

# LOOSENING KONY'S GRIP

*Effective Defection  
Strategies for Today's LRA*

*July 2013*



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*authored by*

PHIL LANCASTER & LEDIO CAKAJ

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## ABOUT

### Published

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### Authors

Phil Lancaster PhD, was General Romeo Dallaire's Military Assistant during the Rwandan genocide. After retiring from the Canadian Army, Phil spent more than a decade working for UNICEF, the World Bank, and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). He is the former director of MONUC DDR, and led the World Bank's LRA Diagnostic Study. His work has focused on LRA issues for the past several years.

Ledio Cakaj (@LedioCakaj) is an independent researcher with a focus on armed groups, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and security sector reform in central Africa. Ledio has spent the last five years working almost exclusively on the Lord's Resistance Army for various organizations including the World Bank, Enough Project, and Small Arms Survey. He has written a series of reports and articles for publications such as Jane's Intelligence Review, the Africa Report, and the Journal of East African Studies.

### Editing and Research

Paul Ronan (@pauldronan) is a co-founder of The Resolve, and currently serves as the Director of Policy. He travels frequently to Uganda and LRA-affected areas of Central African Republic (CAR), Congo, and South Sudan. Paul recently authored *Hidden in Plain Sight: Sudan's Harboring of the LRA in the Kafia Kingi Enclave*, published in April 2013. He is also a frequent contributor to media outlets, Congressional briefings, and think tank forums. Prior to co-founding The Resolve, he worked in the Caritas International and Franciscans International UN advocacy offices in New York.

### Cartography and Design

Kenneth Transier (@ktransier) is a Project Manager for The Resolve. He is also the primary cartographer and designer for the LRA Crisis Tracker's periodic security briefs.

### Cover photo

Come Home leaflet airdrop, Invisible Children

## METHODOLOGY

The report was commissioned by The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative (The Resolve). It was researched and written by Phil Lancaster and Ledio Cakaj, independent consultants, and edited by Paul Ronan, who also contributed original research. Invisible Children also contributed funding for the research.

The authors and editor collected information contained in this report from a variety of sources, including first-hand interviews with former members of the LRA. In total, they interviewed 22 former LRA combatants or abductees. Additional interviews were conducted with civil society leaders and aid workers in LRA-affected areas; representatives from the United Nations, African Union, and donor countries; and representatives from regional governments and military forces.

Most interviews took place in March and April 2013 during trips to Obo in the Central African Republic (CAR); Yambio and Nzara, South Sudan; Dungu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo); and Gulu and Kampala, Uganda. Extensive information was also collected from a review of existing literature on the LRA crisis, as well as previous interviews in LRA-affected areas conducted by the authors and editor.

# Loosening Kony's Grip

## *Effective Defection Strategies for Today's LRA*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is likely weaker than it has been in at least 20 years. LRA groups are scattered across an area in central Africa the size of California, and morale among the Ugandan combatants that comprise the core of its force is at a new low. At least 31 Ugandan LRA combatants, which is approximately 15 percent of the LRA's core Ugandan fighting force, defected in 2012 and through the first six months of 2013. As of May 2013, there were approximately 500 total combatants and dependents within the LRA, operating primarily in Central African Republic (CAR) and Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo). Of these 500 people, approximately 250 are combatants, including up to 200 Ugandans and 50 low-ranking fighters abducted primarily from ethnic Zande communities in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan.

Pressure from Ugandan military operations against the LRA in CAR and Congo has contributed to the breakdown of morale and discipline within the ranks of Ugandan LRA combatants. Launched in December 2008 with significant US support, Ugandan operations have been unable to decisively dismantle the LRA's command structure or comprehensively protect civilians from LRA attacks. Nor are they likely to do so soon, as Ugandan troops are not permitted to operate in Congo and have suspended operations in CAR since the March 2013 coup there. However, over the past four years, the Ugandan military has protected major population centers, kept LRA groups on the run, disrupted their communications, and made basic survival extremely difficult. Ugandan LRA combatants are growing disillusioned with the LRA leadership's failure to maintain contact with fragmented groups or provide a realistic strategy to accomplish its long-time goal of seizing power in Uganda. Some are also disenchanted with the group's recent shift towards forms of banditry, including the harvesting of elephant ivory.

In response, LRA leader Joseph Kony has attempted to reconsolidate his control over the rebel group. In the past year, he has ordered the execution of several senior officers, including those who have disobeyed orders to not sleep with abducted women whom Kony

had taken as his "wives." He has ostracized others, particularly elderly fighters unable or unwilling to endure the grueling life in the forests of eastern CAR. In their place, Kony has transferred operational leadership to the youngest remaining generation of Ugandan fighters. He has also allowed the use of High Frequency (HF) radios to improve coordination between groups, even though he is most likely aware that such communications may be monitored by the Ugandan army with the help of the US military.

Kony has also tried, with limited success, to reach out to former backers in the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). LRA groups acting on Kony's orders have been in contact with SAF officers in Kafia Kingi, a disputed enclave along the border between Sudan and South Sudan, at least since the end of 2009. An LRA group, likely including Kony, was reportedly based near the Dafak SAF garrison in Kafia Kingi for over a year, until February or early March 2013. Recent defector reports indicate Kony may have returned to Kafia Kingi since then. However, the SAF has so far refused to provide the LRA with substantial military support.

The apparent weakening of the LRA's internal cohesion, their long tradition of holding civilian populations hostage to deter attacks, and the historic failure of military operations to achieve a decisive victory suggests that the most timely and cost-effective approach to dismantling the LRA is to encourage increased defections. The large majority of people in the LRA were forcibly conscripted, and most, including many Ugandans, want to defect. However, obstacles to defection force many to remain with the LRA. Would-be escapees face a gauntlet of deterrents, including the risk of LRA punishment if they are caught, long journeys from remote LRA bases through unfamiliar and treacherous territory, and the risk of being harmed or killed by local communities or military forces they encounter.

When LRA members manage to defect, they face an uncertain future. Reintegration support for returnees is shamefully inadequate. Former abductees, particularly adults, must often face the challenge of rebuilding livelihoods, overcoming trauma, and coping with community stigmatization with little support. Awareness of these difficulties, combined with the risks of attempted

escape, discourages many from defecting.

However, a well-resourced and dynamic disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) strategy could help break Kony's grip on the rebel group, allow hundreds of abductees to peacefully return to their families, and help keep civilians safer from further LRA attacks. If executed well, such a strategy could produce a positive feedback cycle in which information from defectors helps DDR actors design more effective initiatives that can increase the rate of defections.

Currently, an alphabet soup of actors is attempting to put together such a strategy, with local civil society groups, the international organization Invisible Children, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Congo (MONUSCO), and US military advisers playing leading roles. They have used a range of tactics, including FM radio broadcasts, leaflets, helicopter-mounted speakers, and Safe Reporting Site (SRS) locations to reach LRA members with "Come Home" messages, while also working with local communities to ensure defectors are safely received.

However, DDR initiatives are far from their full potential. They are largely being implemented where international actors have established bases, but this covers just a fraction of the territory LRA groups operate in, and even in those areas implementation is sparse and uneven. Despite proven cases of success, DDR receives a fraction of the funds spent on military and humanitarian operations in LRA-affected areas. DDR efforts are also hampered by the bureaucratic inefficiencies caused by the need to coordinate efforts among dozens of actors across multiple borders – as well as the lack of interest from regional governments preoccupied with other crises.

A better coordinated, multi-pronged approach is needed to improve existing DDR efforts. More thorough investigations of LRA activity, particularly in north-eastern CAR and Kafia Kingi, are needed to maintain an up-to-date understanding of the rebel group. DDR actors must continue to refine Come Home messages, adapting them to take advantage of LRA group movements and internal friction, as well as to provide practical information to help defectors escape safely. DDR actors must also expand the infrastructure needed to deliver those messages, ensuring that FM radio towers, leaflet drops, helicopter sorties, and Safe Reporting Sites saturate the full geographic range of LRA movements. They must also collaborate with local communities to ensure that defectors are received safely and collaborate with United Nations (UN), African Union

(AU), and national security forces to minimize the risk of LRA reprisal attacks. Finally, a surge in reintegration support is needed to increase the "pull factor" for would-be defectors.

Though the LRA has ceased to be a political threat to any regional state, it continues to menace vulnerable civilians across a large swath of Africa. The coming months represent a critical window of opportunity to encourage as many defections as possible before Kony is able to reconsolidate control of the LRA, renew motivation in the ranks, and diminish opportunities to encourage defection. It would be a tragedy if momentum were lost and Kony given the opportunity to reinvigorate his forces in his usual fashion – by committing new atrocities against innocent civilians.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the African Union

- Request permission from authorities in CAR for the US and the Ugandan military (UPDF) to immediately begin helicopter speaker broadcasts and leaflet drops in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haut Kotto, and Vakaga;
- Request permission from the Sudanese government to conduct Come Home message leaflet drops and radio broadcasts in the disputed Kafia Kingi enclave.

### To the Congolese government

- Acknowledge the threat LRA attacks pose to civilians in Haut Uele and Bas Uele districts;
- Grant permission to the US government and NGOs to conduct helicopter speaker broadcasts over Congolese territory.

### To the Ugandan government

- Negotiate, through the AU, the resumption of LRA pursuit and civilian protection operations in eastern and northeastern CAR as soon as security permits;
- Promptly return Ugandan combatants who leave the LRA to Uganda, refrain from forcing them to join the UPDF, and institute a policy of giving all former combatants a six-month "readjustment period" in northern Uganda before allowing them to join the military;

- Publicly announce if any senior LRA commanders will be held liable for crimes committed, and ensure all other returning members of the LRA are granted amnesty upon returning to Uganda;
- Fully fund rehabilitation programs for former combatants and communities in northern Uganda affected by the conflict;
- Fully fund the Amnesty Commission's operations and resettlement activities.

#### To the US government

- Authorize another six-month rotation of US military advisers to deploy to forward locations in LRA-affected areas;
- Benchmark ongoing US assistance – including the deployment of military advisers and DDR initiatives – against progress in dismantling the LRA's command structure and demobilizing remaining combatants;
- Ease restrictions on approvals for DDR-focused flights and expand airlift capacity to allow for rapid reactions to Come Home messaging opportunities across all LRA-affected areas of CAR;
- Direct USAID to significantly increase funding for community-based LRA defector reintegration assistance;
- Direct the Department of Defense to make significantly more funds available to US military advisers in the field for flexible, needs-based defection efforts such as leaflet distribution, helicopter speaker missions, and community sensitization;
- Encourage the sustainability of SRS locations by providing funding to support the project for at least one year after US military advisers withdraw from the region.

#### To UPDF troops and US military advisers in eastern CAR and South Sudan

- Continue to provide civilian protection at all SRS locations in eastern CAR and South Sudan;
- Continue to employ a policy of rapid reaction to civilian attacks followed by relentless pursuit;
- Immediately resume the distribution of Come Home messages by leaflets and helicopter broad-

casts in eastern CAR;

- Using MONUSCO's model, establish mobile FM radios at strategic UPDF deployments in eastern CAR.

#### To MONUSCO DRRR and peacekeepers

- Expand leaflet drops and begin helicopter speaker broadcasts in Haut Uele and Bas Uele districts;
- Establish SRS locations in Haut Uele and Bas Uele, complete with civilian protection mechanisms;
- In the short-term, expand mobile FM radio broadcasts to all MONUSCO bases in Haut Uele and Bas Uele where the mission does not already have a permanent radio;
- In the medium-term, create permanent FM stations at bases in Duru and Ango;
- Develop and expand civilian liaison and intelligence gathering activities;
- Develop a more effective civilian protection system.

#### To Come Home message actors

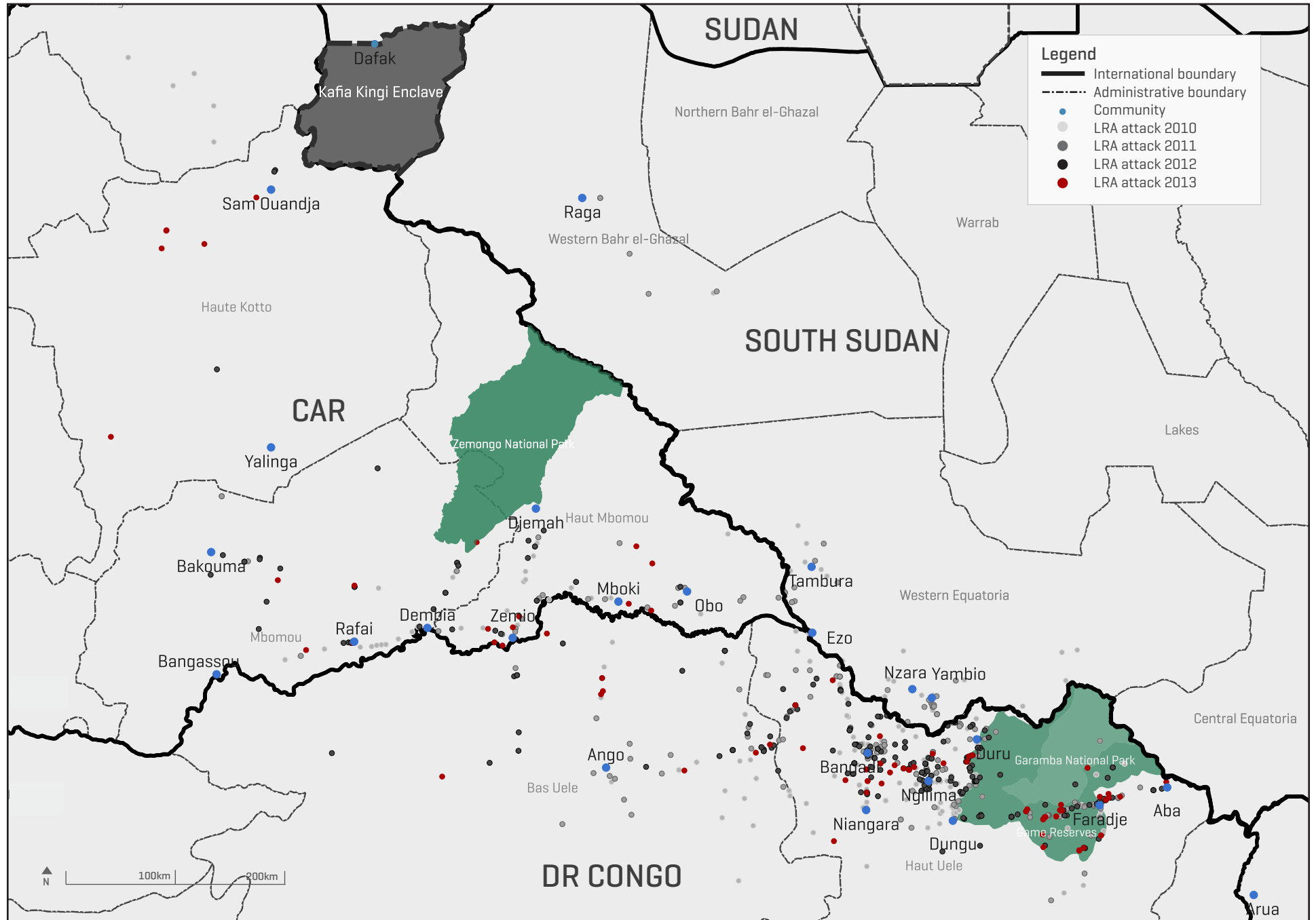
- Ensure communities in CAR, Congo, South Sudan, and Uganda have substantial input into Come Home message campaigns and SRS projects;
- Collectively distribute 300,000 Come Home leaflets per month for the next 12 months;
- Continue to refine Come Home messages to ensure LRA members receive practical information on how to safely defect;
- Launch specific Come Home message campaigns targeting the 20-25 LRA officers most likely to defect;
- Expand the input of former Ugandan LRA combatants into Come Home message campaigns, including by forming an advisory council of former combatants, and compensate them for their efforts;
- Improve collective monitoring and evaluation of the relative success of different Come Home messages and mediums, including by creating a collective database of all returnees from the LRA that tracks what factors influenced their escape.



## To donors

- Fund the construction or expansion, with accompanying local capacity building to broadcast Come Home messages, of community FM radio stations in Bakouma and Bangassou, CAR; Ango, Congo; and Raga, South Sudan;
- Increase funding for organizations such as Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), World Vision, and others that provide medical and psychosocial assistance to Ugandan LRA returnees;
- Increase funding for livelihoods projects in northern Uganda that benefit LRA returnees, including former male combatants, as well as host communities;
- Increase funding for reintegration programs in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan that support community-led projects that benefit both LRA escapees and communities victimized by LRA violence;
- Ensure that reintegration programs in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan provide support for adult escapees, particularly those living in remote rural areas;
- Provide funds for a comprehensive mapping of the LRA command structure and combatant force, combining existing information with supplementary research.

