche et D’Action en Profondeur (CRAP). Protogene has been accused by the European Union of planning, directing, or committing acts that constitute serious human rights abuses in the DRC, and being responsible for sustaining armed conflict, instability, and insecurity in the DRC.

Hakizimana, Uwimbabazi, and Protogene are designated pursuant to E.O. 13413, as amended by E.O. 13671, for being leaders of the FDLR, an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13413, as amended.

**M23**

M23 is a predominantly ethnic Tutsi militia in the DRC fighting against the Congolese military and several non-state armed groups. Starting in November 2021, M23 seized control of large parts of North Kivu province in the eastern DRC, committed serious human rights abuses and forced more than 800,000 people to flee their homes.

Bernard Byamungu (Byamungu), a Congolese national, is the M23 deputy commander of operations and intelligence. Byamungu is designated pursuant to E.O. 13413, as amended by E.O. 13671, for being a leader of M23, an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13413, as amended.

**ARmed forces of the Democratic Republic of the CONgo (FARDC)**

Colonel Salomon Tokolonga (Tokolonga), a Congolese national, commands the FARDC’s 3411th Regiment. In May 2022, Tokolonga led a meeting where several Congolese armed groups agreed to form a coalition against M23. Tokolonga’s regiment provided ammunition to FDLR fighters fighting M23. Tokolonga is designated pursuant to E.O. 13413, as amended by E.O. 13671, for being a leader of the FARDC, an entity, including any armed group, that has, or whose members have, been responsible for or complicit in, directly or indirectly, action or policies that threaten the peace, security, or stability of the DRC.

**RWandAn defense forces (RDF)**
Brigadier General Andrew Nyamvumba (Nyamvumba), a Rwandan national, is the head of operations for the RDF’s 3rd Division. In early 2022, the 3rd Division entered DRC territory, and in conjunction with M23 combatants, attacked FARDC positions and camps, resulting in FARDC casualties.

Nyamvumba is designated pursuant to E.O. 13413, as amended by E.O. 13671, for being a leader of the RDF, an entity, including any armed group, that has, or whose members have, been responsible for or complicit in, or to have engaged in, directly or indirectly, actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, or stability of the DRC.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of the designated persons described above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, individually or in the aggregate, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or exempt, OFAC’s regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons.

In addition, financial institutions and other persons that engage in certain transactions or activities with the sanctioned entities and individuals may expose themselves to sanctions or be subject to an enforcement action. The prohibitions include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any designated person, or the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

The power and integrity of OFAC sanctions derive not only from OFAC’s ability to designate and add persons to the SDN List, but also from its willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with the law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish, but to bring about a positive change in behavior. For information concerning the process for seeking removal from an OFAC list, including the SDN List, please refer to OFAC’s Frequently Asked Question 897 here. For detailed information on the process to submit a request for removal from an OFAC sanctions list, please click here.

Click here for more information on the individuals designated today.

###