

**RELEASE IN FULL**

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**From:** Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 4, 2012 6:05 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: Rebels kill 26 in eastern Congo attacks (Reuters)

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**From:** OpsNewsTicker  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 04, 2012 05:51 PM  
**To:** NEWS-Mahogany  
**Cc:** SES-O  
**Subject:** Rebels kill 26 in eastern Congo attacks (Reuters)

KINSHASA (Reuters) - At least 26 people have been killed by suspected Rwandan FDLR rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo since the beginning of the year, the army said on Wednesday, the worst attacks reported in the central African country in months.

The killings took place in remote villages in the territory of Shabunda in South Kivu province, an area still troubled by armed groups more than eight years after the end of a 1998-2003 war that killed more than five million people.

"It's very, very serious, to the point that the army is re-enforcing the area," army spokesman Colonel Sylvain Ekenge told Reuters. "They said they were attacked because the population had been supporting (another) local militia."

The FDLR, which says it is trying to overthrow the government in neighbouring Rwanda, is the largest rebel group left in eastern Congo and has been responsible for widespread atrocities including mass rapes and killings.

Ekenge said small groups of the FDLR fighters attacked settlements and burned huts in the densely forested region on Monday night, killing 18 civilians. Another eight people died in attacks on villages on Tuesday night, he added.

Congo soldiers were conducting a sweep of the area to try to track the attackers and protect civilians, said Ekenge.

Armed groups continue to operate in Congo's east, despite the presence more than 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers and ongoing military operations.

About 10 people were reported killed in South Kivu in October, and as many as 170 women were raped in a series of rebel attacks in June.

Many of the rebels receive their weapons and ammunition from Congo's army, either through illegal arms trading or capturing it on the battlefield, a U.N. report said last week.