

# The Congo Is Not a Quick Win

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In Washington, “peace” is being marketed like a term sheet. In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, it is still a battlefield. In the critical minerals economy, ambiguity is always expensive.

In a new [InvestorNews.com](https://investornews.com) interview for the [Critical Minerals Institute](https://criticalmineralsinstitute.com) (CMI), [Tracy Hughes](https://tracyhughes.com) speaks with [Melissa “Mel” Sanderson](https://melissasanderson.com), CMI’s co-chair, about a Trump-brokered Rwanda–DRC [peace deal](#) signed in Washington on December 4, 2025. Sanderson’s verdict is blunt: “This is a pipe dream.”

Her first objection is procedural. The deal’s economic promises hinge on a ceasefire and the withdrawal of M23—yet M23 wasn’t in the talks. That omission, she argues, “is an implicit acknowledgement” of what U.N. experts have alleged: Rwanda exercises command and control over the rebel movement.

Then came the map. This week, Reuters and the Associated Press reported that M23 fighters entered and then [consolidated](#) control over Uvira, a strategic town in South Kivu, even as diplomacy pressed forward.

Sanderson notes why Uvira matters: it sits on routes that connect Congo to Tanzania—“an alternative route for shipping out illegally obtained mineral wealth,” as she put it—beyond the traditional flows through Rwanda.

The second objection is capacity. President Trump, Sanderson says, invoked “huge U.S. players” eager to build mines. But big operators avoid active war zones; she points to Freeport-McMoRan’s 2016 exit from its Tenke Fungurume position as a reminder of how quickly exposure can be cut when risk and politics swell. Would-be entrants today are more likely to be

juniors—too small to fund Congo-scale projects without insurance, lenders, and security that is not on offer.

Her third objection is physical: infrastructure. Eastern Congo's transport and power systems, battered across decades of conflict, still complicate routine logistics—never mind industrial mining.

What should Washington do instead? Sanderson offers a fork. If the goal is peace, “you need... targeted sanctions” and leverage on Kigali, not investment cheerleading—an argument echoed this week as U.S. officials accused Rwanda of violating the deal. If the goal is supply chains, she says, assemble financing and risk coverage—and stop confusing “creating peace” with “making a deal.”

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