# Map: LRA attacks, January 2010 – June 2013





## I. INTRODUCTION

The overall situation in the LRA-affected zones of Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo), and South Sudan continues to be dominated by uncertainty, fear, and insecurity. Military and diplomatic efforts made under the auspices of the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA (AU RCI-LRA), working in collaboration with the UN and its Regional LRA Strategy, have generated some progress towards the goals of ending LRA violence and protecting civilians. However disappointing the results in some areas, the combined effect of civilian and military initiatives has made life difficult for the LRA. Based on past experience, it is likely that any loss of momentum in the counter-LRA initiative will be used by the LRA to reorganize and reconstitute.

While the current focus on a collaborative international approach to the LRA problem continues to enjoy broad support, at least in public rhetoric, the goal of knitting together a strategy binding the AU, UN, and national governments has yet to be translated into effective and coordinated action on the ground. The much vaunted AU Regional Task Force (AU RTF), the multi-national force operating under the umbrella of the RCI-LRA, continues to be plagued by a lack of funding, poor logistics, and political challenges that render it virtually ineffective in providing protection to civilians living under threat of LRA attack, who are predominantly of the Zande ethnic group. On the ground, the AU initiative is seen as a hollow exercise in diplomacy.

Recent research indicates that LRA cohesion is weakening. It is possible that the majority of groups might finally disintegrate if sufficient pressure on them can be sustained. The campaign to encourage voluntary defections acts in concert with military operations and contributes to them by reducing LRA strength. Military and non-military interventions together act as push-pull factors and are effective to the extent that they complement each other.

The limited successes of Ugandan forces, supported in their operations by United States expertise and logistics, stand out as positive achievements, particularly in the areas of intelligence gathering and disruption of LRA communications, command, and control. The continuing presence of self-defense militia units in South Sudan has also been effective in reducing the level of

insecurity in LRA-affected areas of Western Equatoria State (WES).

In spite of the operational challenges, the campaign to encourage and facilitate voluntary defections has made some progress over the past year, particularly in CAR and South Sudan. Such efforts, however, take place in a context of inconsistent military pressure on the LRA and still suffer from a number of other crippling weaknesses that can be traced to political and institutional dysfunctions affecting many of the organizations involved.

UN missions in the region, which should play key roles in facilitating defections, are hampered by an absence of coordination between missions, the lack of key personnel on the ground, and Byzantine decision making and procurement systems that are simply too slow to cope with rapidly changing operational needs. These weaknesses have a direct impact not only on efforts to encourage voluntary defections, but also on the ability of would-be defectors to come out safely.

In addition, the sheer number of international agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local civil society groups involved in counter-LRA initiatives generate frictions that operate as a drag on collective action. At best, the international effort can be understood as a fumbling attempt, in which the good will and best efforts of many players fall short of the mark – but nevertheless create a positive effect.

The purpose of this paper is to develop proposals for improving efforts to counter the LRA by encouraging and facilitating defections from the group. To be effective, a defection campaign must be based on a sound knowledge of the organization it targets. Consequently, the paper begins with an extensive description and an analysis of the LRA's composition, *modus operandi*, and area of operations, while commander profiles can also be found in the annexes. It follows with an analytical description of the contributions of various counter-LRA initiatives and how they interact. The paper then focuses on what can be done to improve the rate of voluntary defections. This part of the paper devotes considerable attention to related issues that impinge on the actions of those involved in encouraging or facilitating defections.

Throughout this paper, the authors advance the thesis that the LRA is under considerable stress as a result of current counter-LRA measures, both military and civilian. The Ugandan combatants and senior commanders that form the core of the LRA are currently suffering serious morale problems that are manifesting themselves in increased defections and divisions among the top commanders. Absent a political solution or a definitive military success – both seemingly unlikely given the history and status quo of the conflict – encouraging defections remains the most promising strategy to weaken the capacity of the LRA and reduce violence against civilians.

The various crises in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan impede efforts to capitalize on the current upheaval in the LRA and raise valid questions about the wisdom of continuing to focus on the LRA. However, the failure to definitively address the LRA conflict may give the group an opportunity to initiate another round of attacks that can only aggravate regional instability. Failure to fully dismantle the group's command structure and capacity to regenerate will reverse the progress that has been made and raise the cost of an eventual solution.

## II. THE FINAL CHAPTER?

### *The LRA of 2013*

The LRA of 2013 is a much-changed group, or cluster of groups, compared to the many forms it has taken since the late 1980s. In its smallest size to date, numbering approximately 250 fighters in total, the organization led by Joseph Kony has recently confronted a series of near-terminal challenges and now appears to be losing some of its cohesion. The Ugandan-led military offensive that started in December 2008, known as Operation Lighting Thunder, has forced most senior LRA commanders to retreat to eastern CAR, leaving only a few groups scattered in Congo. Communications between group commanders have been difficult, with some groups forced to operate independently for many months.

Hardships brought about by years of pursuit by Ugandan troops, working in collaboration with United States military advisers, have taken a toll on senior LRA commanders, particularly those in their 40s or older, who seem to be losing their enthusiasm to continue fighting. In response, Kony has transferred command responsibility over his ever dwindling groups to young Ugandan fighters in their mid to late 20s.

Kony has also distilled his fighting force to the smallest possible critical mass that would allow him to survive until conditions improve, which he has done before. Despite the lengthy Ugandan military campaign – entering its fifth year in December 2012 – Kony might once more be correct in his calculations. Ugandan and US troops have suspended their operations in CAR since the 24 March coup there, and Ugandan troops have not been permitted in Congo since September 2011.

In addition, Kony appears to have reestablished contact with elements of the LRA's former patron, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), particularly in 2012 and 2013, although the SAF has not given substantial support to the LRA.<sup>1</sup> If Ugandan military operations come to a premature end and Kony succeeds in receiving considerable military support from the SAF, the LRA will once again have the opportunity to regroup and persevere.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the relationship between the LRA and the SAF, see The Resolve, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Sudan's Harboring of the LRA in the Kafia Kingi Enclave, 2009-2013," April 2013.

### A. Composition

The term "Army" in the Lord's Resistance Army is a misnomer. There never was an "army" in the conventional meaning of the word. The LRA has almost always been an assembly of groups composed of a few former professional soldiers, farmers-turned-combatants, and women and children. It has primarily preyed on civilians and exploited regional instability while typically avoiding military confrontations.

With the exception of a few veteran combatants including Kony and Okot Odhiambo, almost everyone else in the LRA was abducted. Such is certainly the case for the non-Ugandans who were abducted in the last decade from CAR, Congo, and South Sudan. The majority of the Ugandan component of the LRA is composed of people abducted before the end of 2006, when the last LRA group left Uganda and moved to Congo.<sup>2</sup>

The oft-made claim that the LRA is composed mostly of child soldiers is now inaccurate though many Ugandan fighters, if not the vast majority in the LRA today, were abducted as children. With the exception of children born in the bush, all the Ugandans in the LRA today are adults. There are, however, Congolese, Central African, and possibly South Sudanese children among the fighters scattered in LRA groups throughout central Africa.

It is impossible to ascertain the exact number of LRA groups as their composition is fluid and most groups are highly mobile.<sup>3</sup> Recent reports from former combatants and from Ugandan intelligence analysts suggest that there are between ten and 15 separate operational groups today, mostly based in the eastern part of CAR.

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<sup>2</sup> A small number of Ugandans joined the LRA during Juba peace talks, such as Okello Mission. See Mukasa, Henry, "LRA rebel pins Sudan on support," *The New Vision*, 5 April 2010. Children have also been born to Ugandan parents in the bush.

<sup>3</sup> There have been cases in which LRA groups have remained in one place for a significant period of time. This includes a group of LRA that established a camp in the Kafia Kingi enclave, along the border of Sudan and South Sudan between late 2010 and early 2013. Other possible exceptions are groups that may have temporarily settled in Congo's Bas Uele district, near the border with CAR, and groups that have set up camps in Garamba National Park in Congo's Haut Uele district.

A typical LRA group consists of between eight and 20 armed fighters, all men and mostly Ugandan, with between five and ten women and children. At least two groups have different ratios with few fighters and many of Kony's "wives" and children. Smaller groups, referred to within the LRA as "standbys," are formed for specific operations such as looting. Groups occasionally coalesce for meetings or prayer sessions with Kony and other commanders or for large-scale operations. Groups commanded by the senior leaders, such as Kony and Odhiambo, tend to be larger but these too often split into smaller units to increase flexibility or to confuse pursuing forces.

Of the approximately 500 remaining people in the LRA, there are about 270 men, most of them armed, but only up to 200 Ugandan fighters, who constitute the backbone of the LRA.<sup>4</sup> As of April 2013, there were approximately 250 total armed combatants within the LRA, highlighting how the group's fighting capacity is greatly reduced from its peak of approximately 2,700 armed combatants around 1999.<sup>5</sup> There are also about 140 women and 70 children within the LRA. Women and children are usually not armed but many women participate in looting parties. The number of non-Ugandan men and women tends to be fluid as many are abducted or released as dictated by the particular group's needs and their capacity to feed themselves.

## B. Area of operations

LRA groups are scattered over a huge area approximately the size of California that encompasses eastern CAR, northeastern Congo, and, periodically, the Kafia Kingi enclave, a disputed border area claimed by Sudan and South Sudan. LRA forces have not committed an attack in South Sudan since mid-2011, and rarely if ever traverse the area anymore. The LRA has not operated in Uganda since 2006.

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4 The number of remaining men, women, and children remaining in the LRA is very difficult to estimate. The estimates contained in this paper are based on interviews conducted with more than a dozen recent returnees. For detailed information and graphics regarding numbers of fighters, women, and children within the LRA, see Annex I.

5 Cakaj, Ledio, "The Lord's Resistance Army of Today," Enough Project, November 2010. Lancaster, Philip, Guillaume Lacaille, and Ledio Cakaj, "Diagnostic Study of the Lord's Resistance Army," International Working Group on the LRA, World Bank, June 2011. See Annex I for graphics showing the decline in LRA combatant capacity from 1999-2013.

## 1. Central African Republic

Many LRA groups are currently based in CAR, operating in a vast area that encompasses four of the country's sixteen prefectures: Haut Mbomou, Mbomou, Haut Kotto, and Vakaga. The LRA first entered CAR through Haut Mbomou in 2008, but have since been pushed west and north by Ugandan forces, which are concentrated in the Haut Mbomou towns of Obo and Djemah.

In recent years, many LRA groups have operated in the sparsely populated area north of the intersection of the Chinko and Vovodo rivers, in Mbomou and Haut Kotto prefectures. One such group that has operated in this area includes senior commanders Leonard "Lubwa" Bwone, Francis Abuchingu, and Alphonse Lamola. The group previously included OnenChan AciroKop "Angola Unita," but he may no longer be traveling with them. These veteran fighters appear to have had a falling out with Kony in mid-2011 and were placed under the supervision of younger escorts in their twenties, who both protect them and prevent their defection.<sup>6</sup> As of May 2013, at least one other group of about 28 people operated in the vicinity of Agoumar in Mbomou prefecture.

To the west of the Chinko-Vovodo confluence, the LRA has periodically conducted massive abduction and looting raids on towns along the Bangassou-Fode-Bakouma-Nzako axis, including the looting of a uranium mining facility in Bakouma in June 2012.<sup>7</sup> Ugandan troops and US advisers have rarely had the capacity to operate that far west, allowing LRA groups to attack communities with impunity.

Though LRA groups have operated more cautiously in Haut Mbomou prefecture, where Ugandan troops and US advisers are concentrated, they still commit periodic attacks there, including some within a few kilometers of Obo. As of March 2013, two satellite groups reporting to Odhiambo seemed to be operating north of Obo.<sup>8</sup>

Senior LRA commanders, including Kony, also operate in the ungoverned areas of Vakaga and northern Haut Kotto prefectures. Media reports claimed that LRA

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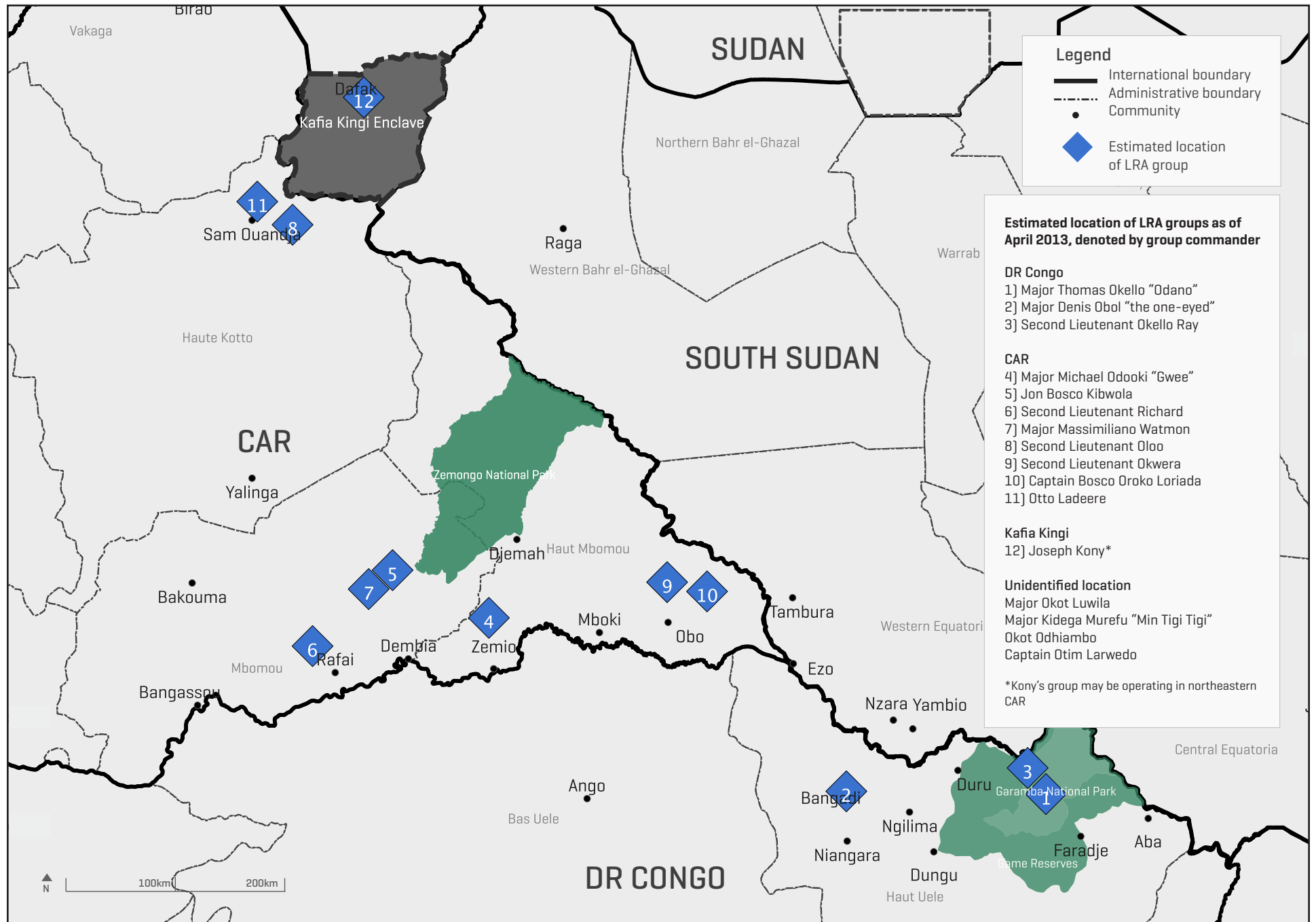
6 Caesar Achellam, a top commander who left the LRA in May 2012, was likely also exiled by Kony and subsequently decided to escape with his "wife" and a young bodyguard.

7 Invisible Children + The Resolve LRA Crisis Tracker, "2012 Annual Security Brief," February 2013.

8 Author interview with former combatant, Gulu, 3 April 2013.



# Map: Estimated location of LRA groups



raiders were responsible for a series of brutal attacks in this region in June 2013 in which 18 civilians were reportedly killed and over 50 others abducted, but the perpetrator of those incidents remains unidentified.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Kafia Kingi enclave

Since 2009, LRA groups have also frequented the Kafia Kingi enclave, which shares a border with CAR's Vakaga prefecture.<sup>10</sup> An LRA group led by Otto Agweng first travelled there in late 2009 to establish contact with the SAF, which controls the enclave. LRA groups returned to Kafia Kingi in 2010, at which point a group of at least 20 fighters, led by Otim Ferry, established a small base near the SAF garrison at Dafak, alongside the Umbelasha river.<sup>11</sup>

In late 2011 and 2012, the LRA expanded its presence in Kafia Kingi, establishing semi-permanent camps that Kony and other senior commanders periodically inhabited. By March 2013, the LRA had abandoned these camps, possibly returning to CAR or to another location within Kafia Kingi. However, recent defectors from the LRA indicate that Kony and a small group returned to Kafia Kingi in April 2013. It is also possible that by the end of May 2013, Kony was located in Vakaga or Haut Kotto prefectures in northern CAR.<sup>12</sup>

## 3. Democratic Republic of the Congo

Although there are fewer LRA groups operating in Congo than in CAR, since 2010 the group has committed approximately 74 percent of its nearly 1,200 attacks there.<sup>13</sup> Many of these attacks have occurred in a relatively densely populated area of Haut Uele district roughly bounded by the Congo-South Sudan border and the Doruma-Bangadi-Ngilima-Dungu-Faradje-Aba road.

