

# DOCUMENTATION CENTRALE DES CRIMES INTERNATIONAUX

## SECTION AFRICA BUREAU DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Redaction : 28/01/2026  
Reference : AFRDC-NDC-3 (ENG)  
Not protected

Context note  
Lieu : Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC),  
regions of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu  
Période : 2022 to 2026

**Subject: Natural resources in the DRC – foreign influence and links to armed groups**

### Overview :

- The DRC is the world's leading producer of cobalt and Africa's leading producer of gold and copper. The country's soil is also rich in coltan, lithium, diamonds, gas and oil. **These resources attract international interest and fuel local conflicts.**
- The **ITSCI system**, the main mechanism for tracing resources, aims to ensure that extraction does not involve illegal labour or fuel armed conflicts. **Major flaws have been identified in the North and South Kivu regions.** Anomalies in the data and cases of money laundering call into question the effectiveness of this system.
- The armed conflict in the DRC has led to the **takeover of strategic mining areas by belligerent entities.** Armed groups such as the Rwandan-backed **M23, CODECO and Wazalendo** control these mines. The profits generated are used to **finance the continuation of hostilities, during which exactions are perpetrated.**
- Companies such as **Minerals Supply Africa, CDMC and SOGECOM** have been identified as responsible for illegal exports. Individuals such as **Chris Huber**, who is under investigation for war crimes, and **John Crawley**, who is linked to shady business dealings, illustrate the wrongdoing in the sector. Despite certifications, multinationals are accused of concealing issues related to the origin of mineral resources.
- The peace agreement signed in June 2025 between Rwanda and the DRC under American pressure led to the **involvement of controversial private security companies** and non-transparent remuneration arrangements to secure mining areas.

## 1 Natural resources:

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is particularly **rich in cooper, cobalt, coltan and diamonds**.<sup>1</sup> It is the first African producer of **gold and copper** and the biggest producer of cobalt in the world (70% of the global production). **Lithium, diamonds, gas and oil** can also be found in the DRC.<sup>2</sup>

All of these elements make the DRC one of the richest countries in terms of natural resources. Because of this, other States and neighbouring countries especially, have always coveted those resources and it is the **source of many of the conflicts that occurred locally**.

Cobalt and lithium are essential for the manufacture of **batteries** for cellphones or electric cars.<sup>3</sup> Coltan is composed of tantalum, which is essential for the production of **capacitors** for telephones and computers. Copper is also essential for the production of **electronic and electrical devices**.

## 2 Traceability:

As the resources found in the DRC are essential for the manufacture of electronic and electrical products, the **traceability of their components** is considered crucial to **ensure that their extraction is not linked to unlawful activities**.

One of the most widely used traceability systems is the International Tin Supply Chain Initiative (ITSCI) created by the International Tin Association (ITA) and the International Centre for the Study of Tantalum and Niobium (TIC). The aim of this initiative is to provide a reliable **chain of traceability** to ensure that **the extraction of resources does not contribute to child labour or armed conflict**.

Government officials are trained to collect data to ensure the **traceability of resources from mining sites to export**, taking into account all intermediate stages, including transport.<sup>4</sup> Data centres verify all this information to try identify potential incidents or anomalies.<sup>5</sup>

However, a 2022 report by the NGO Global Witness highlighted the **flaws in this system** in terms of the traceability of minerals from the DRC, specifically from **North and South Kivu**, the regions that are currently most affected by the armed conflict between the DRC government forces and the M23, supported by Rwanda.<sup>6</sup>

The maps below show the issues identified in the extraction of minerals extracted in the area, which had been certified by the ITSCI system, as well as their international route.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/CD/le-secteur-minier-en-rd-congo#:~:text=La%20RDC%20est%20«%20un%20scandale,coltan%2C%20or%2C%20diamants>).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/fr/actualites-et-recits/recit/les-ressources-minerales-de-la-republique-democratique-du-congo-peuvent>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unep.org/fr/actualites-et-recits/recit/les-ressources-minerales-de-la-republique-democratique-du-congo-peuvent>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.itsci.org/fr/traceability/>

