Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) soldiers have been deployed in Tchabi, Irumu territory of Ituri province, since Thursday, August 28, as part of joint operations with the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC).

The deployment, according to eyewitnesses, seeks to restore security in a region scarred by repeated attacks from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Formed in 1990, ADF is an armed group that originated in Uganda by rebels opposed to President Yoweri Museveni's government. It united Islamist factions and political dissidents, but after heavy Ugandan military pressure, the group shifted its stronghold into the dense forests of eastern DRC, particularly North Kivu and Ituri provinces.

Over the years, the ADF has gained a reputation for extreme brutality—massacres of civilians, kidnappings, looting, burning villages, and attacks on schools. Thousands of people have been displaced by its violence.

In 2019, the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) claimed the ADF as part of its "Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP)." While some analysts argue this link is largely symbolic, the United Nations considers the ADF one of the deadliest armed groups in the region, responsible for thousands of civilian deaths over the past decade.

In response, the governments of Uganda and the DRC launched "Operation Shujaa" in late 2021, a joint military offensive aimed at dismantling ADF bases. Despite recorded successes, the group has remained resilient. Since the start of 2024, ADF attacks have intensified, leaving communities in fear.

In mid-August, several attacks struck Ituri province. On August 15, four people were killed in Busio, while assaults in Bukima, Bandikide, and Lengesa forced villagers to flee their homes, according to the UN Radio Okapi news.

Local leaders say the presence of Ugandan troops is restoring a measure of confidence. "We feel some relief with the arrival of the UPDF," Faustin Mboma Banilau, president of the Banyali-Tchabi community told Okapi Radio. He urged residents to collaborate closely with the FARDC, UPDF, and local police to track down the rebels.

On Thursday and Friday, witnesses observed Ugandan military convoys moving

through Tchabi-centre and surrounding villages, signaling a wider sweep of the territory.

Community representatives are calling for a reinforced FARDC presence alongside the UPDF, especially to enable displaced families to return to their villages during the back-to-school period. “We need stronger protection so our people can return to their villages,” Banilau emphasized.

While the joint military initiative offers hope, the sustainability of peace remains uncertain in eastern Congo, where decades of weak governance and armed insurgencies have allowed groups like the ADF to entrench themselves. For now, communities in Ituri wait to see whether this latest deployment will bring lasting stability.