This area includes Garamba National Park (Garamba), where the LRA first established bases in Congo in 2005. Ugandan troops destroyed those bases during Operation Lightning Thunder in December 2008, but the park remains a critical refuge for LRA groups. LRA combatants have clashed with park rangers on several

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9 Al Jazeera, "LRA rebels 'kill villagers in Central Africa,'" 16 June 2013. Editor email exchange, humanitarian worker, Bangui, CAR, 15 July 2013.

10 For more details on the LRA's periodic presence in Kafia Kingi, see The Resolve, "Hidden in Plain Sight," 2013.

11 See "Hidden in Plain Sight," 2013.

12 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu, 24 June 2013.

13 LRA Crisis Tracker, statistic calculated 13 July 2013.

occasions, but reportedly favor the northern half of the park, where the rangers rarely operate.<sup>14</sup>

As of May 2013, more than 40 people were believed to operate in at least two different groups in and around Garamba, including a small LRA group of about 15 people operating in the northern part of Garamba, near the town of Nabanga in South Sudan's Western Equatoria State.<sup>15</sup> Another small group may operate along the Dungu-Faradje axis. Testimony from women who were released by the LRA in March 2013 indicates that the group operating further north may have established temporary bases there and contained senior commanders, while the group operating along the Dungu-Faradje axis was tasked primarily with looting goods.<sup>16</sup>

The LRA has also had a somewhat continuous presence in Bas Uele district, to the west of Haut Uele. LRA attacks have occurred primarily on communities on the Doruma-Banda-Ango road. There have also been periodic reports of large movements of LRA into Bas Uele from CAR, possibly with the intention of establishing bases there.<sup>17</sup> However, the relative lack of communications systems, military forces, and humanitarian agencies in Bas Uele has made it extremely difficult to confirm reports of LRA activity in the area.

In recent years, LRA groups in Congo were led by Colonel Vincent Okumu Binansio "Binany," but he was killed by Ugandan troops in CAR in January 2013. Leadership of the Congo groups has likely passed to one of his deputies, possibly Major Thomas Odano. It is possible that members of these groups were responsible for a series of messages sent to local communities near Faradje in early May 2013 indicating they wanted to escape.<sup>18</sup> If so, the messages could indicate that Binany's death has triggered instability within LRA groups operating in Congo.

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14 Author interview with JIOC, Dungu, Congo, 4 April 2013.

15 Author interview with former LRA combatant, Kampala, Uganda, 11 June 2013.

16 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu, Uganda, 9 April 2013.

17 Author interview with Ugandan military official, Obo, CAR, April 2013. See also Cakaj, Ledio, "This is Our Land Now: LRA Attacks in Bas Uele, Northeastern Congo," Enough Project, May 2010.

18 For more on these messages, see Voice of Peace, "How DR Congo is missing chances to encourage LRA defections," 13 July 2013.

## C. Kony and LRA command dynamics

The LRA exists primarily as vehicle to ensure the survival of Kony and a handful of senior commanders. The rank-and-file within the LRA stay with the LRA primarily out of fear of this upper echelon of commanders, without which the LRA would collapse. Though the LRA command structure has faced unprecedented stress since 2008, Kony has overseen a series of adaptations, including promoting a younger generation of fighters that could ensure its survival into the future.

### 1. The challenges of maintaining cohesion

After Ugandan troops destroyed the LRA's established bases in Garamba in December 2008, Kony struggled to maintain a degree of control over his fragmented and scattered organization. Rightly guessing that use of satellite phones and High Frequency (HF) radios could betray his position and invite Ugandan army attacks, Kony turned to using messengers and pre-arranged meetings to communicate with his commanders.

However, as the Ugandan offensive continued, the groups became increasingly disconnected. By mid-2009, barely six months after the launch of Operation Lightning Thunder, there were as many as 20 distinct LRA groups. Some were based in Garamba National Park, while others were hundreds of kilometers to the west in Bas Uele. Kony and his main unit were at least 400 kilometers to the northwest of Garamba, in CAR's Haut Mbomou prefecture.

Long distances between commanders and a lack of direction from Kony created confusion among the troops, leading in turn to increased defections and insubordination. Understanding the long distance to Uganda to be an effective deterrent to defections and hoping the Ugandan army would cease its costly pursuit, Kony moved further away from Congo and deeper into CAR in 2010 and 2011. During this time he sent his personal bodyguards to bring some groups operating in Congo and South Sudan to CAR while his emissaries continued to seek favor with SAF elements in the Kafia Kingi enclave.<sup>19</sup> According to former combatants, Kony hoped to move most of the LRA to Sudanese-controlled territory in Kafia Kingi or Southern Darfur, while leaving a group to maintain a presence near the northwestern part of Garamba, the LRA's old base and a potential bridge back to Uganda.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu and Kampala, 2011-2013.

20 Ibid.

Many fighters who tried to join Kony in CAR between 2009 and 2011 were killed, captured, or defected. Top commanders Bok Abudema, Santo Alit, and Okello Kalalang were among those killed by the Ugandan military (UPDF).<sup>21</sup> Other influential commanders killed in the last two years include Captains Michael Otika and Justin Atimango, Kony's chief security and personal secretary, respectively.<sup>22</sup> It appears that influential commander and Kony protégée, Otim Ferry was killed near Pasi, Congo at some point in 2012.<sup>23</sup> Some groups made it to CAR but did not meet Kony for a long time. Such was the case with at least one group in CAR under the leadership of a Captain Okwere.<sup>24</sup>

### 2. Maintaining discipline within the LRA

Since the end of 2011, Kony has tried to reorganize his forces but has struggled to assert his authority over troops he has not seen for years. Sometimes lacking direct communications, he has used his personal bodyguards to carry messages to other commanders, including news of promotions and demotions – as well as execution orders. Some leaders and their groups were almost forcibly brought to CAR from Congo.

This was the case with Dominic Ongwen and his small unit, which used to operate between Congo and South Sudan along the Duru River. Ongwen was injured in a battle in early 2011 but eventually brought to see Kony in CAR. Kony demoted him on the spot and threatened to have him executed for insubordination. By August of 2012, Ongwen had reportedly crossed the Chinko River and moved further north into CAR. Ongwen has a long history of discord with Kony, who may fear that Ongwen wants to defect. In the past, Ongwen was forgiven for reasons such as family ties – Kony is married to one of his sisters – or his bravery in battle. But like many other senior leaders in the LRA, Ongwen operates in CAR under the orders of a much younger commander, though defectors indicate he may have been

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21 Cakaj, Ledio, "On the heels of Kony: the untold tragedy unfolding in CAR," Enough Project, 24 June 2010. See also BBC News, "Uganda reports killing LRA commander Abudema in CAR," 2 January 2010.

22 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu, 3-4 April 2013.

23 Ibid.

24 According to at least three former combatants, Okwere's group did not see Kony for about four years from the end of 2008 until the end of 2012. Binany's group brought Okwere to Dafak, travelling from Bangadi in Congo to Kafia Kingi. Interviews with former LRA combatants, Kampala and Gulu, 28 March and 3-4 April 2013.

promoted back to senior leadership in recent months.<sup>25</sup> Whatever his present status, his case illustrates some of the inner tensions among LRA senior leaders.

Ongwen, however, may be an exception to the rule. There have been at least four reported cases in 2013 in which Kony ordered the executions of commanders for insubordination.<sup>26</sup> While such reports remain unconfirmed, two former LRA combatants claimed that Kony ordered the execution of three mid-level commanders at the end of 2012 for allegedly raping young Congolese women. In early 2013, Kony appears to have ordered the killing of Otto Agweng, his former chief of security and one of the most feared men in the LRA, for alleged adultery.<sup>27</sup> Agweng was also in charge of the first group that reached Kafia Kingi in October 2009.

There are also reports that Kony's half-brother, Major David Olanya, impregnated one of Kony's "wives."<sup>28</sup> Olanya was arrested on Odhiambo's orders and demoted from overall command of LRA groups in CAR.<sup>29</sup> All previous cases of fighters sleeping with Kony's "wives" were punished by death, but it is unclear what has happened to Olanya. Former combatants claim that he will not be executed since he is related to Kony by blood.

Olanya's case is the latest in a series of breaches of discipline in the LRA caused by hardships and Kony's inability to control his itinerant commanders. The exiled groups of Lamola, "Angola Unita," and Bwone are also the result of Kony's loss of confidence in senior commanders and, possibly, vice-versa. According to former combatants, Kony, responding to reports that these commanders complained of being tired of the constant treks through the bush, accused them of being lazy and unable to lead.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. The golden generation

To strengthen his hold on the LRA command structure, Kony has transferred operational responsibilities to younger commanders. Part of the last generation of

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25 Editor interview with Ugandan military official, Obo, CAR, April 2013.

26 Author interview with Ugandan military official, April 2013.

27 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu, 24 June 2013.

28 Author interview with former LRA combatants, 7 April 2013.

29 Ibid.

30 Author interview with Ugandan intelligence analyst, Kampala, 10 April 2013.

Ugandans abducted before the LRA moved to Congo in the mid-2000s, these commanders were abducted as children and indoctrinated through their formative years. Many of them, including Binany, Otim Ferry, and Jon Bosco Kibwola, earned Kony's trust while serving as part of his bodyguard unit.

Frequent changes at the operational leadership level and increasing cases of lack of discipline are signs of organizational stress. As explained above, Kony has tried to reverse the trend and to maintain his authority by demoting senior officers, executing disobedient commanders, and promoting younger fighters. Though he has used similar command strategies in the past, this is the first time he has systematically promoted the youngest generation of Ugandan fighters.

### 4. Leadership roles for non-Ugandans?

*"Kony has become too quarrelsome, making it hard for the Ugandan commanders to serve him well."* Ugandan military analyst, 10 April 2013

If Kony becomes unhappy with the current crop of younger Ugandan officers, he will have to turn to non-Ugandan fighters to assume command positions. Most of these are from the Zande ethnic group abducted from communities in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan since 2005.

Should Kony promote non-Ugandans to command positions, it would mark a dramatic shift in the LRA's essential character. A rebel force run by Zande fighters in a predominantly Zande territory, with a huge recruiting potential, would be much harder to contain than the current LRA groups. But, to be successful, Kony would likely be forced to adapt the *raison d'être* of the LRA to fit the Zande context.

To motivate Zande officers, the LRA could try to use the political grievances of Zande communities, which have historically been marginalized by elites in Bangui, Kinshasa, and Juba, and are increasingly frustrated with the failure of government officials to address the chronic lack of security, governance, and development in their communities.

### **D. Communications**

LRA groups operating at significant distances from one another have struggled to maintain communications since 2008. Some groups, particularly those led by Kony and other top commanders such as Okot Odhiambo, have maintained limited communications through messengers while other groups have had little



or no contact with one another.

There are, however, recent reports that most groups, particularly those based in CAR, have resumed communicating via HF radios in what appears to be a concerted effort by Kony to reorganize his fragmented organization. Throughout the early to mid-2000s when LRA groups were based in southern Sudan and Uganda, Kony and his commanders communicated via HF radios, or what combatants refer to as “radio calls,” even though they were aware that their conversations were monitored by the Ugandan army. Commanders used sophisticated coded messages, though Ugandan military analysts managed to break some of the codes. In the immediate aftermath of Operation Lightning Thunder, Kony curtailed the use of HF radios and satellite phones but by late 2012 he seemed to have reversed that decision. It is likely that he understands the risks of being tracked through the radio signals but sees them as a necessary means to prevent the complete disintegration of the LRA.

There are now about 15 radio call signs, meaning that at least ten group leaders are active on-air. Kony and Odhiambo have a signaler each in their respective groups, thus their two groups have four radio call signs (two used for the signalers and two for the commanders themselves). The rest are used by separate groups. According to former combatants, radio contact is made at specified times set in advance. Those handling the HF radios move a considerable distance from their base before coming on air. Satellite phones, many of them in the hands of commanders since the Juba peace talks of 2006-2008, are not normally used for communication but rather for their GPS navigation capacity.

While it is possible that Kony reverted to using HF radios out of necessity despite the obvious risks of being tracked or overheard, it seems that, “*he is acting emboldened recently,*” as an analyst put it.<sup>31</sup> This could be due to the recent events in CAR leading to the overthrow of President Bozizé, which could have given Kony new hope that his forces can exploit the increasing instability in CAR to gain a new lease on life.

## E. Modus operandi

The LRA’s efforts to curry favor with the SAF since 2009 have brought about a significant change in the group’s modus operandi. Though there is no credible evidence that the SAF provided the LRA with substan-

tial military support since then, the LRA’s relationship with Sudanese troops connected the LRA to localized bartering opportunities.<sup>32</sup> For instance, the SAF helped the LRA access local markets, such as Songo in South Darfur State, where LRA members exchanged crops they cultivated and bush meat for salt, soap, flour and cooking oil.<sup>33</sup>

It is also possible that the SAF provided the LRA with an opportunity to make use of ivory it had poached from elephants in Congo. According to at least three different former combatants, in the summer of 2011, Kony, through his personal envoy Major Jon Bosco Kibwola, ordered fighters to kill elephants and harvest their tusks. According to two former LRA combatants, Kony’s group also looted five tusks from a group of South Sudanese poachers in CAR in early 2011. It appears that Kony used the five tusks initially to secure goodwill and then eventually more limited supplies from individual officers in the SAF. LRA defectors report that the SAF afforded no substantial material support to Kony, instead offering him safe haven in an area off limits to pursuing Ugandan forces.

Despite this, Kony ordered LRA groups to secure more ivory. When commanders complained that there were not many elephants in their areas of operations in CAR, Kony tasked the Congo group leader, Binany, to secure tusks and transport them to the Kafia Kingi enclave, via eastern CAR.<sup>34</sup>

Binany reportedly delivered a consignment of ivory to Kony at the end of 2012, possibly in late November.<sup>35</sup> A former combatant claims that Binany met an LRA group north of Zemio, CAR, in September or early October 2012 on his way to Kafia Kingi with 38 elephant tusks. Binany was ambushed and shot by Ugandan forces in January 2013 on his return from Kafia Kingi.<sup>36</sup> It is unclear if he was able to deliver all the tusks to Kony in Kafia Kingi or whether he hid some of the tusks in CAR and intended to return and pick them up once contact with Kony was made.

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32 The SAF provided the LRA with substantial military support from 1994-2004, and since 2009 SAF representatives in Kafia Kingi periodically provide the LRA with food and medical supplies. See “Hidden in Plain Sight,” 2013.

33 Author interview with former LRA combatant, Kampala, 29 March 2013.

34 Author interview with former LRA combatant, Kampala 29 March 2013.

35 Interview with former LRA combatant, Gulu, 24 June 2013.

36 Baguma, Raymond, “UPDF kills LRA leader Kony’s chief bodyguard,” *The New Vision*, 21 January 2013.

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31 Author interview with Ugandan military analyst, Kampala, 10 April 2013.

It is not the first time LRA fighters have bartered goods for food, certainly not with the SAF. In the late 1990s to mid-2000s, when LRA groups were based in southern Sudan, some LRA elements engaged in small barter with SAF soldiers, usually marijuana or herbal remedies in exchange for food, soap, and radio batteries. It was small in scale and not organized through the LRA headquarters as Kony had already secured large amounts of ammunition and food supplies through the SAF headquarters in Juba. But the recent barter, including bush meat and ivory, was reportedly ordered by Kony and overseen by his command element.<sup>37</sup>

The increase scale and systematic nature of trade represents a shift in the LRA's behavior. In the past, material benefit was not seen as a major organizational aim, which, coupled with a vaguely defined political agenda, made Kony's movement difficult to categorize. It also made the LRA hard to understand, particularly during the last few years when fighters in need of food and guns refrained from looting gold and diamonds from artisanal mines in eastern CAR.

