



## LRA Update

On 29 June 2012 the United Nations (UN) Security Council held a meeting to discuss the threat of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to populations in South Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the current African Union initiative to counter the fragmented armed group. In a presidential statement released the same day, the Security Council condemned LRA attacks against civilians in CAR and welcomed the development of a 'UN Regional Strategy to Address the Threat and Impact of the Activities of the LRA', which includes efforts to protect civilians and provide humanitarian aid.

In its statement, the Security Council also referred to African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative against the LRA (AU RCI-LRA), launched on 24 March 2012. The Council called for all the countries involved to cooperate with the AU mission and encouraged a closer collaboration between the AU and the UN initiatives. What this might entail is unclear apart from a better relationship between the AU Special Envoy Francisco Madeira and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Central Africa Abou Moussa.

Mr. Madeira and Mr. Moussa met in Entebbe, Uganda with representatives of UN field offices and non-governmental organizations at the end of July 2012 to identify areas of cooperation between the AU and the UN but there remain many unanswered questions as to how the UN can practically support the AU RCI-LRA. Despite public pronouncements by AU officials that 5,000 troops under AU auspices are ready to deploy, Congolese, South Sudanese, and Central African officials have not formalized troop contributions. If and when they are detailed they will need to be trained, equipped, and supplied.

The sourcing of the AU RCI-LRA forces is also unclear. It might include the 1,000 Ugandan troops already chasing LRA groups in CAR. But the majority of an infantry battalion of the Congolese army, trained by the US army intended to be part of the AU RCI-LRA, recently redeployed to North Kivu to cope with the so-called M23 rebellion of April 2012 and is thus unavailable. South Sudanese officials have reportedly promised 500 SPLA soldiers, while the Central African army can allegedly provide up to untrained and unarmed 1,000 troops. The AU claims the joint force will deploy by December 2012.

State politics and the situation on the ground also threaten to compromise the AU initiative. The Ugandans, whose army is the only force currently deployed against the LRA, are unlikely to submit to a joint coordination mechanism with the other forces, as stipulated by the AU. But to reach LRA fighters across the border in DRC, the Ugandans likely need the AU to pressure DRC President Kabila to lift the yearlong ban on Ugandan forces entering his country.

Even if the AU RCI-LRA were to successfully deploy by the start of next year, chances are poor of a successful military campaign. In order to keep up with the fast moving LRA units, the troops would need to be far more mobile than the Ugandan forces already deployed in CAR. They would need helicopters and other rapid response vehicles that the regional armies and the UN missions in DRC and South Sudan

**ARCHIVE**  
visit [smallarmsurveysudan.org](http://smallarmsurveysudan.org)  
for more recent updates



lack. Furthermore, if Kony and his associates have moved to Sudan’s South Darfur region, as UN officials have privately indicated, AU RCI-LRA would need to obtain permission to enter Sudan—a highly unlikely scenario.

Sudanese authorities have vehemently denied the LRA presence in South Darfur. At the end of July 2012, as the UN Security Council discussed renewing the African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeeping mission, Sudanese representative asked for but did not receive the removal of a clause in a proposed text tasking UNAMID with sharing information on LRA presence in Darfur.

Meanwhile LRA attacks have increased in recent months in CAR and DRC according to a 17 July report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Between April and June, 11 civilians were killed and 37 people abducted, the report said, with at least 62 attacks in north-eastern DRC, and nine attacks in eastern CAR in the second quarter of 2012. There have been no recorded attacks in South Sudan in 2012.

20 August 2012