<sup>5</sup> See annex 1

<sup>6</sup> [https://gw.hacdn.io/media/documents/The\\_ITSCI\\_Laundromat\\_FR\\_-\\_April\\_2022.pdf](https://gw.hacdn.io/media/documents/The_ITSCI_Laundromat_FR_-_April_2022.pdf)

## Des minerais entachés entrent dans le système ITSCI en RDC

● Mine ▲ Export point

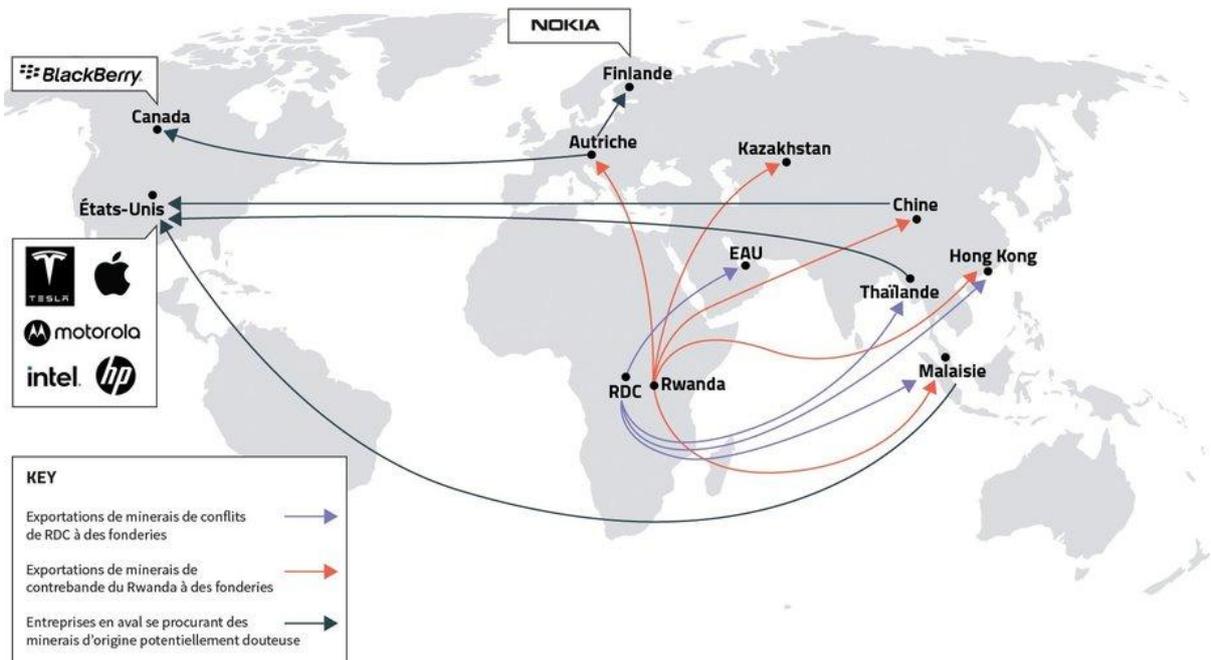
Issues identified : ● Conflict funding ● Human rights violations  
● Child labour ● Protected area



Note : \* mines autour de la localité mentionnée

Source : données tirées des recherches de Global Witness, du Groupe d'expert de l'ONU et de l'IPIS.

## Chaînes d'approvisionnement internationales de minerais d'origine douteuse blanchis par le biais d'ITSCI



### 3 Les limites du système ISTCI :

ITSCI is the largest certifier of minerals in the DRC and Rwanda. There are other certification mechanisms, such as **Better Mining**, which are currently less widespread. For example, in 2012, 97% of 3T exports (cassiterite, tungsten and coltan) were labelled by ITSCI.<sup>7</sup> However, this system has its limitations. For the **Sakima concession**, ITSCI's baseline estimates were 10 times higher than those of the UN, as some of the minerals were imported from the **SMB concession**.<sup>8</sup>

Although this system has flaws, since the implementation of the ISTCI system, there has been a decline in the illegal transit of minerals with Rwanda.<sup>9</sup> However, alongside this decline in trafficking to Rwanda, **mineral laundering in the DRC has increased**.<sup>10</sup> In 2021, **the conflict between the DRC government and the M23 resumed, and in March 2022, the armed group seized a large part of the province where many mines are located**.

