



CENTRAL AFRICA: 2025 Q1 SITUATION REPORT

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Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): The eastern DRC saw a sharp deterioration in security as M23 rebels – widely understood to be backed by Rwanda – captured strategic cities including Goma and Bukavu. The Congolese military, supported by regional militias and UN forces, struggled to contain rebel advances. The violence displaced hundreds of thousands and disrupted mining activity in North Kivu. Peace talks in Luanda and Doha have stalled, and the crisis is drawing in regional actors, raising the risk of escalation. Former President Joseph Kabila announced a return to politics, positioning himself as a potential mediator in the conflict.

Gabon: Gabon’s political transition following the 2023 coup reached a turning point with presidential elections held in April 2025. General Brice Oligui Nguema, who led the coup, contested the vote amid questions over transparency and the role of the military in shaping outcomes. While the elections proceeded without major unrest, the process has done little to ease investor concerns over long-term political stability and governance standards. Gabon’s oil and mining sectors continue to operate, but with caution from international partners awaiting clear civilian transition commitments.

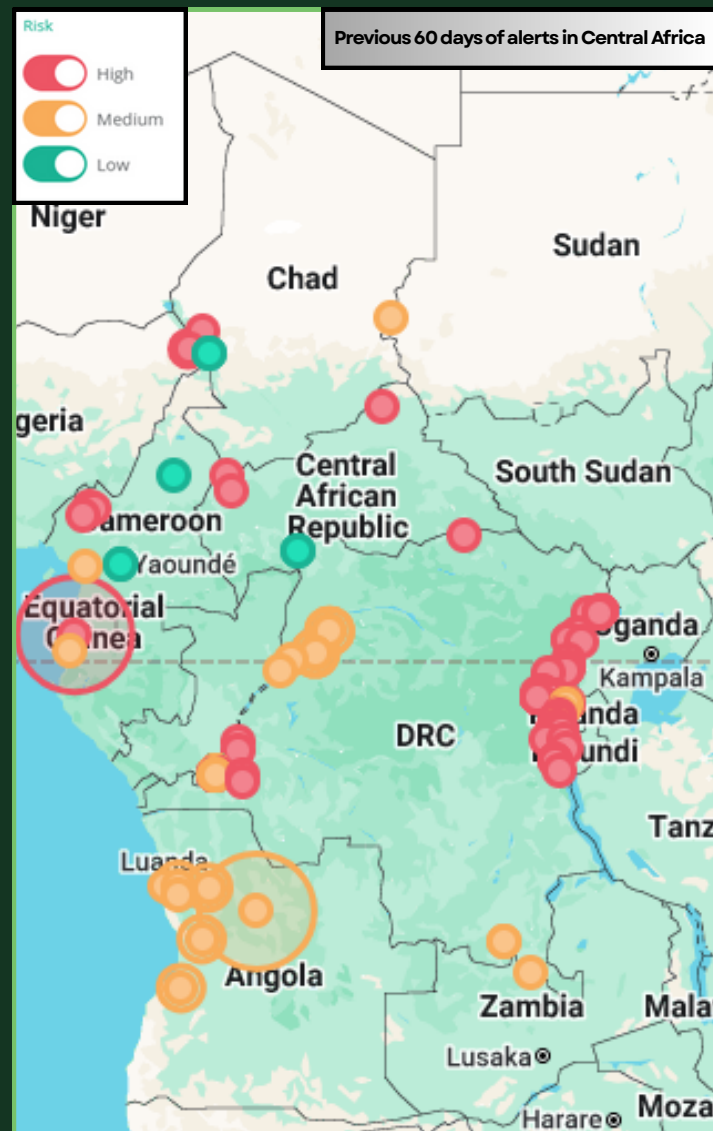
Cameroon & Chad: Both countries are navigating complex security and political environments. In Cameroon, Boko Haram continues to stage attacks in the Far North, while tensions persist in the Anglophone regions, where armed separatist groups remain active. In Chad, the transitional military government has faced civil society protests and sporadic clashes, especially in N’Djamena, ahead of repeatedly delayed elections. Cross-border tensions with Sudan and instability in the Lake Chad Basin continue to strain security forces. Both governments are under scrutiny for limited progress on political inclusivity and civilian-military power balance.

Central African Republic (CAR): The CAR remains volatile, with ongoing clashes between government forces and armed rebel coalitions. The presence of Wagner-affiliated Russian forces has helped the government retain urban control, but large parts of the countryside remain inaccessible. Rebel groups have disrupted logistics and trade routes, affecting aid delivery and mineral exports. The government has signaled interest in closer ties with Russia and China, further distancing itself from traditional Western partners. The humanitarian crisis continues to deepen, with rising displacement and food insecurity in northern and eastern regions.

Republic of the Congo & Equatorial Guinea: Both countries remain relatively stable, but institutional fragility and governance opacity remain concerns. In the Republic of the Congo, the government is balancing debt obligations and aging leadership while maintaining tight control over political space. Equatorial Guinea remains under the authoritarian rule of the Obiang family, with limited political activity. Both states are watching regional instability cautiously, especially developments in Gabon and the DRC, given shared economic and political linkages.

Angola: Angola has remained stable, but underlying socio-economic discontent has grown amid inflation, unemployment, and slow reform implementation. President João Lourenço’s administration has focused on economic diversification and infrastructure development, but frustrations have surfaced in localized protests and political opposition activity. Security forces have largely contained unrest, and no large-scale disruption has occurred. Angola is also positioning itself regionally as a diplomatic player, hosting engagements on the DRC crisis and economic cooperation with Central African neighbors.

