

# Lord's Resistance Army Update

In an article and a documentary released in August, National Geographic documented the journey of specially constructed fake tusks from southeastern Central African Republic (CAR) to a small town in Darfur via the disputed enclave of Kafia Kingi. The fake tusks, embedded with GPS-emitting devices, were planted by National Geographic journalists near the small town of Mboki in CAR. After 53 days, the tusks were recorded for the last time in the East Darfur town of Ed Daein, 590 miles northeast of Mboki and about 90 miles southwest of Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state.

National Geographic journalists concluded that the tusks were taken by fighters of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) travelling on foot from southeastern CAR to Kafia Kingi, which is controlled by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). The article and documentary contend that LRA fighters then took the tusks to commander Joseph Kony. Using testimony from former LRA combatants who have defected over the past few years, the documentary showed that Kony traded ivory with SAF in exchange for weapons and ammunition. It is unclear what happened to the ivory after Ed Daein.

These claims are consistent with previous reports from other organizations. At least two reports from the Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative, released in 2013, established the presence of a relatively large LRA group, led by Kony, based in Kafia Kingi since at least 2011. Another 2013 report from the Enough Project showed how ivory was poached from elephants in Garamba National Park in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and transported on foot to Kony in Darfur. Other reports and published testimony has established that the first ivory trip from DRC to Kafia Kingi, led by commander Binany Okumu, took place in late 2012. (Binany was shot dead by the Ugandan army in January 2013 in CAR, on his way back to DRC, having reportedly already delivered the ivory to Kony.) But while LRA ivory trafficking in the region has thus been established, its scale—perhaps 100–200 tusks since 2012—is small compared to more systematic poaching by other actors in the area.

New evidence from recently defected LRA combatants provides fresh evidence of trafficking from DRC's Garamba Park to Kony in Kafia Kingi. A group of seven fighters, previously part of Kony's group in Kafia Kingi, surrendered to the Ugandan army in Obo, CAR, at the start of June 2015. The defectors confirmed that Kony was located in disputed enclave, his last known position being near the border with CAR, about 30 miles east of the CAR town of Sam Ouandja. The defectors also claimed that LRA fighters based in DRC have continued to bring ivory to Kafia Kingi via eastern CAR. Ivory is reportedly also exchanged for food, uniforms, and ammunition with Sudanese merchants likely connected to SAF. Ugandan army officers have claimed that SAF military intelligence provides information and security to the LRA and Kony, but have presented no evidence to support their claims.

In an effort to respond to the many reports detailing Kony's presence in Kafia Kingi, an African Union (AU) verification mission visited Khartoum on 12–15 September 2015. Led by the AU special envoy for LRA issues, Retired General Jackson Tuwei, the mission came after an invitation from Sudan in May 2014 following a UN Secretary-General report on the presence of the LRA in Kafia Kingi. The AU delegates met with various Sudanese military and civilian

officials who denied the presence of the LRA and Kony in Kafia Kingi but assured the AU of their full cooperation, including facilitating a future joint visit to Kafia Kingi.

LRA violence was recorded in the months of July, August, and early September, primarily in CAR and DRC. According to the LRA Crisis Tracker Initiative there were 38 attacks attributed to the LRA during this time; most (29) occurred in DRC. According to Secure, Empowered and Connected Communities, a USAID-funded community-based early warning system in CAR and DRC, four people died during these attacks—three in CAR and one in DRC.

A series of LRA attacks took place in and around Dungu, particularly towards Niangara, in early and mid-August 2015, as reported by local media, including Radio Okapi. At least one person died and four were seriously injured in violence directed at people along the Dungu–Niangara axis. A Congolese military official claimed the attacks were committed by Congolese bandits pretending to be the Ugandan rebels, but many local Dungu sources, including a priest from the Dungu diocese, denied those claims, saying the LRA was a continued threat to civilians in the area.

LRA attacks in CAR, as in DRC, were primarily attempts to secure food and included looting and temporary abductions of people forced to prepare the looted food. Many attacks were recorded around the southeastern towns of Mboki and Obo as well as on the Mboki–Zemio road and near the CAR–DRC border, south of Zemio, in Haut Mbomou prefecture. The village of Kpabou, 12 km west of Mboki, on the Mboki–Zemio axis, was attacked at least three times in the last two months. The most violent incident took place on 14 September 2015, in which three young men in their late teens were killed by unknown assailants believed to be LRA fighters.

A few attacks were also recorded in Haut Kotto prefecture, including a seemingly typical LRA looting of houses near Mbamangana on 16 August 2015. SEEC also reported attacks by armed fighters in Lengo and vicinity in August and early September but claimed the fighters are former Séléka rebels, not LRA, highlighting the difficulty of distinguishing between armed groups in highly volatile areas.

On 15 September 2015, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) spokesperson Philip Aguer denied that there had been clashes between SPLA and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in Opposition (SPLM-IO) in Wunduruba, Central Equatoria, South Sudan, claiming instead the SPLA fought a criminal group connected to the LRA. This raised questions and some tension in neighboring Northern Uganda, often attacked by the LRA in the past from bases in Central Equatoria. SPLM-IO sources later confirmed that their troops had in fact clashed with the SPLA in Wunduruba.

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