Following the resumption of the conflict, Rwanda's exports of rare minerals increased by 43%.<sup>11</sup> Considering the **links between the M23 and Rwanda**, although both parties deny these relations, this resumption of exports speaks volumes, especially since, according to the Global Witness report, **90% of minerals exported from Rwanda actually come from the DRC**.<sup>12</sup>

Another factor that calls into question the reliability of the ISTCI system is the involvement of **General Kabarebe** and **Mr Bensusan** in its implementation.<sup>13</sup> The first was **Rwanda's Minister of Defence** between 2010 and 2018 and was accused by the United States in early 2025 of playing a role in the Rwandan army's support for the M23 movement. The second, who is now deceased, is the **former CEO of Minerals Supply Africa**, a major company linked to the mineral trade in Rwanda, which had admitted to purchasing contraband minerals.

**The involvement of individuals known for their involvement in mineral trafficking and with strong links to Rwanda** in the creation of the ISTCI system therefore raises doubts about its reliability.

Finally, report S/2025/446 produced by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo highlights other flaws in the ISTCI system, particularly due to the **multitude of armed groups present in mining areas**.<sup>14</sup> Links have also been established between these flaws and the sale of resources by countries such as Rwanda and Uganda, showing that **some of the minerals from the DRC are being smuggled into neighbouring countries**.

<sup>7</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>9</sup> Voir annexe 2

<sup>10</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.revueconflits.com/rwanda-la-revolution-mini%C3%A8re-entre-industrialisation-transparence-et-inclusion/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>14</sup> [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4085466/files/S\\_2025\\_446-FR.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4085466/files/S_2025_446-FR.pdf)

#### 4 Control of mines by armed groups (in 2026):

Following the resumption of armed conflict between the M23 and DRC governmental forces, **armed groups have taken control of certain areas in the east of the country, including resource mines.**

- **The M23 is established in:**
  - The area of **Rubaya** (Masisi) since 2024. This is one of the largest coltan production areas in the world.<sup>15</sup>
  - The territories of **Rutshuru and Masisi**, where there are significant deposits of cassiterite and tungsten.<sup>16</sup>
- **The Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) is based in:**
  - The territory of **Djugu**, where it controls gold mines.<sup>17,18</sup>
  - The **Mongbwalu** plain.<sup>19</sup>
- **The Wazalendo are based in:**
  - **South Kivu**, particularly the territories of **Mwenga and Shabunda**, where they control gold mines.<sup>20</sup>

These armed groups are suspected of committing **violations of human rights and international humanitarian law**. The profits generated by the exploitation of natural resources enable them **to finance their armed activities and maintain a situation of instability that leads to exactions.**

#### 4 Mining companies:

**Minerals Supply Africa** is one of the main companies exporting minerals.<sup>21</sup> Chris Huber is a Swiss businessman who is alleged to have profited from the illegal export of these minerals. He has links to numerous resource exporters such as **Rwanda Rudniki, Tawotin Ltd and Wolfram Mining and Processing (WMP)**.<sup>22</sup> He is also **under investigation for war crimes in the DRC**.<sup>23</sup>

The two largest exporters of coltan in North Kivu are the **Coopérative des artisans miniers du Congo (CDMC)** and the **Société générale de commerce SARL (SOGECOM)**. **John Crawley** (former president of the Tantalum Niobium International Study Centre) is the president of the CDMC.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/podcasts/afrique-économie/20260125-rdc-à-rubaya-des-mines-stratégiques-au-cœur-de-la-guerre-toujours-contrôlées-par-le-m23>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.agenceecofin.com/metaux/0210-122079-en-rdc-une-partie-de-la-production-de-coltan-est-taxee-par-le-m23-onu>

