



LRA Update

According to a recent joint monitoring report by two NGOs, LRA violence doubled in the first half of 2012 compared to the same period in 2011. The [report](#), compiled by Invisible Children and Resolve, noted 155 reported LRA attacks the first half of 2012 in northern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) mostly to the west and south of Garamba National Park. LRA attacks also increased significantly in southeast Central African Republic, with as many reported attacks in the first half of 2012 (35) as in all of 2011. Some 59 additional attacks committed in DRC and CAR by ‘unknown perpetrators’ could have also been committed by LRA fighters.

The most recent LRA attack took place on 1 September in Balifondo, in CAR’s Haut Mbomou prefecture, 800 kilometers east of the capital Bangui. According to press reports, 55 people were abducted by an LRA group of about 20 armed fighters. At least 19 people were severely beaten and otherwise injured by the rebels who abducted 14 young girls, among others. The attack may have been in retaliation to a reported Ugandan army clash on 28 August with an LRA group in the area led by Dominic Ongwen, a young commander indicted by the International Criminal Court. According to Ugandan army representatives, Ugandan soldiers killed two of Ongwen’s troops.

Further claims by Ugandan officials that the army destroyed Ongwen’s ‘headquarters’ and therefore weakened the LRA are overstatements. Ongwen, like LRA leader Joseph Kony and other top commanders, have been constantly on the move since at least December 2008 when a Ugandan army offensive against LRA bases in Congo caused the fighters to scatter throughout Congo and CAR. But Ugandan officials are increasingly under pressure to deliver results, particularly since the end of 2011 when about 100 US Special Forces arrived in Central Africa to help the Ugandan army in their hunt of the LRA.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reaffirmed American support to the Ugandan army on a short visit at the beginning of August 2012. Secretary Clinton visited the US Special Forces group training grounds in Entebbe, where according to the Ugandan daily *The New Vision*, she said, ‘I told the President [Museveni] earlier, we have to get the equipment and resources that will help rid the world of this terrible man [Kony].’

After watching a demonstration of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), or drone plane, Clinton said that better planes were needed to track Kony. The current UAVs used by the Ugandans, a dozen of RQ-11B Raven, supplied by the US army for use in the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, cannot penetrate dense vegetation. ‘We have to figure out one that can go through thick vegetation to get Kony,’ Clinton said. It is unclear whether the US would provide additional drones and aircraft to help fight the LRA. So far, the US has only provided intelligence and logistical support to the Ugandan troops.

Within US policy circles, the LRA issue remains in the spotlight. In July, a bipartisan group of 78 US legislators delivered a [letter](#) to President Obama urging him to coordinate, along with the

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U.N. and the African Union (AU), efforts to end the LRA. The US representatives want President Obama to hold a meeting during the current session of the U.N. General Assembly to press nations to make concrete commitments to strengthen regional coordination in addressing the LRA threat, apprehending Joseph Kony and his top military commanders, and civilian protection.

Finally, a *New York Times* article on elephant poaching claimed that LRA fighters have been shooting elephants for their tusks in DRC and trading them for guns and ammunition in Sudan. If true, this would represent a new operational tactic for the group. The phenomenon would be notable because LRA fighters traditionally have not engaged in trading of any kind and because the journey from northern DRC to South Darfur, where the LRA is allegedly based, is long and hazardous.

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