It remains unclear how much ivory the LRA has collected and whether Kony also issued orders to secure gold and diamonds. At least one former combatant said that Binany also delivered a "small cup filled with gold" taken from artisanal miners of alluvial gold in Congo.<sup>38</sup> It is also unclear how much the LRA is now relying on trade in valuable illicit goods to survive, though LRA attack patterns suggest that looting food and supplies from small communities remains their primary means of survival.<sup>39</sup>

Regardless, Kony's decision to order the collection of ivory marks a radical break with past LRA practice and could have significant consequences. The LRA has never before engaged in the trade of invaluable illicit goods, and even though the LRA has never had a rigid set of rules – historically favoring flexibility – the rejection of material wealth while in the bush has consistently been a key tenet of the LRA's "code of honor" and Kony's lectures to his fighters.

Kony has historically taken pride in his Spartan lifestyle, which he has compared with that of Jesus.<sup>40</sup> He

imposed the same frugal lifestyle on his commanders, forbidding them from acquiring wealth, except when it was strictly necessary for operational reasons. He presented the tough lifestyle to new recruits as the hard but noble code of the true freedom fighter. The harsh life in the LRA was both a source of honor and a distinguishing feature that set LRA fighters apart from President Museveni and corrupt politicians in Uganda, and from common bandits. It is the adherence to the code of harsh self-denial in the LRA that makes former combatants today differentiate Kony from other rebels in the region who they disparagingly refer to as "warlords."

Kony's ordering groups to collect ivory was a strategic and perhaps necessary decision. It is not surprising that faced with a vanishing Ugandan core and a shortage of military supplies, Kony would be open to any option to ensure his own and his organization's survival.

However, his decision to collect ivory has come with a cost. Former combatants interviewed for this report expressed disappointment at this "act of banditry." Though it is unclear how Ugandan combatants still in the bush perceive the barter in ivory, it may be weakening their belief in the LRA's ideology, which remains centered on the political grievances of northern Ugandans. When added to the practical impossibility of returning to Uganda and toppling President Museveni's government, it has become increasingly difficult for LRA members to keep faith in the group's ideology.

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37 Author interviews with Ugandan military analyst, Kampala, 10 April 2013.

38 Author interview with former LRA combatant, June, 24 June 2013.

39 For more on patterns in LRA lootings, see LRA Crisis Tracker, "2012 Annual Security Brief," 2013.

40 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu and Kampala, 2011-2013.

### III. HOMEWARD BOUND

#### *Debating Defection Within the LRA*

The difficulty of surviving in the bush and the gradual erosion of the LRA's ideology is motivating an unprecedented desire among the LRA lower ranks to defect. Reports from recent returnees indicate that the majority of LRA members want to leave the rebel group. With the exception of Kony and his two dozen most senior commanders (including Okot Odhiambo and, perhaps, Dominic Ongwen), who remain committed to the LRA cause, most of the remaining Ugandan officers and combatants would gladly go home if given the chance. Abducted, often at a young age, and forced to walk ceaselessly in the inhospitable bush of central Africa, few would remain in the LRA if not held by their circumstances.

There are, however, many obstacles to defection, some with potentially fatal consequences. The four most prominent barriers to defection for Ugandan members of the LRA are: 1) fear of encountering hostile communities and military forces in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan, 2) a long, hazardous journey to defection sites from remote LRA locations, 3) mistreatment and persecution by the Ugandan military upon escaping, and 4) lack of reintegration support once they return home to Uganda.<sup>41</sup>

Most of the non-Ugandans abducted by the LRA since 2008 from CAR, Congo, and South Sudan seek to escape if given the chance. Mostly Zande, they face less risk of harm from hostile communities with whom they often share cultural or linguistic ties or from national military forces. However, many stay where they are rather than risk punishment from the LRA if they are caught trying to escape. Additionally, anecdotal evidence indicates that some Zande may be discouraged from escaping due to lack of livelihood options and reintegration support, calculating they may fare better by remaining where they are.

Trends in LRA defections highlight the complex dynamics involved in leaving the rebel group. There were at least 110 returnees from the LRA between January

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<sup>41</sup> Fear of being caught while trying to escape did not feature prominently in interviews with recent LRA returnees. This could be due to the groups becoming smaller and less able to control the members. It is possible that those still in Kony's group, where there is presumably more control over the group members, are afraid of being caught trying to escape and suffering severe punishment.

2012 and June 2013 that had spent six months or more with the rebel group, including 31 Ugandan male combatants.<sup>42</sup> If the reported numbers of returnees are correct, it means that in the last 16 months, the LRA has lost approximately 15 percent of the nearly 200 Ugandan combatants and officers that comprise the core of the LRA. It should be noted that for at least the past two years, LRA groups have quickly released many of the non-Ugandans they abduct, particularly adults used to carry looted goods. However, it is a testament to the difficulty of leaving the rebel group that so many low-level Ugandan officers and combatants, as well as abductees, remain within the LRA.

#### **A. Deciding to defect**

*"I left because this was a rebellion, I did not join it on my own, I was abducted when I was young. When I was fighting I was told that we were fighting a bad government. But I realized that things in the bush were bad and what I was told was not true. I had discussions with friends and realized that what they were preaching were lies. The one who was telling lies was the Big Teacher [Kony]." Former LRA combatant who escaped in 2011, 28 March 2013*

##### 1. The view from within the LRA

The authors of the report interviewed 22 Ugandans formerly with the LRA for this report.<sup>43</sup> Their dates of abduction, experience within the LRA, and dates and circumstances of defection varied, but all stated that they had been abducted and forced to remain in the LRA and had often thought about escaping. They had no desire to stay but were scared to leave, fearing punishment or death if caught. Out of the 22, ten said they had tried at least once to leave but were either caught immediately, failed to make it out, or came across another LRA group who recaptured them. All said they had been severely beaten for trying to flee.

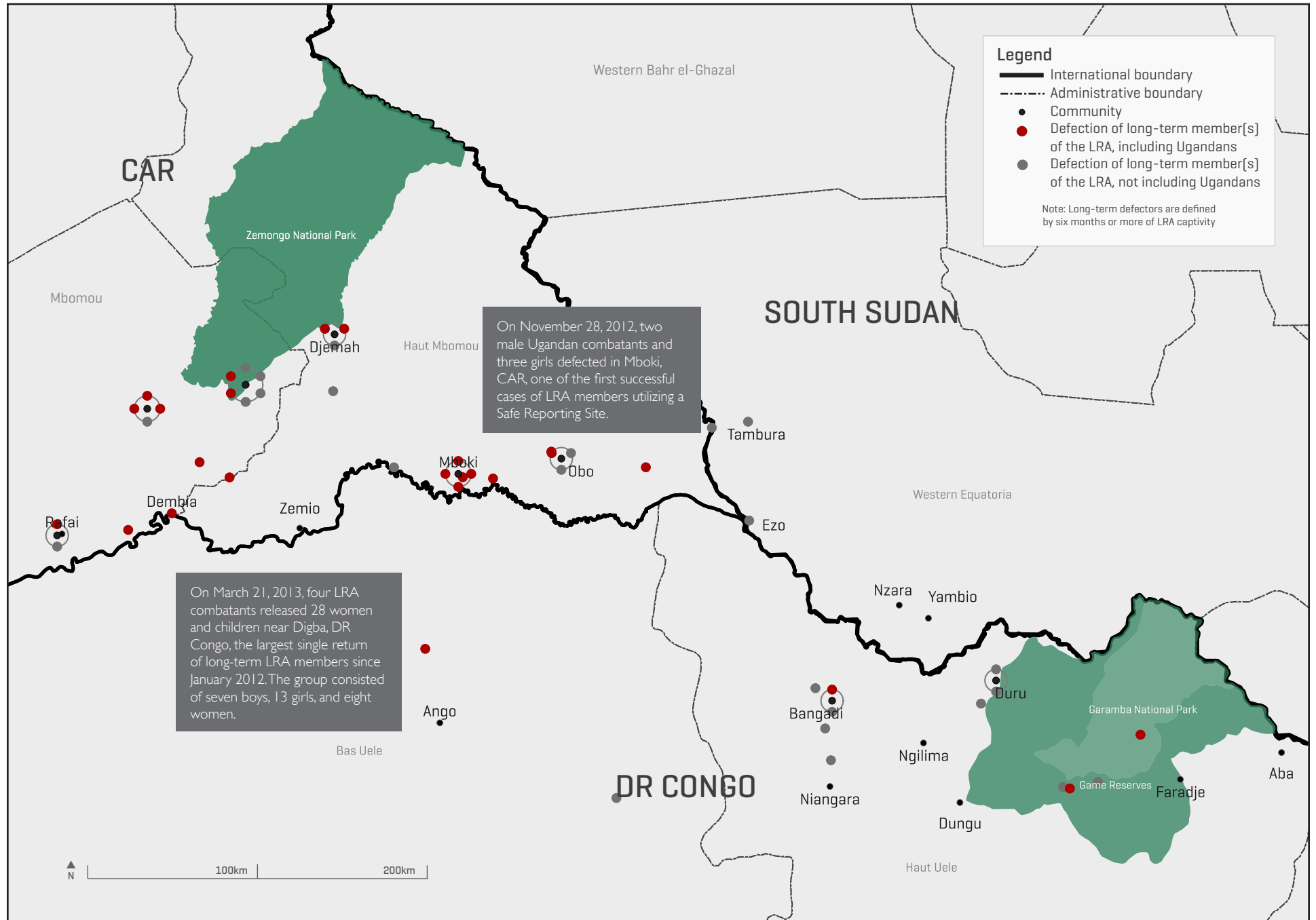
The common allusion to the "Stockholm Syndrome" – the psychological state in which captives create strong bonds with their captors – as a reason why LRA abductees do not risk escaping is overstated in this context. In recent years, the authors have consistently found that

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<sup>42</sup> LRA Crisis Tracker, statistic calculated 13 July 2013.

<sup>43</sup> The authors conducted the interviews in Kampala and Gulu in March and April 2013, as well as several additional interviews with former LRA combatants in June 2013.

# Map: Defection of long-term members of the LRA, January 2012 – June 2013





the majority of LRA members seek only to survive until the opportunity and incentives to defect are present. This has never been more true than today. While in the past former combatants may have expressed sympathy towards Kony and his stated aim of righting the wrongs committed against the Acholi by the Ugandan government, the most recent defectors talk of their disillusionment with the LRA leader. A relatively senior commander who came out of CAR at the end of 2012 said, “He [Kony] is only trying to survive now, [he] has no other aim.”<sup>44</sup>

The decision to defect is not usually the result of a single incident but rather a long process reinforced by several events or experiences such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, and longing for family. In this context, demobilization messages encouraging defections, including leaflets and radio programs, play a crucial role, further strengthening the desire to escape.

The desire to leave usually leads to action after discussion with a friend or groups of friends within an LRA group. Though this carries a significant risk of betrayal, it has become comparatively safer as LRA groups get smaller and command oversight weakens. There are now more opportunities to slip away. Five former combatants said they escaped while being sent on routine chores. Three women were let go by their group leader, citing hardships in the bush that led to the group leader’s decision to release them.

## 2. The complex role of military pressure

Military operations have a complex effect on defection dynamics within the LRA. The Ugandan military periodically clashes with LRA groups and captures combatants or women and children. However, these direct clashes do not necessarily provide the best opportunities for LRA members to defect. Almost all of the defectors interviewed for this report who had escaped in the last year did so when they were sent to do menial tasks such as fetching food, wood, or water, or when they simply fell out of the line of march and were abandoned. Three former fighters interviewed reported defecting from an LRA group allegedly based in Kafia Kingi that was sedentary and faced no military pressure at the time. The main reason for their defection was Kony’s decision to execute three mid-level commanders.<sup>45</sup>

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44 Author interview with former LRA combatant, Gulu, 3 April 2013.

45 Interviews with former LRA combatant, 24 June 2013.

Even so, military pressure, or even the perception of military pressure, does play a significant role in encouraging defections. Since December 2008, Ugandan military operations have forced most LRA groups into a continuous state of mobility, making it more difficult for groups to find food and increasing opportunities for LRA members to defect. All 15 recent returnees interviewed for this report who had escaped since the middle of 2012 said they had not been pursued by the Ugandan military for more than one year before they left but that they feared contact with the army and moved frequently in the bush. One former fighter said he left after he heard radio reports about the AU RTF’s deployment to areas with LRA presence.<sup>46</sup>

## 3. How the LRA discourages escape

LRA commanders are adept at manipulating information and fears in order to discourage would-be defectors from attempting to escape. They restrict radio access to senior commanders to discourage lower-ranking members from hearing Come Home messages broadcast on FM or shortwave radio. They also sow doubt about the veracity of Come Home messages that use the voices of former LRA combatants by claiming that those who defect are killed after the broadcast or slowly poisoned by the Congolese army or the Ugandan government.

Similarly, LRA commanders forbid lower-ranking members from picking up or reading Come Home leaflets distributed by disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) actors, telling them the fliers are coated in a poison that seeps through the skin when touched. Some members pick up leaflets despite the risk, but hide them to avoid punishment.

LRA propaganda works best when it exaggerates legitimate fears. Would-be defectors’ biggest fear when leaving the LRA is being killed or harmed by the local communities in CAR, Congo, or South Sudan. This fear is directly related to the LRA’s deliberate strategy of committing atrocities with the intent of alienating the local population and deterring defections. LRA commanders reinforce these fears by reminding members of such attacks, as well as of reports or rumors of communities killing or harming defectors.

## **B. The long journey home**

Once a member of the LRA has made the decision to defect, the act of leaving the LRA is difficult and dangerous. The risks involved are not lost on people in the

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46 Author interview with former LRA combatant, Gulu, 3 April 2013.

LRA, particularly as top commanders attempt to exaggerate those risks as much as possible.

But recently, as groups became smaller and more mobile, some members were able to defect without being pursued. Some groups are now too small or weak to chase those who leave. According to at least two recent returnees, commanders of small groups worry that those sent to retrieve defectors would also defect.<sup>47</sup> In the past, LRA groups that were more stable could minimize defections by using established perimeter guards. But sedentary groups run the risk that LRA members will build relationships with local community members and seek their help to escape, as happened in Haut Uele from 2007-2008, as well as in Kafia Kingi in 2011 on at least one occasion.

Many LRA escapees who manage to elude their captors still must make a long journey through dense forests from remote LRA encampments to the nearest army detachment or civilian settlement. They are often unable to take sufficient provisions for the journey, for fear of tipping off LRA commanders to their plans. They may face extreme hunger or thirst while traveling, as well as exposure, disease, and wild animals. Though some are able to survive in the bush for weeks or months, some escapees have undoubtedly died in the attempt.

Local communities usually welcome non-Ugandan defectors, mostly Zande, who survive the bush journey.<sup>48</sup> If they escape in their country of origin, they usually are returned home quickly. However, for those who escape in a different country than that from which they were abducted, the journey home can be perilous. Though government authorities, UN actors, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have strengthened protocols for coordinating cross-border returns, these systems work best for children and women.<sup>49</sup> Non-Ugandan adult males who escape from the LRA in a different country have often been jailed or held in custody for extensive periods of time, though improved coordination in the past two years has re-

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47 Interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu, 3 and 7 April 2013.

48 Across LRA-affected areas of CAR, Congo, and South Sudan, there are periodic, localized tensions between Zande farming communities and Mbororo (Fulani) herdsman. However, Mbororo herders usually feed Zande escapees they encounter in the bush and transport them to nearby communities or authorities. For more, see *The Resolve*, "Peace Can Be," February 2012.

49 Even so, there remain long delays in repatriating them in some cases.

duced the number of such cases.

Ugandan defectors, particularly male combatants, face greater danger in trying to establish contact with local communities. Failure to build trust or communicate clearly with local communities may lead to beating or lynching. Some of the interviewees said they tried to secure assurances before surrendering by either waving white flags from the side of the road or writing letters to local community leaders. In most cases they received no response and feared they would be attacked if they stayed in the same place. Ugandan LRA defectors also assume false identities – pretending to be from one of the neighboring LRA-affected countries – to avoid being killed while coming out. Many, especially combatants, attempt to find civilian garb before leaving the bush. Looting or bartering of civilian clothes, particularly suits and shoes, could signal the looters' intent to defect. Three different former fighters interviewed for this report testified that they asked Mbororo cattle herders they encountered in the bush for "good clothes" to help facilitate their defection.

Despite their fear, Ugandan defectors often receive assistance from local communities. In late 2012, civilians in the CAR towns of Obo and Mboki helped several Ugandan combatants defect. Their willingness to assist LRA defectors is likely linked to intensive efforts by civil society leaders, local authorities, the NGO Invisible Children, and US military advisers to encourage community members to assist defectors.

Ugandan defectors also face potential mistreatment at the hands of military forces. Five former combatants said they avoided surrendering to the Congolese army (FARDC) as they heard rumors while in the LRA that Congolese soldiers killed LRA defectors on the spot.<sup>50</sup> There have also been at least two cases of the South Sudanese military (SPLA) mistreating Ugandan LRA defectors it has received, and likely many more.<sup>51</sup>

However, Ugandan LRA combatants are also weary of the Ugandan military. Though Ugandan forces do not physically abuse them, defectors fear being recruited and forced to fight their former colleagues in the bush.<sup>52</sup> The Ugandan army uses many former Ugan-

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50 There have been several documented cases of Congolese soldiers mistreating Ugandan defectors. See Cakaj, Ledio, "Too Far From Home: Demobilizing the Lord's Resistance Army," Enough Project, February 2011.

