

# Coltan, blood & weapons in Congo

**Spain's National  
Court is  
investigating the  
plundering of this  
strategic mineral**

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It is an essential mineral in everyday life. Mobile phones, videogame consoles and personal computers need it for their production.

Coltan, however, lies at the heart of one of the bloodiest wars in recent times and one which has caused the death of millions of people. The struggle for control of the coltan mines lying in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo is behind the rebellions and military



interventions directly organized or supported by bordering countries such as Rwanda or Uganda in the neighboring Kivu region (at the north and south). The most recent riot was staged by general Laurent N'Kunda who heads the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), the party supported by Rwanda. N'Kunda was arrested this past January 22.

According to legal counsel Jordi Palou-Loverdos, who initiated the lawsuit, National Court judge Fernando Andreu has now expanded his

investigation of the Tutsi Rwandan government's systematic extermination of the Hutu ethnic group – which took place after the Tutsi genocide perpetrated by the Hutu after the spring of 1994 – to look into the illegal mining of this mineral in eastern Congo. The judge has now approached U.N. Secretary General Ban-ki-moon to request from him the evidence supporting the three U.N. reports which make Rwandan President Paul Kagame, indicted for genocide, and his close associates, responsible for the illegal exploitation of Congolese natural resources, among them

coltan. According to accounts by the author of these reports, all these people took advantage of related guerrilla wars to carry out the pillage.

With his resolution, the Spanish judge is seeking to obtain the evidence which the group of experts relied on to state, in their 2001 reports about the illegal exploitation of resources, that three of the companies involved in transporting the coltan to (Rwandan capital) Kigali, namely Air Navette, Jambo Safari and New Gomair, belonged to people close to Kagame. Among them was the wife of his finance minister or entrepreneurs in Kagame's closest circle. In addition, the reports assured that most companies which profited from this pillage belonged to Kagame's government or to officials of the party he heads, the Rwandan Patriotic Front. (RPF):

One of the companies involved in this operation is Tristar Investment, whose main shareholder, Kagame adviser Tribert Rujigiro, is a member of the RPF and considered to be one of its closest supporters. Rujigiro has had dealings with arms traffickers such as former KGB spy Viktor Butt who collaborated with Rwandan army leaders by renting planes to transport coltan to Kigali. Judge Andreu has likewise requested information on Butt who played a key role in financing the most recent revolt supported by Rwanda, that of General N'Kunda, which has resulted in 250,000 displaced people.

Rujigiro is now in London, where he was arrested because South Africa wants to extradite him on tax evasion charges. Legal counsel Palou Loverdos is considering asking Andreu to issue an arrest warrant for him in Europe in order to bring him to justice in Spain on war crime charges.

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