<sup>17</sup> <https://mines.cd/ituri-des-deputes-cites-dans-lexploitation-illegale-de-lor-a-djugu-sous-protection-de-la-codeco/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4085466/files/S\\_2025\\_446-FR.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4085466/files/S_2025_446-FR.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://mines.cd/rdc-lor-la-raison-detre-des-groupes-armes-et-des-massacres-en-ituri/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://docs.un.org/en/s/2025/858>

<sup>21</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20191213-entrepreneur-suisse-vise-une-enquete-pillage-rdc>

According to the Global Witness report, he is identified as one of the key figures in mineral exports:

*"Between at least 2014 and 2017, **Hong Kong-based East Rise Corporation Limited**, of which **Crawley** is a director, purchased most of SMB240's coltan. Two mining industry experts told us that **Huber** financed SMB's coltan purchases, and one added that these transactions took place through **East Rise 241**."*<sup>24</sup>

#### 4 The option of legal action against the companies involved:

With regard to the critics of systems such as ITSCI, the fact of having 'certification' is likely to be used by some companies to deflect responsibility. Considering the various reports on the unreliability of these systems, it seems **unlikely that the companies concerned are unaware in good faith that some of the minerals they purchase are linked to armed groups and unlawful practices.**

**Legal complaints were filed against Apple subsidiaries in France and Belgium in 2024 for concealing war crimes, laundering counterfeit goods, and consumer fraud.**<sup>25</sup> Although the complaint in France was not pursued, **Apple's decision to suspend its supply of minerals from the DRC and Rwanda** shortly after these complaints were filed suggests that the multinational corporation was aware of contentious practices. Similar complaints have been filed against companies such as **Intel, Samsung, Nokia, Motorola and Tesla** by human rights NGOs, as well as by the State of DRC.<sup>26</sup>

In France, the 2017 vigilance law could be a possible avenue for complaints to be filed against certain companies.<sup>27</sup>

#### 5 American influence:

Following the peace agreement between Rwanda and the DRC signed on 27 June 2025 under US pressure, the DRC government announced that it had signed a **contract with Erik Prince**, founder of the former private security company Blackwater, to **secure North and South Kivu with a local security force that would draw revenue from extractive industries.**<sup>28</sup>

This highlights **American influence and the involvement of contractors** in the DRC conflict, whose missions remain obscure to this day, particularly with regard to the terms of the profits they may generate.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2024/12/19/apple-dit-avoir-suspendu-ses-approvisionnements-en-minerais-en-provenance-de-la-rdc-et-du-rwanda\\_6457545\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2024/12/19/apple-dit-avoir-suspendu-ses-approvisionnements-en-minerais-en-provenance-de-la-rdc-et-du-rwanda_6457545_3212.html)

<sup>26</sup> <https://globalwitness.org/fr/campaigns/transition-minerals/la-laverie-itsci/>