51 For instance, the South Sudanese military held a male Ugandan LRA defector in custody for several months in late 2011 and early 2012.

52 Three of the former LRA combatants interviewed for

dan LRA fighters as scouts immediately after they surrender. Though these men are thought to provide valuable intelligence, often LRA groups change plans once they know one of their members has defected. Even if the Ugandan military does transport former LRA fighters back to Uganda, they often pressure and intimidate them to join the UPDF. As of February 2011, there were reportedly over 100 former LRA combatants in the Ugandan army, fighting against the remaining LRA groups.<sup>53</sup> All the males interviewed for this report claimed that they had been asked to join the Ugandan army and knew at least one other person who had succumbed to the pressure and joined.

Ugandan army officials lure former combatants with promises of salaries to be deposited into bank accounts in Uganda while the former combatants fight for the Ugandan army in CAR. Such promises are almost always false as, according to Ugandan law, no person without a high school education can be integrated into the Ugandan army and receive a salary.<sup>54</sup> Most of the former combatants were abducted as children and have only a basic elementary education. Almost all of the recently returned former LRA combatants who now fight for the Ugandan army interviewed by the authors in the last two to three years have reported that they have not undergone any training or other basic procedures needed to formally be absorbed into the army and therefore do not qualify for the salaries they are promised.<sup>55</sup>

### C. Lack of reintegration aid back home

*"I have a question. Suppose you were the person who came out and had nothing, you were suffering and people ask you to go on the radio and tell others to come out, when in fact you wished you were back in the bush? Would you do it?"* Former Ugandan LRA combatant who escaped in 2011, 29 March 2013

*"At least in the bush I could find food for myself."* Multiple former Ugandan and Zande LRA members, April 2013

If LRA defectors succeed in surviving the gauntlet of

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this report stated they had been worried the Ugandan army would recruit them once they escaped. They tried to surrender to the local population in CAR or even the South Sudanese army and police.

53 Cakaj, "Too Far From Home," 2011.

54 World Factbook, "Uganda," Central Intelligence Agency, 2012.

55 Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu and Kampala 2011-2013. Author interview with social worker, Gulu, 24 June 2013.

obstacles between their escape and their arrival home, they then face the challenge of reintegrating back into their communities. Interviews with former combatants indicate that even though such concern might be seen from the outside as premature – survival being obviously the initial worry – members of the LRA are more likely to undertake the perilous return journey if they are convinced that the rewards of being home are worth the risk of getting there.

#### 1. Reintegration support for Ugandans

Reintegration of Ugandan former members of the LRA requires a holistic, community-based approach. Even so, the Ugandan government has a primary responsibility for facilitating and funding reintegration activities. Since 2000, it has largely implemented this responsibility through the Amnesty Commission, a body created under the terms of the 2000 Amnesty Act that has been tasked with granting legal amnesty, as well as providing rehabilitation to former members of the LRA.

Since their creation, the Amnesty Act and Amnesty Commission have faced a variety of critiques, including concerns about the appropriateness of a blanket amnesty and the quality of reintegration packages. Regardless, the Commission enjoyed support among some elements of northern Ugandan civil society, and for years it was able at least to provide some returning members of the LRA with amnesty certificates.

However, the Amnesty Commission's performance has steadily declined since 2006, when the LRA abandoned northern Uganda, as the rate of defectors has slowed and attention in Uganda has shifted to more pressing domestic issues. The Commission failed to issue many former combatants their amnesty certificates, while lack of funding meant many defectors received reduced reintegration packages, or none at all. The Commission's offices in northern Uganda, where most defectors return, are closed. The Commission's work was also compromised by other Ugandan government actors working at cross-purposes, including Ugandan military officials who used the denial of amnesty certificates to pressure returnees to join the military. Additionally, the Ugandan government has blocked the issuing of an amnesty certificate for Thomas Kwoyelo, a mid-level commander who was captured in February 2009, as the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP) attempts to try him for alleged crimes committed while in the LRA.



The Amnesty Commission was further weakened in May 2012, when the Ugandan Minister of Internal Affairs failed to renew the section of the Amnesty Act that allowed the Commission to grant former combatants amnesty. The Amnesty Commission retained the authority to provide LRA returnees with reintegration support, but has lacked the funds to do so. It also retained the authority to provide “letters of introduction” to LRA defectors to help facilitate their reintegration, but such letters do not grant them any legal protection from prosecution.

Following a year of intense lobbying from Ugandan civil society groups and members of Parliament, in May 2013 the Ugandan government renewed the section of the Amnesty Act that allowed the Commission to grant LRA returnees amnesty. However, it remains unclear whether the Ugandan government will invest the resources and political will necessary to implement the full range of activities in its original mandate.

In the absence of adequate support from the Ugandan government, the task of providing reintegration support has fallen largely on civil society and humanitarian groups. Following the departure of the LRA from Uganda and the subsequent return home of most internally displaced people, many international humanitarian organizations ceased their programs. Consequently, there are fewer services, such as vocational training and small loans, available to former LRA members. Aid groups have continued to provide limited medical and psychosocial support to some returning LRA members, but no long-term follow-up care.

A local organization, Gulu Support for Children Organization (GUSCO), receives funding from the UN children’s agency (UNICEF) to house young mothers and children who return from the LRA, which GUSCO did with regularity at least until the end of 2011. But due to lack of funds and the small number of people trickling out of the LRA, GUSCO appears to have stopped offering support to young mothers and children. World Vision, an international organization that offered medical support and reintegration services to adult males formerly in the LRA, has also faced severe funding shortfalls, though funding from Invisible Children will extend its capacity to operate the reintegration center and support livelihood activities. With GUSCO and World Vision providing limited support, only the ICRC has recently remained to carry out “direct reintegration,” a euphemism for the process of reuniting those who have come out with their families without any medical, psychosocial, or financial support. This only serves to maintain the cycle of poverty and neglect that helped

launch and sustain the LRA rebellion in the first place.

The experiences of three Ugandan women and an infant who came out of the bush in Congo in February 2013 and made it to Uganda the following month are particularly telling. After being transported to Uganda’s capital Kampala by the UN, the four were taken by Uganda’s Amnesty Commission and paraded in front of the Ugandan media. Despite public statements from an Amnesty Commission official that the four would receive support, they were transported to Gulu in northern Uganda, with the help of an international NGO, where they were taken to the Ugandan military’s Child Protection Unit (CPU), a crumbling facility that is occupied mostly by Ugandan soldiers and their families. By mid-April 2013 the women and the infant were still in the CPU. Neither the Amnesty Commission nor other actors have provided them with reintegration assistance.

The challenges faced by Ugandans formerly in the LRA are highly deleterious to the current DDR efforts. Many, robbed of educational and livelihood opportunities first by the LRA and then by the lack of reintegration support, have been among the northern Ugandans unable to take advantage of the economic growth the region has enjoyed since 2006, which has been highly uneven and left large portions of the population in poverty.<sup>56</sup> Some former members of the LRA have even come home to find that others have appropriated their lands and homes.

Ugandans remaining in the LRA able to keep up on developments in northern Uganda, primarily via international and Ugandan shortwave radio programs, are aware of the challenges they will face upon returning home.<sup>57</sup> Fear of being unable to sustain a livelihood, or acquiring only a menial job, creates a strong disincentive to accept the grave risks of trying to escape, especially for higher-ranking officers who have comparatively better living conditions in the bush.

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56 For instance, see Owich, James, “Biting Poverty on the Rise in Acholi,” *Acholi Times*, 23 May 2011.

57 Up until the launch of Operation Lightning Thunder, LRA forces kept in frequent touch with family, friends, and former combatants in northern Uganda. Given their isolation and reluctance to use electronic communications, the extent to which members of the LRA in the bush continue to communicate with such contacts is unclear. There have been recent reports that Kony and other commanders have called relatives in northern Uganda, although such reports have not been confirmed by independent sources and are likely untrue. See Lawino, Sam, “Kony calls uncles, vows never to return home,” *The Daily Monitor*, 14 April 2013.



## 2. Reintegration support for non-Ugandans

Many non-Ugandans, primarily Zande, who escape from the LRA receive even less reintegration support than those who return home to Uganda. Upon returning home, they are forced to restart their livelihoods from scratch, and some are too traumatized to return to the rural farming communities they were abducted from for fear of being abducted again. This leaves them with few livelihood options, as most Zande rely on small-scale farming, hunting, and fishing to support themselves and their families.

Non-Ugandan returnees also face stigma from local communities when they return. Though many families and community members welcome escapees and provide essential support networks, some community members harass them. These dynamics are extremely complex, as returnees may face increased stigma from community members if they exhibit signs of “LRA behavior,” such as aggression, withdrawal, or psychological trauma. Young women who return from the LRA having been raped face heightened stigma, especially if they return with children fathered by Ugandan LRA members. Family and community members may refuse to care for or accept such children, while men sometimes refuse to marry women raped by LRA combatants.

These dynamics can be especially pronounced in rural areas away from the eyes of international observers:

*“Stigma against LRA returnees may not be evident as much in urban areas, but in remote rural areas where LRA atrocities hit the hardest, people are very bitter about the LRA. Because they can’t take out their anger on the LRA, they take it out on returnees who have spent time with the LRA. LRA violence was worst in rural areas, so most abductions occurred there and bitterness is worst there. So most returnees are returning to rural areas where they face the greatest likelihood of stigma, but where support and sensitization is the least developed.”* – South Sudanese community leader in Yambio, April 2013

National governments in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan, having failed to protect their citizens from abduction by the LRA, have also completely abdicated their responsibility to provide reintegration support. In addition, they have failed to provide any legal framework to guide the reintegration of former LRA members or to protect them from prosecution for crimes they may have committed under coercion from LRA commanders, though none of the three governments have yet moved to actually prosecute former abductees. Fur-

thermore, unlike many cases in northern Uganda, returning defectors or escapees in Zande communities do not undergo any community reconciliation process to ease their transition back home.

Despite this, non-Ugandan returnees, particularly children, do receive some reintegration support. In south-east CAR, former abductees have formed “Victim’s Associations” in many towns. Several international NGOs and UN agencies provide psychosocial and livelihood support to such associations and other former abductees. However, the Victim’s Association in Obo, which includes 140 adults and 100 children, reports that external livelihood assistance has been sparse and poorly managed, preventing them from putting their training to productive use.<sup>58</sup>

In Congo, several groups provide limited but inadequate psychosocial and material assistance to children who escape the LRA.<sup>59</sup> However, returning adults receive little if any formal external assistance. Assistance is particularly sparse – or absent altogether – for children and adults who return home to remote rural communities or towns in areas such as Bas Uele that are far from the headquarters kept by the UN and most international NGOs in Dungu.

In South Sudan, where the local government of Western Equatoria is elected and comparatively well-organized, the local Ministry of Gender and Social Development operates a UNICEF-funded transit center for children and women who come out from the LRA. Though few escape within South Sudan, the center processes many South Sudanese women and children rescued or captured by Ugandan troops operating in CAR. The UPDF hands over women and children to the center under the terms of a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) agreement it signed with UNICEF.<sup>60</sup> Though the center provides some follow-up counseling and support to South Sudanese returnees, long-term support is limited. For South Sudanese adults who escape from the LRA, no formal reintegration assistance is available.

Though it has long been assumed that Zande abductees

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58 Editor interview, Obo Victim’s Association members, Obo, April 2013.

59 For a detailed discussion of the challenges Congolese children who escape from the LRA face, see Discover the Journey and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, “We Suffer from War and More War: Assessment of the Impact of the LRA on Formerly Abducted Children and Their Communities in Northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” 2012.

60 The SPLA, FARDC, and the Central African national army (FACA), have not signed similar SOPs with UNICEF.

need no incentive to attempt to escape the LRA, there is increasing concern among Zande community leaders that the lack of reintegration support for escapees, particularly youth and adults, could lead some to stay in the bush. If the conflict persists, Zande abducted by the LRA, aware of the stigma and lack of livelihood options they will face upon returning home, may be more reluctant to take the dangerous risk of attempting escape from the LRA.

## Community-led reintegration in the tri-border area

With governments and international organizations providing little support for adult LRA returnees in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan, local civil society groups are helping to fill the gap within their limited capacities. Local religious and community leaders often lead such initiatives, operating with few resources and little or no outside assistance. In other cases, formal or informal peer groups of former abductees provide each other with financial and psychological support. Arising organically from the local context, such initiatives represent a comfortable and culturally relevant opportunity for LRA escapees to rebuild their lives.

In Congo, Mama Bongisa Center / Centre de reinsertion et d'Appui au Developpement (CRAD), a loose-knit organization run by a local Catholic nun, brings together women who have escaped from the LRA, been widowed by LRA attacks, or otherwise been victims of sexual and gender-based violence. The women participate in income-generating activities such as bread baking, and also have a chance to foster informal peer networks that help them cope with trauma. Another organization, SAIPED, uses mobile cinema and community gatherings to sensitize communities

on reintegration of former abductees. In addition, the Catholic group CDJP helps operate Centre Elikya, in Dungu, which provides psychosocial counseling and other services to formerly abducted youth.

In southeast CAR, the "Victim's Associations" that bring together former abductees in many towns facilitate peer-to-peer counseling and provide a forum to address community stigmatization. They also provide financial assistance to new escapees. Other civil society leaders, such as Marie Francine in Obo, have initiated local efforts to assist LRA returnees. In South Sudan, local church organizations have begun to conduct surveys and needs assessments of adult returnees from the LRA, as well as some community reconciliation workshops.

In all of these areas, where literacy rates are low and print media scarce, community FM radio stations are a critical medium to sensitize local communities on the importance of accepting LRA escapees back into the community. Radio Zereda in Obo, Anisa FM in Yambio, and Radio RTK in Dungu are excellent examples of this.

## IV. A REGION IN CHAOS

### *The Context for DDR Initiatives*

With its command structure under stress and its core combatants wanting to return home, the LRA is extremely vulnerable to effective efforts to encourage defections. However, dysfunction in the broader counter-LRA response and pressing crises in other areas of CAR, Congo, and South Sudan threaten to undercut existing DDR interventions and stall efforts to capitalize on the LRA's current instability. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze fully the broader counter-LRA response and regional security dynamics, a brief overview is necessary before providing recommendations for the future of DDR interventions.

DDR interventions are nested within a set of civilian and military counter-LRA initiatives designed to stop LRA violence and protect civilians that have had some success but not been decisive.<sup>61</sup> The main aim of military operations is to pursue senior LRA commanders and protect civilians from LRA attacks, though the ways that this is done and the level of effort varies in important ways across different operational sectors. The civilian contribution is mainly directed at improving civilian protection, monitoring human rights abuses, and providing assistance to affected communities.

Overall, the collective effort falls far short of providing an adequate level of protection to the affected communities. The declining political will and the general sense of defeatism that pervade some agencies within the architecture of civilian protection play into Kony's hands. While it should be possible to improve with only modest adjustments to the present level of effort, counter-LRA actors must at least be able to sustain the present level of effort and investment if it is to succeed.

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<sup>61</sup> Major players in the international campaign against the LRA include the AU RTF, two UN peacekeeping missions, MONUSCO and UNMISS, the UPDF, who are supported through a bilateral agreement by US Special Force advisers, the FARDC, the SPLA, and the FACA, the Western Equatoria Ministry of Gender and Social Development, the Uganda Amnesty Commission, UN agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, CAS and UN Child Protection), international NGOs (Invisible Children, The Resolve, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Conciliation Resources, COOPI, the International Rescue Committee), ICRC, and active local church and civil society organizations (particularly Zande traditional authorities as well as JUPADEC in CAR). Local defense militias in South Sudan and park rangers in Garamba National Park in Congo also work against the LRA.

Counter-LRA initiatives, in turn, are nested within a broader regional context in which each of the countries where the rebel group operates is faced with burgeoning crises that overshadow LRA atrocities. Meanwhile, the tri-border region of CAR, Congo, and South Sudan that the LRA has operated in since 2008 is among the most remote and marginalized regions on the African continent. Distracted national elites in Bangui, Kinshasa, and Juba have at their best dedicated minimal resources towards the conflict, and at their worst have downplayed the severity of the conflict and even opposed local and regional efforts to stop the LRA. The most populous ethnic group in the region, the Zande, do not form a core political constituency for their national governments, limiting their ability to advocate for a more effective response. Meanwhile, Kony's deliberate strategy to minimize attention-grabbing LRA massacres and mass abductions creates pressure on international partners in the counter-LRA coalition to turn their attention and limited resources to other regional crises.

