Cycling team Soudal-QuickStep has decided not to participate in this year's Tour du Rwanda due to security worries linked to the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The M23 rebel group has taken control of Goma, the largest city in eastern DRC, which is near the Rwandan border. Some race stages of the Tour du Rwanda, scheduled for 23 February to 2 March, pass close to this region. One overnight stop for teams is planned in Rubavu, just 10km from Goma.

"We reviewed the situation and were concerned about the start, finish, and hotel location near the high-risk area," Soudal-QuickStep CEO Jurgen Fore told Belgian media outlet Sporza. "We decided not to send 20 people without a clear safety guarantee."

Despite this decision, Tour du Rwanda organizers insist the event will continue as planned. They assured riders, teams, and fans of a "safe and enjoyable event."

Rwanda is also preparing to host the Road World Championships in Kigali from 21 to 28 September, making it the first African country to hold the prestigious event. The UCI, cycling's global governing body, confirmed it has no plans to relocate the competition.

Kigali is more than 90 miles from Goma, with a 100-mile drive through Rwanda's mountains connecting the two cities.

Meanwhile, the Rwanda Cycling Federation (FERWACY) has recently addressed safety concerns regarding the upcoming Tour du Rwanda. They have assured participants and supporters that the race will proceed as scheduled from February 23 to March 2, 2025.

As organizers, they have emphasized that the ongoing conflict in neighboring eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is unlikely to affect Rwanda. They have stated: "All necessary measures have been taken to ensure the safety of riders, teams, and supporters, and that the event will be both safe and enjoyable."