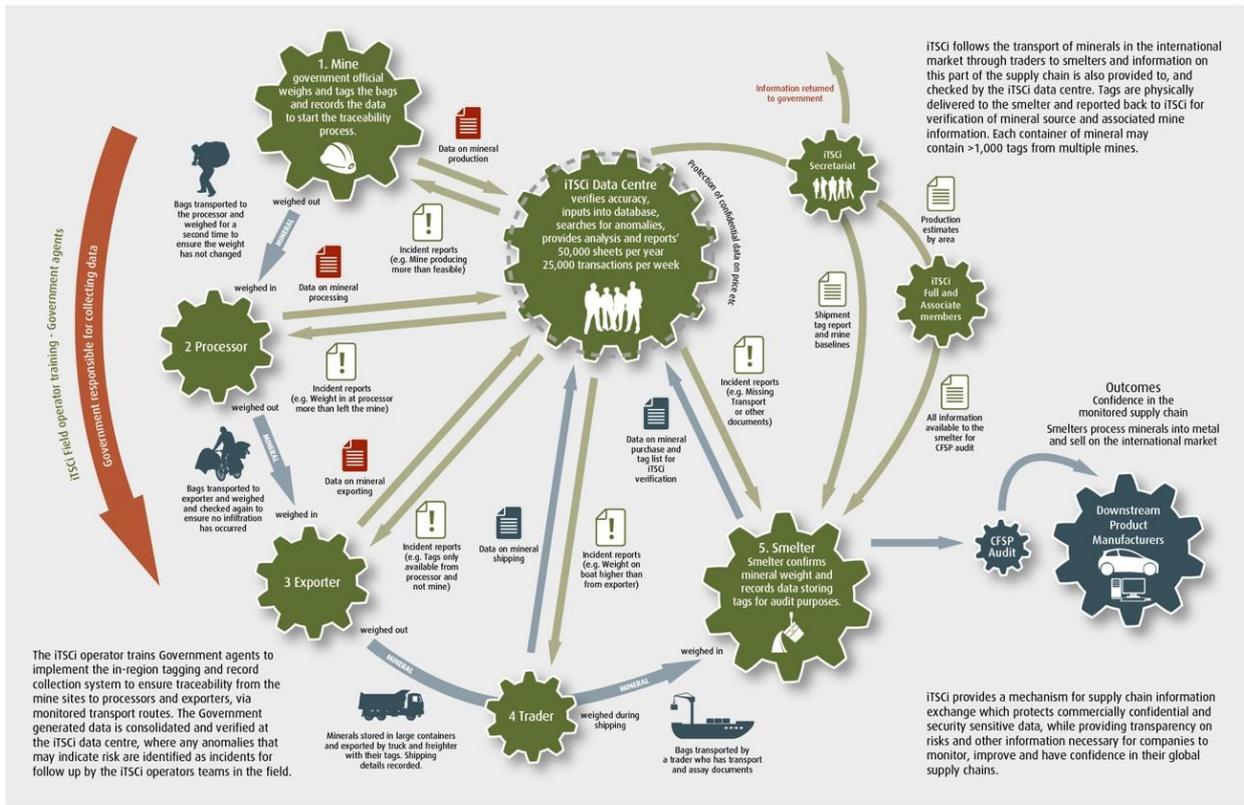
<sup>27</sup> <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000034290626/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.theafricareport.com/402680/how-blackwater-founder-erik-prince-slid-back-into-business-in-drc/>

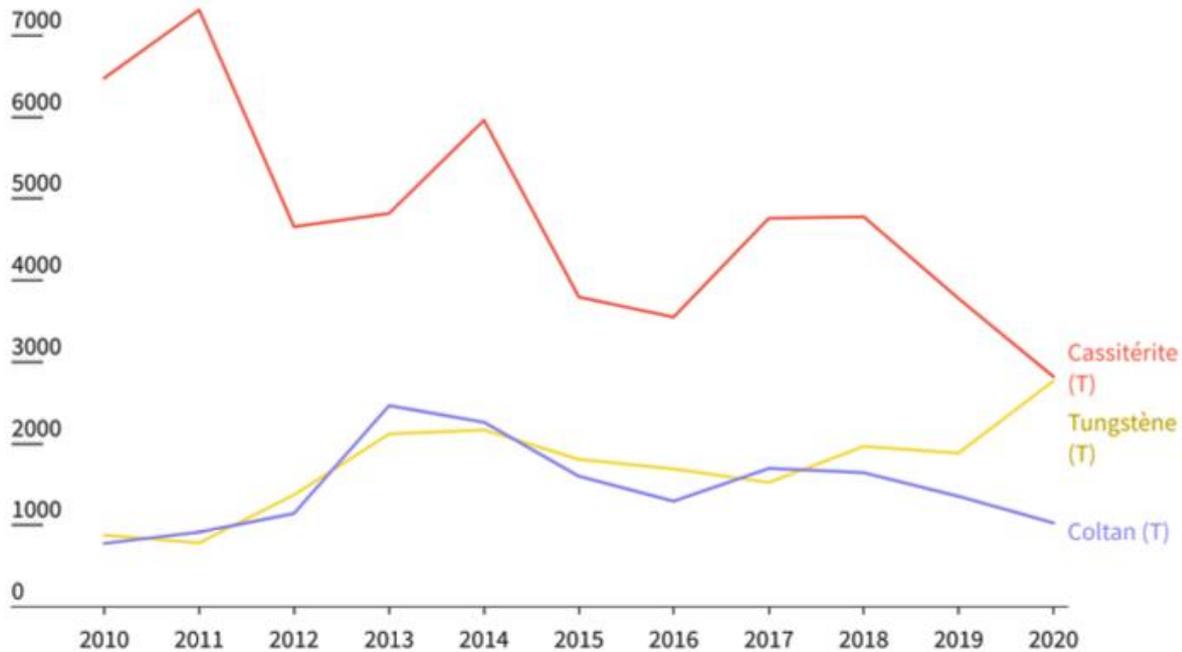
<sup>29</sup> <https://afriquinfos.com/congo-protection-et-agemira-deux-societes-militaires-privees-etrangeres-contraintes-de-quitter-lest-de-la-rdc/>