#### **A. Counter-LRA dynamics at the local and national scale**

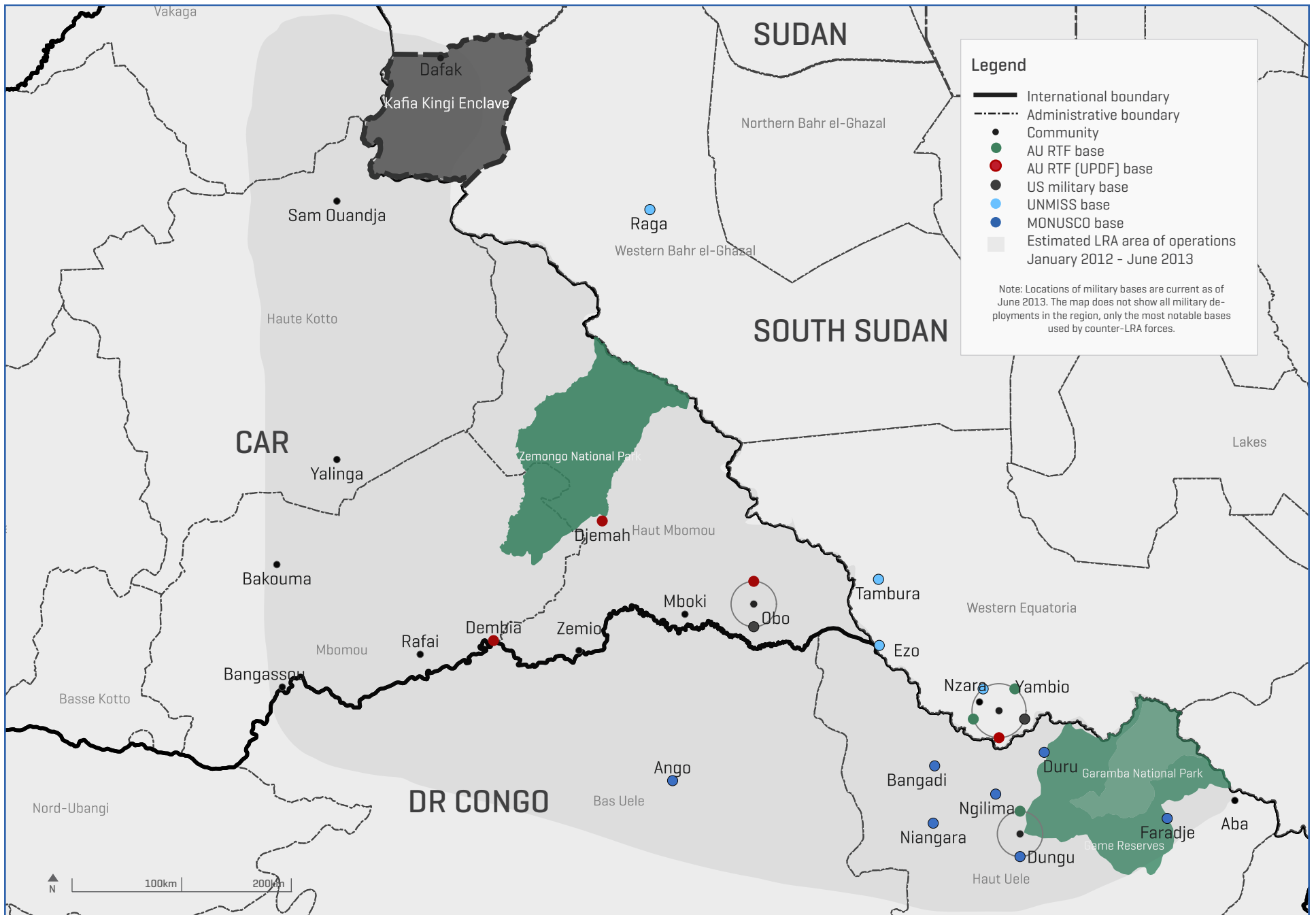
*"We have been living on edge for five years."* – Community leader in Dungu, Congo, March 2013

*"We are discouraged because nobody can stop the LRA. The LRA is going to finish off the people of Haut Mbomou [CAR]."* – Community leader in Obo, CAR, April 2013

##### 1. Congo

Though senior LRA commanders have preferred to operate in CAR and Kafia Kingi in recent years, 74 percent of the rebel group's attacks have occurred in Congo's Haut Uele and Bas Uele districts since 2010. The effect of this prolonged insecurity has been calamitous for the local people, who live on scattered farms and combine subsistence farming with hunting and fishing – activities rendered excessively dangerous by the LRA presence. LRA groups operating in and around Garamba National Park frequently attack people travelling along the newly reconstructed road between Dungu and Faradje, forcing UN personnel to travel with a military escort and civilians to use it only at considerable risk and without protection. LRA violence in the Ueles has also had a ripple effect, creating an atmosphere of

# Map: Counter-LRA military bases vs. LRA area of operations





chaos that emboldens bandits, rogue Congolese troops, and poachers to copycat LRA tactics.<sup>62</sup>

The Congolese government, preoccupied with Kinshasa political machinations and crises in the Kivus, continues to discount the threat posed by the presence of the LRA.<sup>63</sup> At the local level, Congolese military and civilian authorities consistently under-report LRA activity, attributing almost all reported LRA attacks to Mbooro cattle herders, poachers, or bandits.<sup>64</sup> Congolese community leaders have condemned the government's denial of the LRA threat, but to little effect.<sup>65</sup> The Congolese government and military have also blocked attempts by civil society to develop self-defense units, which have shown flashes of success against the LRA, largely because of very negative experience with self-defense militias in eastern Congo.<sup>66</sup>

Even as the Congolese government and military have discouraged self-defense groups, they have been lackluster, at best, in protecting civilians. FARDC troops deployed in small towns provide some deterrent to LRA attacks, but are infrequently supplied and often responsible for looting and human rights abuses.<sup>67</sup> In 2011, the US-trained 391<sup>st</sup> FARDC battalion was deployed to the Ueles, but the overall FARDC commander in the area prevented it from conducting effective

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62 Inadequate investigation capacities in the Ueles often prevent protection actors from confirming the identity of attack perpetrators. For one comparison of LRA attacks to those committed by other armed groups, see LRA Crisis Tracker, "2012 Annual Security Brief," 2013.

63 For a brief description of the overarching political and security challenges in Congo, see IRIN, "Is More Force in the DRC More of the Same?," 14 May 2013.

64 Author interviews with Congolese officials and FARDC commander tasked to the AU RTF, Dungu, April 2013.

65 Author interviews with Congolese community leaders, Dungu, April 2013.

66 A local Zande chief was reportedly imprisoned in Kisanгани following an incident in which a local self-defense unit he supported pursued LRA forces and rescued two young children. The unit in question was subsequently disarmed. Author interviews with Congolese community leaders, Dungu, April 2013.

67 For recent reports of rape and other abuses of civilians in the Kivus alleged to have been perpetrated by the FARDC and M23, see MONUSCO and UNHCHR, "Report of the UN Joint Human Rights Office on the Human Rights Violations Perpetrated by Congolese Armed Forces and Combatants of the M23 in Goma and Sake, North Kivu Province, and in and around Minova, South Kivu Province, from 15 November to 2 December 2012," 8 May 2013. The pattern of FARDC indiscipline is well established in HRW reporting going back to 2004.

operations.<sup>68</sup> In late 2012, it was redeployed to eastern Congo, where it was responsible for grave human rights abuses that prevent the US from continuing to support it, even if it were to be returned to the Ueles.

Congolese authorities have also been reluctant to cooperate with regional military efforts to address the LRA threat. To the extent Congolese officials follow the conflict, they seem more concerned about the perceived threat of Ugandan presence on Congolese soil. Political tensions and mistrust between the two governments continue to prevent full cross-border cooperation.<sup>69</sup> The Congolese government ordered Ugandan troops to leave the country in September 2011, and has not permitted them to return since.

## 2. Central African Republic

The future of counter-LRA efforts in CAR has been in question since Seleka rebel forces overthrew President François Bozizé's government in March 2013.<sup>70</sup> The new government, led by Michael Djotodia, has struggled to control looting and human rights abuses by Seleka troops, making the LRA seem a distant security concern.<sup>71</sup>

Following Seleka's takeover of Bangui, Ugandan troops and US advisers immediately suspended counter-LRA operations in eastern CAR. Ugandan troops, in CAR as part of the AU RTF, withdrew to bases in Obo, Djemah, and Dembia, while US advisers consolidated in their Obo base. Ugandan officials, citing security concerns, have not indicated when the Ugandan military will resume deployments of tracking teams and other patrols. The UN Security Council and AU Peace and Security Council have expressed support for continued counter-LRA operations by Ugandan troops, and Seleka representatives have indicated that the Ugandan military

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68 Ibid.

69 This theme was repeated in several author interviews with government and military officials in Dungu, April 2013. 70 Bozizé signed agreements with Seleka rebels in Libreville, Gabon in January 2013 aimed at halting the advance of the rebel movement in CAR. Seleka rebels resumed hostilities and captured Bangui in late March, forcing Bozizé to flee the country. Neither the AU nor the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) initially recognized legitimacy of self-proclaimed President and Seleka leader Michael Djotodia. ECCAS led efforts to secure the new government's agreement to an 18-month transitional process that will culminate in drafting a new constitution and national elections. 71 See International Crisis Group, "Central African Republic: Priorities of the Transition," 11 June 2013. IRIN, "CAR crisis remains dire – and neglected," 6 June 2013.

can resume counter-LRA operations only in Haut Mbo-mou prefecture. But the new government in Bangui is divided, and tensions have flared in several encounters between Seleka and Ugandan troops. As matters stood at the time of writing, operations remained suspended. At present, it seems unlikely that order will arise out of the chaos of Central African politics or that a clear understanding of a single best international course of action will emerge in the near future.

In the vacuum created by the suspension of Ugandan and US operations, the new Seleka government has given little concrete indication of how it seeks to address the LRA presence in eastern CAR.<sup>72</sup> Having decided to structure counter-LRA efforts under the auspices of the AU, it is hoped that diplomacy does not lose sight of the need to find political space to allow for a prompt resumption of Ugandan and US operations in CAR. At the very least, the possibility that the LRA and disaffected elements of the Seleka coalition might coalesce should lead to vigorous action to minimize the risk.

### 3. South Sudan

South Sudan, like Congo and CAR, has other problems to deal with and has elected not to devote significant military resources to the LRA-affected areas of Western Equatoria State, despite the importance of Equatorian agricultural production to the national economy. However, the new national government has made a conscious decision to allow the state governor of WES, himself a former colonel in the SPLA, wide latitude to respond proactively to the LRA threat.<sup>73</sup>

The WES governor, Joseph Bakasoro, campaigned in the 2011 elections largely on the promise that he would address the security threat posed by the LRA. Since winning the election, he has done so by quietly supporting a local self-defense militia known as the Arrow Boys, or Home Guard, and instituting a policy of welcoming LRA defectors and swiftly punishing LRA raiders. The Arrow Boys are closely supervised within the traditional tribal structure of the Zande, which remains strong in WES, and have been instrumental in creating an atmosphere of security within which

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<sup>72</sup> In June 2013, Djotodia met with AU LRA envoy Francisco Madeira and Abou Moussa, the UN's chief LRA official and Special Representative for the Secretary General (SRSG) for UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). Djotodia reportedly expressed support for the AU RTF, and announced a two-week operation to be led by Seleka troops to address LRA activity in Mbomou prefecture.

<sup>73</sup> Author interviews with government and UN officials, Yambio, March 2012 and April 2013.

farming, hunting, and fishing activities have resumed in many areas, though fear of the LRA is still persistent in rural areas.<sup>74</sup> State authorities are now concentrating on economic development but monitoring LRA activity in bordering CAR and Congo carefully in case the LRA should return.

### **B. The African Union LRA intervention**

*"African Union officials came to Obo and promised they would bring peace, but they have done nothing."* Community leaders in Obo, CAR, April 2013

Two years since its official launch, the AU RCI-LRA is still struggling to generate an effect on the ground.<sup>75</sup> The mission remains plagued by a fundamental difference in vision between the AU, participating countries, and donors. The AU planning infrastructure in Addis Ababa has sought donor support to make the AU RTF, the military component of the AU RCI-LRA, a robust peacekeeping mission. They have been supported in this by LRA-affected countries, which hope that bringing their troops under the AU's legitimizing umbrella will result in increased military support from donors. Meanwhile, donors have sought to tamp down expectations of military support and instead encouraged AU LRA envoy Francisco Madeira and the AU RTF to play the role of facilitator in order to smooth regional political tensions that have hindered cross-border collaboration on the LRA crisis.

As a result, despite the obvious diplomatic advantage provided by AU leadership, the RTF is, in terms of real military capacity, verging on irrelevance. Despite this, the diplomatic progress that has led to this point seems to have satisfied public opinion enough that there has been no serious pressure on the AU or its Western sponsors to transform the symbolic accomplishment of an AU mission into a serious effort to strengthen the capacity of national forces to pursue LRA commanders or protect civilians.

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<sup>74</sup> Author interview, Paramount Chief of the Zande, Yambio, April 2013. See also Danish Demining Group, "Armed Violence and Stabilization in Western Equatoria: Recovering from the Lord's Resistance Army," April 2013.

<sup>75</sup> For a complete description of the different components of the AU mission, see African Union, "Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the implementation of the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army," 17 June 2013.

## 1. Standing up the AU RTF

Having failed to attain buy-in from participating countries into a common vision, the AU RTF has stalled. The mission is coordinated from a small headquarters in Yambio, but the officers stationed there lack basic logistical support and secure communications with AU sector headquarters in Obo and Dunggu. RTF headquarters has also been unable to deploy liaison teams to its sector headquarters because money to support them is lacking.

Though the mission has a concept of operations, headquarters staff cannot translate it into an operational plan until weaknesses in communications, finance, and logistics capacity of participating forces have been addressed. At present the AU RTF consists of between 800 and 1,200 UPDF troops, approximately 500 SPLA troops, and a battalion of 500 FARDC soldiers.<sup>76</sup> The FARDC contingent only recently formally came under AU command. So far, both the SPLA and FARDC perform static defense tasks and do not actively track or pursue the LRA. Neither has received operational orders from the RTF headquarters. No agreements exist to allow any of the forces to operate across international borders except the UPDF, which can operate in CAR and South Sudan.

The Congolese government has agreed to participate in the AU RTF, but has been reluctant to do so substantively because it sees the mission as a largely irrelevant distraction from problems in the Kivus and resents that it is dominated by Uganda. The FARDC sent several senior officers to the AU RTF headquarters in Yambio, but did not dedicate any troops to the force until February 2013, nearly a year after the SPLA, FACA, and UPDF had committed their contingents. The troops they eventually assigned to the RTF came from a notorious “mixed” (i.e., an amalgam of elements from former militia forces that once fought each other) battalion of troops. The FARDC reportedly redeployed some of these troops from outlying towns at higher risk of LRA attack to the AU RTF sector headquarters in Dunggu, leaving civilians in remote areas even more vulnerable.<sup>77</sup> The AU RTF commander, a UPDF officer, has been frustrated in his attempt to get official clearance to

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<sup>76</sup> These figures are estimates based on interviews and direct observation and differ from those provided by the AU, which claims there are 2,000 UPDF troops and 350 FACA troops dedicated to the AU RTF. See African Union, “Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Implementation of the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative,” 17 June 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Author interview, civil society leaders, Dunggu, April 2013.

visit “his” troops in Dunggu and they have yet to deploy on operations.<sup>78</sup>

The SPLA contingent to the AU RTF has more cordial relations with the AU and Ugandans, but is not actively engaged in pursuing LRA commanders or protecting civilians from the LRA. Juba, hoping the AU would provide for its troops, has not made available transport or logistics resources, needed more urgently at hotspots along the border with Sudan and in Jonglei state, for troops in WES.

Prior to its dissolution in the March coup, the CAR military had contributed approximately 400 troops, largely used for static point security in the LRA-affected zone of CAR. But CAR’s participation has been suspended since March, and it is still uncertain if the new government in CAR will collaborate or how many soldiers they could contribute to the AU mission.

## 2. Ugandan military operations

Given the disarray in its other partner forces, the Ugandan military remains the most critical component to the effectiveness of the AU RTF. These operations are of particular importance because they straddle LRA lines of communication and may have been the single most important factor in pushing Kony to adopt the policy of dispersal that has generated new opportunities for defection.

Since the launch of Operation Lighting Thunder in December 2008, the UPDF has maintained varying degrees of military pressure on LRA groups, initially in Congo and now primarily in CAR, at least until the suspension of operations in March. The UPDF’s primary bases are in Nzara, South Sudan, as well as Obo, Djemah, and Dembia in CAR. US military advisers operate in CAR and South Sudan alongside the UPDF, providing intelligence, information operations, training, and logistics support.