São Tomé and Príncipe: The island state has remained calm and politically stable through the period, with no major security or governance disruptions reported. São Tomé continues to pursue economic ties with Angola and Equatorial Guinea and has maintained strong relations with international donors. While small in regional influence, it remains a valuable diplomatic and maritime node in Central Africa’s wider political landscape.



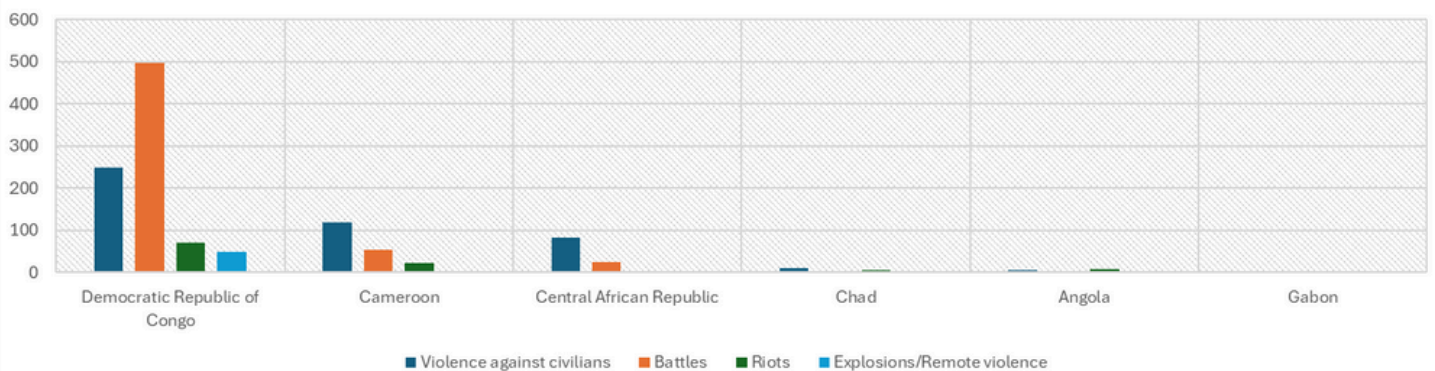
Assessment

Central Africa's security landscape remains highly volatile, with multiple overlapping crises driven by internal insurgencies, contested political transitions, and transnational tensions. The most severe escalation has taken place in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have captured strategic towns including Goma and Bukavu. This has triggered mass displacement and raised the risk of a broader regional conflict, particularly as Kinshasa accuses Kigali of direct military involvement. Peace talks have stalled, and the Congolese government's reliance on regional militias and international allies has only partly contained the crisis. The conflict's scale and complexity – involving rebel movements, foreign interests, and unresolved historical grievances – make resolution unlikely in the short term. The eastern DRC will likely remain a major regional flashpoint, with cross-border implications for Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi.

Meanwhile, political uncertainty has gripped Gabon, Chad, and Cameroon. Gabon held presidential elections in April 2025 following the August 2023 coup, but concerns over transparency and military influence remain high. In Chad, the transitional government faces mounting pressure as it nears its own long-promised elections, amid civil society pushback and recent violent clashes in the capital. Cameroon is navigating a complex political and security environment ahead of elections, while also contending with the persistent Anglophone crisis and Boko Haram activity in the Far North. These transitions have occurred against a backdrop of limited institutional reform, raising the realistic possibility of unrest should public trust in the electoral processes falter. Across the region, central authorities are stretched thin, and while formal state structures persist, their reach in peripheral and conflict-prone areas remains limited.

At the regional level, governance weaknesses, fragmented security responses, and growing foreign influence have further complicated crisis management. Russia and China continue to deepen their engagement, particularly in the CAR and DRC, through security, mining, and diplomatic channels. Simultaneously, traditional Western influence has waned in several Central African states, either due to strategic recalibration (as seen in the CAR's rejection of French support) or reputational concerns tied to support for entrenched regimes. This evolving geopolitical landscape has introduced new uncertainty into peacekeeping and stabilization efforts, while blurring lines between private security actors, foreign governments, and state forces. Humanitarian conditions continue to worsen in conflict zones, particularly in eastern DRC, northern CAR, and Lake Chad borderlands, where displaced populations face both violence and a lack of access to basic services. Without sustained regional cooperation and inclusive political reforms, the Central African security outlook is likely to remain unstable through the near term.

Political violence across Central Africa: Jan - Apr 2025



Impact

Ongoing conflict, contested political transitions, and foreign realignments are raising operational and strategic risks across Central Africa. Extractives firms face growing disruption in eastern DRC and CAR due to armed group activity, while regulatory unpredictability in countries like Gabon and Chad complicates investment planning. Financial institutions must manage elevated credit and compliance risks in fragile states, especially those under transitional or military rule. As Western influence recedes and alternative partners like Russia expand their role, firms are facing new uncertainties in securing contracts, navigating ESG expectations, and managing exposure to sanctioned or opaque actors.

Sectoral considerations:

- Mining operations in DRC, CAR, and Congo face rising threats from conflict, infrastructure attacks, and forced evacuations.
- Oil & gas projects in Chad and Gabon are exposed to political volatility and potential regulatory renegotiation.
- Contract enforcement risks are growing in countries under transitional or military governments.
- Financial institutions face higher compliance burdens and restricted correspondent banking access in conflict-affected states.
- ESG scrutiny is intensifying around engagements involving military actors or sanctioned entities.
- Insurance and operational premiums remain elevated for projects in or near conflict zones.