# Annex 1 : Chaîne d’approvisionnement et traçabilité ITSCI

## ITSCI STEP 2: Identify the supply chain - ITSCI Traceability



## Annex 2 : Exportation rwandaises de 3T



Source: UN Comtrade ; Banque nationale du Rwanda

The graph shows a substantial decline in the quantity of 3T exported by Rwanda, coinciding with the introduction of the ISTCI certification system in 2009.

## Annex 3 : Biographical elements

### **Chris Huber :**

Limited information available from open sources. Swiss businessman who allegedly owned companies managing mining concessions in the DRC and who is said to have traded with DRC-Goma, an armed group accused of war crimes.

Currently believed to be living in South Africa, where he owns multiple properties.<sup>30</sup>

Criminal investigation against him in Switzerland. Suspected of illicit mineral trafficking during the Second Congo War.<sup>31</sup>

### **John Crawley :**

American of British origin. President of the Tantalum-Niobium International Study Centre (TIC) in 2019, the global trade association for tantalum.<sup>32</sup> Associated with multiple companies operating in the minerals sector in the DRC, including the Coopérative Des artisanaux Miniers du Congo (CDMC), which is also linked to Chris Huber.

Sanctioned by the US Treasury for participating in illegal mining in the Rubaya area.<sup>33</sup>

Allegations concerning links to the purchase of minerals from areas controlled by the armed group Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais.

### **David Bensusan :**

British national linked to mineral trafficking.<sup>34</sup> In particular, he supervised mining activities for Congo Desk between 1997 and 2003 and is believed to have set up trading posts in the DRC owned by Rwandans.

Former managing director of Minerals Supply Africa (MSA), Rwanda's largest mineral exporter.

Involved in the creation of the ISTCI traceability system in 2009, of which MSA is a founding member, which raises questions about the motivations behind this system. MSA's exports of 3T minerals increased significantly following the implementation of this system and were certified by ISTCI as exports of Rwandan minerals.

Reportedly close to General Kabarebe, who was sanctioned in February 2025 by the US Treasury Department for his support of the M23.<sup>35</sup>

Died in 2021.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://continent.substack.com/p/christoph-huber-accused-of-drc-war>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.business-humanrights.org/fr/latest-news/une-enquête-pénale-ouverte-en-suisse-contre-un-entrepreneur-soupçonné-de-traffic-illicite-de-minerais-en-rdc/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://7sur7.cd/coltan-john-crawley-president-du-tic-en-appelle-a-une-nouvelle-strategie-pour-une-plus-value-en-rd-congo>

<sup>33</sup> <https://bankable.africa/fr/mines/1408-1556-sanctions-americaines-le-minier-congolais-cdmc-denonce-un-complot>

<sup>34</sup> <https://beto.cd/grand-angle/magazine/2024/05/03/voici-les-acteurs-occidentaux-du-commerce-illicite-des-minerais-de-sang-en-rdc-au-profit-du-rwanda.html/162085/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1660810/politique/soutien-du-rwanda-au-m23-james-kabarebe-sanctionne-par-le-tresor-americaain/>