Ugandan and US operations focus on a combination of military and information operations (which can be defined loosely as using information from all sources to shape the operational context, e.g., using information about the composition of a particular LRA unit to craft a specific defection message). Military operations, while nominally focused on protection of civilians, concentrate on the tasks of finding and attacking LRA forces. UPDF tracking teams track and attack LRA ele-

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<sup>78</sup> Author interviews, AU RTF commanders, Yambio, April 2013. Author interviews, UN JIOC officials, Dunggu, April 2013.



ments with technical, training, and intelligence support from US advisers, who also provide some advanced intelligence gathering and processing capacities. These operations were intended to take place within a civilian protection envelope provided by national armies in each of the concerned countries, though in practice they often cannot fulfill that function. While together Ugandan and US troops have been successful in putting pressure on the LRA in CAR by restricting their ability to abduct and train new recruits, resupply themselves, and concentrate forces for major attacks, the task is exhausting and uncertain, often depending on a certain amount of luck and very good timing. However, they have been largely successful in inhibiting Kony's command, control, and communications.

Current operations are limited to CAR and South Sudan, though there are both a US military adviser team and UPDF liaison team seconded to the Joint Intelligence and Operations Centre (JIOC), a military intelligence and coordination unit in Dungu facilitated by the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO). The military information operation works in tandem with direct military operations and focuses on attempts to encourage and enable defections under the US Military Information Support Team (MIST) guidance, described later in this paper. Both direct military action and information operations connect to AU, UN, and civil society initiatives through loose human networks.<sup>79</sup> They also tie directly into US State Department diplomacy, spearheaded by dedicated field staff from the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, which is critical to maintaining collaboration at a political level among all the key players.

### C. The UN Regional LRA Strategy

In June 2012, at the request of the UN Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released a UN Regional Strategy on the LRA. In April 2013 the Secretary General submitted an accompanying implementation plan and loose timetable to the Council. The Strategy seeks to coordinate the activities of the alphabet soup of UN actors working in LRA-affected areas around five primary goals designed to mitigate the immediate effects of LRA violence and address long-term governance, human rights, and development challenges.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> These efforts suffer from excessive turbulence in military staff who are rotated through so quickly that they do not have time to develop effective networks. This might be addressed by having a civilian component attached to the JIOC.  
<sup>80</sup> For a more detailed assessment see NGO coalition, "Getting Back on Track: Implementing the UN Regional Strategy

However, the Strategy remains largely a policy document that has little impact on the ground, possibly because it is focused on high level actors rather than being based on a functional analysis of what actors close to the ground need to do to achieve the objectives laid out in the Strategy. It has so far failed to create a sense of urgency or any optimism that might carry over into implementation. This may be in part because the Strategy, in addition to its overly abstract approach, is not grounded on an up-to-date understanding of the LRA and its impact on the region.

Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully analyze the implementation of the UN Regional LRA Strategy, an analysis of MONUSCO's civilian protection efforts in LRA-affected areas of Congo helps to highlight some of the challenges facing the effort. MONUSCO, the UN agency with the greatest capacity and resources in the region to assist in counter-LRA efforts, has deployed a Moroccan battalion (MORBAT) of approximately 1,000 soldiers to Dungu with company operating bases (COBs) in Dungu, Faradje, and Duru and four tactical operating bases (TOBs) along major axes. These positions serve as administrative bases for sub-units tasked to patrol roads, escort convoys, provide limited escort to protect some agricultural activities, and present a military presence that is meant to reassure the population. There is an additional Guatemalan special forces company (approximately 120 strong, known as GUASFOR) that is tasked with limited foot patrolling near villages and population centers and which occasionally deploys on jungle search missions. In addition, UN Military Observers act with some independence within the framework of the MONUSCO military force structure and are supposed to patrol and investigate reports of incidents.<sup>81</sup> MONUSCO also hosts the JIOC in Dungu, which consists of officers from MONUSCO, the US military, the Ugandan military, and the Congolese military.

The MONUSCO forces in northeastern Congo face undeniable capacity constraints that limit their ability to protect civilians comprehensively from the LRA. But instead of seeking to creatively exploit the resources it has, MONUSCO has used its capacity constraints as an excuse to allow its civilian protection strategy to stagnate. MONUSCO military operations are largely lim-

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on the Lord's Resistance Army" December 2012.

<sup>81</sup> UN Military Observers are formally distinct from UN troop contingents. They are mid-level commissioned officers operating under a separate chain of command tasked with monitoring and observation functions. They are not permitted to carry weapons of any kind.



ited to passive measures in that they neither seek nor pursue LRA elements. MONUSCO troops are staunchly resistant to assuming any risk of making contact with the LRA, instead trying to provide a deterrent to LRA attacks by establishing bases in key towns and conducting periodic “show of force” patrols along roads or in areas such as Garamba National Park. However, the LRA, which is highly mobile and based in remote forests, is easily able to exploit gaps in the mission’s predictable civilian protection tactics. Consequently, LRA raiding parties face no threat of being pursued by peacekeepers, even when they attack communities just 1-2 kilometers from MONUSCO bases.<sup>82</sup>

MONUSCO has periodically introduced innovative efforts to improve protection, such as brief deployments of troops to highly vulnerable areas or in the immediate aftermath of attacks on remote communities, but its unspoken “zero risk” policy also renders these initiatives largely ineffective. MONUSCO rapid reaction forces have yet to arrive in time to prevent the escape of any LRA elements and do not, as a matter of policy, chase them. GUASFOR, for instance, has not made contact with the LRA since its disastrous initial contact with the group in 2006, in which eight peacekeepers were killed.<sup>83</sup>

With their civilian protection strategy largely static and little prospect of encountering LRA forces, MONUSCO personnel also have little incentive to consistently gather intelligence about LRA activity in surrounding areas from local community members. Such low-cost, low-risk activities are essential for understanding patterns in LRA activity and designing effective civilian protection and DDR initiatives. In many cases, MONUSCO personnel not only fail to gather information from local sources, they fail to build trust with local communities and adequately explain their actions.

MONUSCO’s difficulty in gathering information about LRA activity has been exacerbated by failures to properly utilize the JIOC, which despite frequent mention in UN and AU public statements, is extremely limited in its capacity to generate useful intelligence. Though the JIOC is staffed with capable analysts, some are not trained intelligence officers and they are rarely or never permitted to leave their base to collect information. In addition, JIOC answers to both MONUSCO Force headquarters in Kinshasa and Ituri Brigade headquar-

ters in Bunia but has no authority to task any other MONUSCO elements for intelligence purposes. This includes the Military Observers, who respond to their own chain of command and depend on armed escorts provided by MORBAT to move outside of protected localities. The JIOC, in its present guise, also cannot plan, conduct operations, or formally respond to the AU RTF headquarters in Yambio.

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82 Author interview, UN staff during a security meeting, Dungen, February 2010.

83 Lewis, David, “Guatemalan blue helmet deaths stir Congo debate,” Reuters-AlertNet, 31 January 2006.

## V. THE FORGOTTEN PILLAR

### *The State of LRA Defection Initiatives*

Efforts to encourage defections from the LRA are nearly as old as the conflict itself, and encouraging defections is widely recognized as a key pillar of the counter-LRA response. In northern Uganda, direct outreach to LRA members, FM radio programs, and the passage of the Amnesty Act allowed thousands of LRA members to defect and helped convince LRA commanders to abandon the region. Since the LRA's dispersal in 2008, MONUSCO, US military advisers, NGOs such as Invisible Children, and local civil society groups have continued to encourage defections, helping thousands of short-term abductees and hundreds of long-term members escape from the LRA.

Even this modest success has not come easily. DDR actors must devise Come Home messages that will convince LRA members to escape and provide them with instructions on how to do so. They must then create effective delivery mechanisms to ensure those messages reach LRA members deep in the bush, as well as expand the geographic range of delivery mechanisms. Equally important, DDR actors must foster networks and infrastructure on the ground to safely receive and repatriate defectors, which requires garnering support from local communities and coordinating across borders.

DDR actors have made strides in all of these areas in recent years, but still stumble on several key challenges. The most basic is inadequate understanding of the LRA's movement patterns, command structure, and psychology, which hampers the effectiveness of targeted Come Home messages. This challenge is exacerbated by the LRA's ease in crossing borders that create bureaucratic coordination challenges for DDR actors, leading to the imposition of artificial boundaries on information flows and defections efforts. Dozens of government bodies, UN peacekeeping missions and agencies, civil society groups, and donors are actively involved in DDR efforts, with most actors' mandates and resources constraints limiting the scope and geographic range of their activities.

In addition, there is a lack of political will to pursue robust defections initiatives, with national governments and the AU largely ignoring such efforts, and donors investing far more resources in efforts to pursue LRA leaders, protect civilians, and deliver humanitarian assistance. This lack of political will translates into un-

der resourced defections programs whose geographic range is far smaller than the actual LRA area of operations. Finally, local communities remain very skeptical of defections campaigns, in part because international DDR actors have failed to adequately consult and collaborate with them and in part because they bear the greatest risk of LRA reprisals.

Following the description of actors engaged in reintegration efforts given in Section III, below is a brief description of the primary actors engaged in efforts to encourage defections from the LRA and an evaluation of the success of those efforts.

#### **A. The United Nations**

*"People all across Haut Uele think that MONUSCO and the DDRRR office are assisting the LRA." Congolese community leader, April 2013*

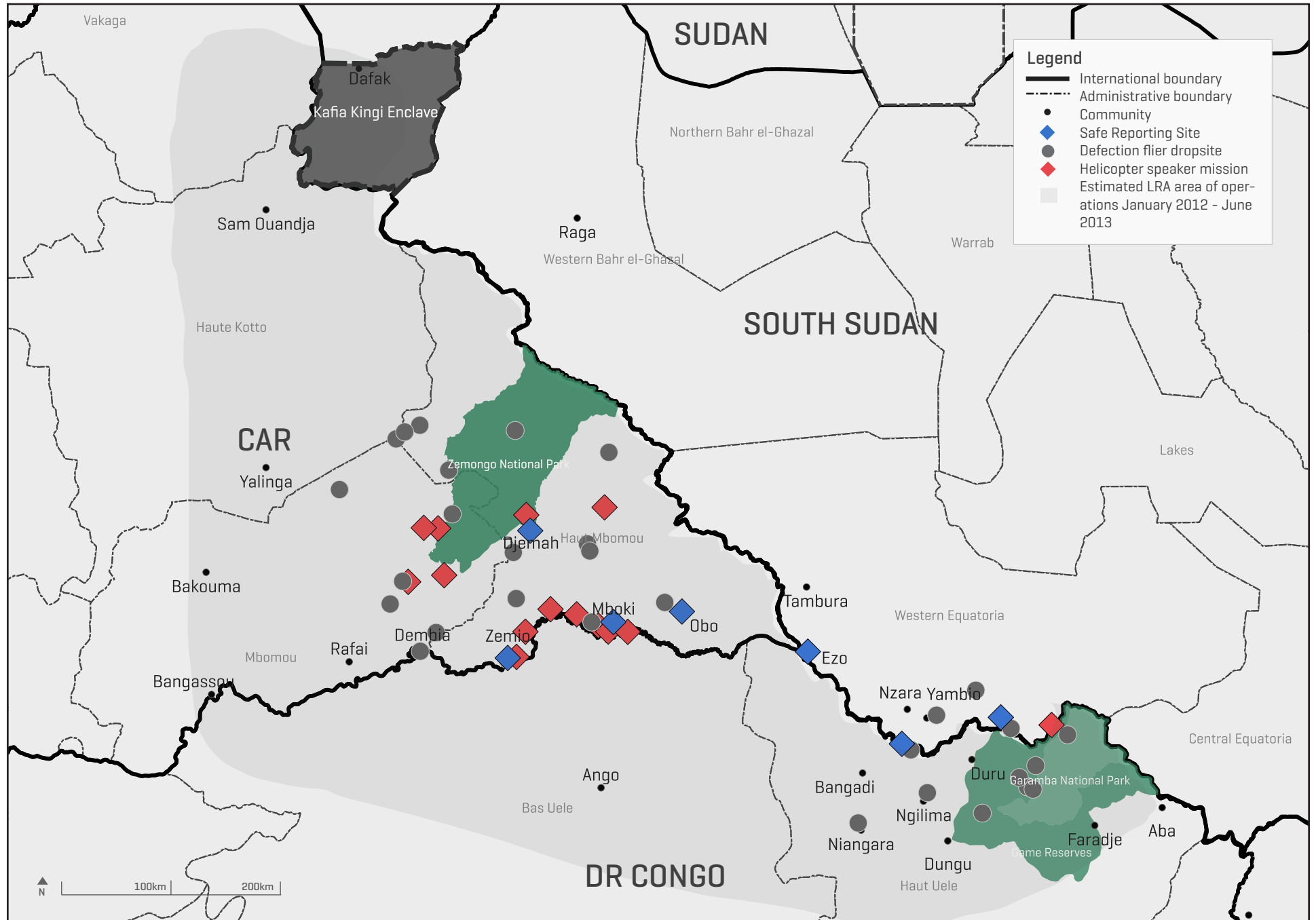
Since the LRA's move to Congo in 2005, MONUSCO's Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRRR) team has done the lion's share of the UN's work to encourage defections from the LRA. It helped facilitate some defections from the LRA in 2007, including senior officers such as Opio Makasi, who fled the LRA after Kony ordered the execution of his second-in-command Vincent Otti. The DDRRR team also played a leading role in developing Come Home messages and delivery mechanisms such as leaflets and FM radio programs following the launch of Operation Lightning Thunder in 2008.

The UN Security Council's renewed attention to the LRA in December 2011 and the subsequent release of the UN Regional LRA Strategy has gradually broadened the scope of the UN's work. In recent years, the UN has particularly sought to expand DDR work in CAR and improve cross-border collaboration, including by creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for LRA DDR. These efforts, though celebrated by the UN bureaucracy, have yet to have significant impact in the field.

##### 1. MONUSCO DDRRR

The DDRRR team continues to play an active role in encouraging LRA defections. They broadcast Come Home radio programs via two permanent radios based in Bangadi and Faradje and operate two addition-

# Map: Come Home message range vs. LRA area of operations



al mobile FM radios. They also provide content and technical support to the UN-funded Radio Okapi and several community FM radios.<sup>84</sup> MONUSCO conducts leaflet airdrops approximately once a month, coordinating with the JIOC on where to drop the leaflets. They also distribute leaflets to FARDC and MONUSCO peacekeepers. Beginning in 2012, the DDRRR team also launched an Assembly Point project designed to establish sites near the towns of Duru, Faradje, and Bangadi where LRA members could safely defect.

However, the DDRRR office in Dungu has recently lost several key staff members and is dependent on an organization that has understandably been distracted by the Kivus crisis. The new team in Dungu includes several professional grade civilians, a few UN volunteers, and a handful of community sensitizers. In addition to their primary office in Dungu, they have staff based in Bangadi and Faradje, but do not have sufficient staff to cover all of MONUSCO's seven COB and TOB deployments in the LRA-affected region.

As a result, the DDRRR team's efforts in the past year have been underresourced, plagued by poor community relations, and stubbornly mediocre. Little evaluation has been done on the success of leaflets and FM radio programs, which have failed to encourage defections from Ugandan members of the LRA operating in Congo. The Assembly Point project failed to spark defections, in part because sites were remote, difficult for LRA members to identify, and were only patrolled by MONUSCO peacekeepers 2-3 times a week. Some major defector incidents, such as the LRA's release of 28 women and children in Bas Uele in March 2013, were ordered by LRA commanders operating in CAR, not necessarily sparked by Congo-based Come Home messaging.

Civil society and community leaders in northeastern Congo, already suspicious of efforts to invite their tormentors in the LRA to defect, are overwhelmingly critical of the DDRRR team's efforts. They see the DDRRR team's work as ineffective, and criticize the team for consulting only with local government officials and prominent civil society members while failing to engage and gain the support of the broader community. This has resulted in a poisonous atmosphere for new defections efforts in many Congolese communities outside of Dungu.<sup>85</sup>

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84 For more on FM radio coverage in LRA-affected areas, see *FM radio coverage vs LRA area of operations* map on page 45.

85 Author interviews with civil society leaders, Dungu, April 2013. See also Voice of Peace, "How DR Congo is missing

In recent months, MONUSCO's DDRRR team has shown some encouraging signs of activity. They have shown interest in retooling the Assembly Point project to mirror more closely the similar Safe Reporting Site (SRS) model spearheaded by US military advisers in CAR and South Sudan, described in detail below. They have also shown interest in supporting community-based reintegration programs in Congo to help incentivize non-Ugandan abductees within the LRA to defect, though no plans have yet been implemented. The DDRRR team has also continued to repatriate non-Congolese defectors, which it has done well, with some exceptions, since 2007.

