

1st case of cholera hits Congo refugee camp

August 3 2012, by MICHELLE FAUL



Internally displaced Congolese have set up an impromptu camp on the outskirts of Goma, eastern Congo, Friday, Aug. 3rd, 2012. The first case of cholera has emerged among thousands of people in an impromptu refugee camp in eastern Congo who fled fighting between a new rebel group and government forces backed by U.N. peacekeepers, Doctors Without Borders reported. Congo's army now controls only the city of Goma and the village of Kibumba, 10 kilometers (six miles) outside Goma. Now the rebels hold all towns going north as far as Rutshuru and are threatening to besiege Goma. The U.N. Security Council on Thursday demanded that the M23 rebel group halt any advances toward Goma. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

(AP) — The first case of cholera has emerged among thousands of people in an impromptu refugee camp in eastern Congo who fled fighting between a new rebel group and government forces backed by U.N. peacekeepers, Doctors Without Borders reported on Friday.

Dr. Patrick Wieland said that MSF, as the aid group is known by its

French initials, has set up an isolation clinic tent at Kanyaruchinya on the outskirts of the provincial capital of Goma, where between 10,000 and 20,000 civilians have taken refuge in a school, a church and nearby grounds.

Cholera is a contagious disease caused by filth and lack of hygiene. Wieland said humanitarian agencies are delivering water to the camp but people probably are collecting the water with dirty containers. He said there are not enough toilets for the people who fled fighting last week in Rutshuru and neighboring Kiwanja, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Goma.

Rebels last week attacked Congolese army troops and U.N. peacekeepers, firing mortars at the peacekeepers' base at Kiwanja which was surrounded by more than 2,000 displaced people at the time. Wieland said the fighting was much heavier than any his team has seen in the three-month-old rebellion.

"We're treating people with arms and legs blown-off by grenades and other heavy arms," said Wieland. He also said that for the first time they treated many more civilians than combatants.



An internally displaced Congolese child holds up a cot in a school on the outskirts of Goma, eastern Congo, Friday, Aug. 3rd, 2012. The first case of

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He said that since April, Doctors Without Borders has treated more than 500 people hurt in the conflict.

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The U.N. Security Council on Thursday demanded that the M23 rebel group halt any advances toward Goma. In a statement delivered by council president Gerard Araud of France, the Security Council expressed deep concern at the worsening humanitarian situation, especially the increasing number of refugees, and called on the international community to provide appropriate humanitarian support.

The Security Council reiterated its strong condemnation of any and all outside support to M23.



Congolese government troops load up on a pickup truck outside the UN's main base in Goma, eastern Congo, Friday, Aug. 3rd, 2012. The first case of cholera has emerged among thousands of people in an impromptu refugee camp in eastern Congo who fled fighting between a new rebel group and government forces backed by U.N. peacekeepers, Doctors Without Borders reported. Congo's army now controls only the city of Goma and the village of Kibumba, 10 kilometers (six miles) outside Goma. Now the rebels hold all towns going north as far as Rutshuru and are threatening to besiege Goma. The U.N. Security Council on Thursday demanded that the M23 rebel group halt any advances toward Goma. (AP Photo /Jerome Delay)

Neighboring Rwanda has been accused of supporting the rebels in the mineral-rich territory, which the Rwandan government has emphatically denied.

Uganda's foreign affairs minister said on Friday that his country's forces are not fighting in the Congo and that Uganda's president is actively trying to help resolve the conflict there.

Okello Oryem told reporters in Kampala, Uganda's capital, that allegations of Uganda's military involvement in the Congo are "rubbish." President Yoweri Museveni visited Angola this week to consult with officials on how best to find a regional solution to the Congo violence, Oryem said.



A internally displaced Congolese child sits in the church where he and others found refuge on the outskirts of Goma, eastern Congo, Friday, Aug. 3, 2012. The first case of cholera has emerged among thousands of people in an impromptu refugee camp in eastern Congo who fled fighting between a new rebel group and government forces backed by U.N. peacekeepers, Doctors Without Borders reported. Congo's army now controls only the city of Goma and the village of Kibumba, 10 kilometers (six miles) outside Goma. Now the rebels hold all towns going north as far as Rutshuru and are threatening to besiege Goma. The U.N. Security Council on Thursday demanded that the M23 rebel group halt any advances toward Goma. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

Col. Felix Kulayigye, the spokesman for the Ugandan military, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the Ugandan government is investigating reports that some M23 rebels were seen wearing Ugandan army fatigues and that a rebel commander uses a vehicle with a number plate associated with the Ugandan army.

"Some of the rebels are putting on our uniform," Kulayigye said. "It seems there is a scheme intended to soil Uganda's image."

Next week Uganda will host a conference on regional security that President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and President Joseph Kabila of Congo are expected to attend.

Valerie Amos, the U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, is scheduled to visit Congo and Rwanda next week to "draw attention to the deteriorating humanitarian situation," the U.N. said Friday.

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