## 2. UNMISS and BINUCA

As problematic as MONUSCO's efforts to encourage defections have been, they far outpace the efforts of the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN political mission in CAR (BINUCA). The LRA has not committed an attack in South Sudan since 2011, and aside from stationing Rwandan peacekeepers in Western Equatoria State and monitoring the borders, UNMISS is primarily concerned with security threats in other areas of the country. Similarly, UNMISS DDR's national priority is planning DDR programs for domestic armed groups and the SPLA. The UNMISS DDR branch office in Western Equatoria has played a small role in collaborating with MONUSCO to support FM radio projects in Western Equatoria. It has also collaborated with US military advisers and community leaders on establishing SRS locations for LRA defectors in South Sudan, a variation on MONUSCO's Assembly Point project. However, aside from collaborating with more proactive partners, the office has little capacity or eagerness to initiate or take a leading role on LRA DDR projects.

Though a majority of senior LRA commanders have operated in CAR for the past three years, the UN has done very little to encourage the defection of LRA members there. In 2013, under pressure from the UN Security Council, BINUCA appointed two World Bank-funded personnel to assist in DDR efforts in southeast CAR. The two personnel, though competent and experienced on LRA issues, were afforded no resources to implement DDR programs. They were based in Obo, where US advisers and the local community had already spearheaded defections efforts, but were rarely able to travel to other LRA-affected communities in which no opportunities to conduct defections initiatives had even been investigated. They did provide BINUCA

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chances to encourage LRA defections," 13 July 2013.



staff in Bangui with improved field-level analysis of the conflict, and proactively worked with local civil society actors active in local defections efforts, such as the Come Home FM radio programs pioneered by Radio Zereda in Obo. However, no BINUCA staff has been based in Obo since December 2012 due to political unrest in CAR, and future redeployments are uncertain.

## **B. US Military and State Department**

DDR was one of the four pillars of the comprehensive LRA strategy that President Obama released to Congress in November 2010. However, when he announced the deployment of nearly 100 US military advisers to LRA-affected areas in October 2011 – his strategy’s flagship initiative – there was little public mention of these advisers having an active role in promoting defections from the LRA. Instead, the focus was on assisting Ugandan troops to pursue top LRA leaders and improve civilian protection.

Once deployed to their forward operating bases in Nzara, Obo, and Djemah, US advisers quickly found there was a limit to their ability to advise Ugandan troops, in part because of the UPDF’s early reticence to take direction from the US and in part because US advisers initially were unable to travel to the bush where LRA groups and Ugandan tracking teams operated. Though frustrating for the advisers, these dynamics helped shift their focus more toward finding ways to encourage defections from the LRA, a task in which the UPDF only minimally engages. In doing so, they received substantial support and guidance from US military advisers from the Military Information Support Operations (MISO) team based in Uganda, as well as several US State Department field representatives based in Bangui and Kampala.

US defections work has included a range of initiatives. In late 2012, US advisers pioneered the use of loudspeakers mounted on helicopters that fly sorties in the bush broadcasting Come Home messages. Though the speaker missions are a relatively new tactic, several LRA defectors have reported hearing them while in the bush. However, mechanical problems with contracted helicopters, as well as a lengthy approval process to authorize missions, has limited their use and the ability of advisers to react rapidly to reports of LRA movements.

US military advisers and State Department field representatives have also worked with MONUSCO and Invisible Children to design leaflets, which they have distributed via handouts to Mbororo cattle herders and airdrops. The US military has also used Department of

Defense (DOD) rewards money to support community FM radio projects in Mboki and Obo, CAR, as well as Yambio, South Sudan. These stations broadcast community sensitization and Come Home messages, and US advisers have also attempted to expand access to them by distributing hand-crank handheld FM radios. This program is distinct from the US State Department War Crimes Rewards program, announced in March 2013, which offers an award of up to \$5 million for information leading to the arrest, transfer, or detainment of the three senior LRA leaders indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

US advisers have also sought to expand “human intelligence” networks and improve local coordination between DDR actors. US-initiated Combined Operation Fusion Cells (COFCs) hold regular meetings in Nzara and Obo, bringing together military and civilian actors. US advisers have also started a DDR working group in Western Equatoria, and expanded outreach to Mbororo populations in eastern CAR.

Many of these initiatives have been integrated into the US-initiated SRS project launched in CAR and South Sudan with the support of Invisible Children in late 2012. This initiative is similar in principle to MONUSCO’s Assembly Point project, though instead of placing defection points along remote roads, it has sought community buy-in to designate specific towns as Safe Reporting Sites. As of June 2013, SRS locations had been launched in Sakure, Nabanga, and Ezo, South Sudan, as well as Obo, Djemah, Zemio, and Mboki, CAR. The project has required US advisers to conduct intensive outreach with community leaders to attain buy-in to the SRS project, as many communities are justifiably concerned that the projects may be unsuccessful or may result in their communities becoming targets of LRA attacks. In South Sudan, US advisers and community leaders have a particularly difficult challenge in convincing Arrow Boys and rural farmers that have been successful in attacking the LRA to instead facilitate their peaceful defection. In addition, US advisers have faced challenges trying to tell LRA members to find SRS locations. Working with partners, they have designed leaflets that provide rudimentary directions to the locations, and have distributed new leaflets via Mbororo cattle herders and airdrops. They have also worked with community FM radio stations to promote the SRS project.

US-led defections initiatives are likely partly responsible in part for the surge in defections in the latter half of 2012, when 29 long-term members of the LRA defect-

ed.<sup>86</sup> The most direct “proof of concept” was an LRA group, including two Ugandan male fighters, that was given defections leaflets by Mbororo herders they encountered in the bush and then were assisted by community members outside of Mboki in safely reporting to authorities. Since October 2012, Ugandan male combatants also have successfully defected in Obo, Djemah, and Gougbera.

Despite their modest success, US advisers’ LRA defections initiatives face a range of challenges. Their partner military forces, including the UPDF, have shown little initiative to actively participate in implementing leaflet drops, the SRS project, or FM radio broadcasts.<sup>87</sup> UPDF commanders periodically undermine US advisers’ efforts by not providing them with access to recent Ugandan defectors, limiting their ability to gather the insight necessary to create effective Come Home messages and exploit timely opportunities to encourage defections that may be revealed in defector debriefings, though collaboration has reportedly improved in recent months. The AU RTF, which has 30 officers based in Yambio, also provides little support or initiative to defections efforts.

Despite the millions of dollars spent on the US counter-LRA deployment, DOD has afforded the advisers with little discretionary funding for local projects, forcing them to rely on NGO support to provide basic supplies such as printers. Advisers deployed to the field rotate out every six months, meaning teams are not given nearly enough time to understand their operating context, build relationships with local community members, and implement projects. Though new teams try to ensure continuity between deployments, community leaders in Obo and Western Equatoria have been critical of the lack of continuity in some projects. This has been somewhat minimized by the presence of MISO personnel and State Department field representatives, who have had longer deployments. However, US officials should see the frustration Congolese communities have with MONUSCO after years of limited success and poor community relations as a cautionary tale.

This issue speaks to larger questions about the sustainability of US defections initiatives. Already, they have been slowed by the coup in CAR, which helped spark the shutdown of the US base in Djemah and has limited

the advisers’ ability to travel to towns such as Mboki. Also, the Obama Administration has yet to publicly announce whether it will extend the mission for another deployment when the current teams leave in late 2013. Though the US has sought to foster community ownership of the SRS project, it is far from clear whether these initiatives have taken deep enough root to survive if the US advisers and the resources they bring are withdrawn, especially with the AU RTF partner forces largely disengaged from the project. A US withdrawal could also spark Ugandan troops to drawdown, leaving communities in CAR and South Sudan who have agreed to participate in the SRS program with far less protection and at much greater risk of LRA reprisals.

### C. Local civil society and NGOs

*“The general population is not ready to welcome the LRA out of the bush.” – Congolese community leader, April 2013*

After years of brutal attacks, many local community members in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan are fearful of and bitter towards the LRA. Many have heard of cases in which LRA raiders used deception, pretending to enter a town peacefully to defect or use the market, only to launch attacks. Some communities, particularly in Western Equatoria, see local militias that repel the LRA attacks as the most effective way to improve local security. As a result, attaining community support to peacefully accept and even encourage Ugandan members of the LRA to defect – knowing it could result in reprisal attacks – is often difficult. For instance, there is widespread suspicion in Congo and South Sudan that any Come Home FM radio programs broadcast in the Ugandan Acholi language – which Zande community members do not understand – is actually broadcasting directions to the LRA. These sentiments are reinforced by local suspicions that MONUSCO and UNMISS are providing support to the LRA. The lack of UN pursuit of LRA units after attacks increases the local sense of vulnerability and further undermines the credibility of promises of protection.

Consequently, local civil society leaders play a critical role in sensitizing communities to facilitate safe LRA defections and to implement Come Home programs. In CAR, prior to the recent coup, civil society in the LRA-affected region had cooperated in the establishment of SRS locations and efforts to convince LRA members to defect. Some of this activity had been facilitated through the national NGO Jeunesse Unie pour la Protection de l’Environnement et la Développement Communautaire (JUPEDEC), which continues to

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86 LRA Crisis Tracker, statistic calculated 13 July 2013.

87 Until Uganda suspended counter-LRA operations in March 2013, UPDF tracking teams did periodically distribute Come Home leaflets.

function in spite of the coup. Other key players include community FM radio stations in Obo, Radio Zereda, and Mboki.

In South Sudan, Radio Yambio, an affiliate of the national radio network owned by the central government, and Anisa FM, a local Catholic station, play Come Home and community sensitization programs. However, their capacity to do so has been limited by financial constraints and their inability to acquire fresh Come Home program material. Community leaders from the Episcopal Church of Sudan, Catholic Church, and Zande traditional authorities have also played a key role in sensitizing communities via community workshops in Safe Reporting Sites and direct outreach to Arrow Boys.

In Congo, community radio stations such as Radio RTK in Dungu have taken a methodical approach to defections efforts. Understanding local mistrust of Acholi-language programming, Radio RTK operators spent months broadcasting community sensitization programs and explaining the purpose of Come Home programs before actually broadcasting Acholi-language programs. Other community organizations, such as SAIPED and CDJP, have played critical roles in traveling to remote towns to gather community input to defections programs, though their ability to influence MONUSCO's DDRRR team remains limited.

Internationally, the NGO Invisible Children has taken the most proactive role in LRA defections initiatives. Along with groups such as the Voice Project, Invisible Children staff in northern Uganda produce FM radio content intended for the LRA and affected local communities and distribute it to FM stations in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan. Invisible Children has also funded the expansion of FM radio stations in Dungu, Faradje, Banda, Obo, and Mboki. Perhaps most importantly, they have worked with the Uganda Broadcast Corporation (UBC) and Radio Mega, a northern Uganda-based radio station, to broadcast Come Home messages on shortwave bandwidths. Shortwave signals, which travel much further than FM signals, are able to reach a far greater proportion of the LRA's area of operations than the community-based FM stations in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan. They also provide Ugandan LRA commanders, who often listen to UBC, with a direct link to their homeland. In addition to radio-focused efforts, Invisible Children worked closely with community leaders and US advisers on creating and maintaining Safe Reporting Sites in CAR and South Sudan. Invisible Children also develops demobilization leaflets, some of which they airdrop and some

of which they give to MONUSCO and US advisers to distribute.

Other international NGOs that directly or indirectly support defections include Conciliation Resources and IVK Pax Christi, which play a critical role in building capacity and cross-border connections between local civil society groups in LRA-affected areas.



## VI. BRING THEM HOME

### *Towards a Better Strategy for Encouraging Defections*

The task of persuading LRA combatants, and top commanders in particular, to surrender has frustrated local community leaders and international policymakers for years. Initiatives led by religious and political leaders, as well as international DDR experts, have all failed to convince the most hard-core officers within the LRA to give up their struggle. The ICC indictments hanging over the heads of the three top LRA leaders may negate any efforts to convince them to defect. Fear of being harmed by local communities, the lack of reintegration support back home, and confusion over the status of Uganda's Amnesty Act deter many other commanders and combatants who would like to escape from doing so.

However, the LRA today is much weaker than at any time since at least 1994, when its numbers had been severely reduced by UPDF pressure, and recent defections and upheaval in the command structure indicates changing dynamics within the organization. This is an opportune moment for an active strategy to encourage defections which, if properly conducted, could be the safest and most cost-effective path towards a permanent end to the LRA's atrocities, as well as a chance for the hundreds of abductees within the group's ranks to rebuild their lives.

As noted in Section V, there are numerous challenges facing DDR actors. Despite this, there is scope for Come Home information campaigning to counter the years of propaganda put forward by Kony and top commanders to deter defections. Leaving aside the need for military pressure, which is critical to overall success, a fully developed defection strategy should include: 1) an effective "marketing" strategy to sell the idea of defection, 2) provision of defection services including safe surrender procedures, and, 3) improved amnesty policies and reintegration assistance for people who leave the LRA. They should also seek to target specific people in the LRA and address particular concerns fighters have when contemplating defection, such as the practical steps they can take to avoid harm at the hands of local communities.

#### **A. Key considerations for Come Home messages**

Given the difficulty of communicating directly with isolated LRA groups, Come Home messages distributed via radio, leaflets, and other mediums play a critical

role in the defections process. They help convince LRA members to defect and help communicate the practical details of how to do so safely.<sup>88</sup>

#### 1. Emphasize the "how" of defecting

In a typical DDR program, combatants have already agreed to a peace process and are encouraged through the disarmament and demobilization stages of the process by the promise of reintegration assistance. In the case of the LRA, most of the fighters are already convinced that they want to leave but cannot find an easy way to do so because their commanders still want to fight. A successful LRA-focused DDR campaign, at least concerning disarmament and demobilization, should not necessarily be primarily about encouraging defections but rather about facilitating them.

To do so, Come Home messages in all mediums should provide clear instructions describing how LRA members, particularly Ugandan male combatants, can find a safe and easily accessible place to defect and how they should communicate with and act towards community members while escaping. Radio messages can do so by providing clear instructions from trusted sources on where defectors can escape, how to get there, and how to behave towards the community when they arrive. Leaflets can be especially useful in providing practical information, particularly via images and maps.

#### 2. Counter LRA propaganda

It would be a mistake to consider the LRA a passive entity unable to adapt and protect itself. In recent years, the effectiveness of any single strategy to motivate defections has been limited by the capacity of senior LRA commanders to perceive the threat and rapidly counter it. Kony has at various times moved his forces out of reach of radio broadcasts, limited access to radios to his most trusted leaders, and forbidden followers to touch demobilization leaflets. LRA groups have also used brutal atrocities to intentionally alienate the civilian population who might otherwise welcome defectors.

A successful DDR strategy should be flexible enough

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<sup>88</sup> The following points are drawn from interviews with former Ugandan LRA combatants, non-Ugandan LRA escapees, journalists, Ugandan and AU military sources, US military advisers, UN DDR experts, and LRA analysts.



to respond immediately to the counter-measures Kony and his most senior commanders will continue to institute against any defection campaign. The most promising way to deal with LRA counter-measures is to keep ahead of their capacity to respond by developing sequences of varied strategies directed at keeping Kony uncomfortable. Messaging campaigns should aim at appearing random and unpredictable and should be put together as “action strings” – sets of activities and events that follow a sequence designed to disrupt and overwhelm Kony’s capacity to react. Developing such action strings requires timely intelligence collection and analysis as well as imaginative use of communications. Approaches could include:

#### *Appealing to parents within the LRA*

Education is highly valued in northern Uganda, and parents within the LRA hope of educating their children. Come Home campaigns could use this both to encourage LRA members to defect and to encourage LRA combatants to release women and children from the LRA. Specifically, leaflets could include pictures of kids going to school, reading, or playing football. Leaflets could also include photos of new schools constructed in northern Uganda since the LRA left. Similarly, messages broadcast via radio and helicopter speakers could encourage parents to defect, and, if accompanied by programs, promise that their children’s school fees will be paid.

#### *Encouraging homesickness*

Come Home message strategies should also encourage homesickness and add to the sense of the futility of staying with the LRA in the bush. Direct messages from family members and respected community leaders can be effective, but content producers should explore other avenues as well.

More subtle communications strategies that do not have a direct Come Home message can also be effective, such as radio programs in which moderators report on news from northern Uganda, film stars, football matches (including the Cranes, Uganda’s national team; the English Premier League; and the 2014 FIFA World Cup), or cultural figures with whom LRA members would be familiar. Content producers could also attempt to link this cultural milieu into more direct Come Home messaging, perhaps by promising Ugandan combatants who defect tickets to a Uganda Cranes game.

Come Home messages should also seek to draw con-

trasts between the harsh life in the bush and the potential for better quality of life in northern Uganda. Messages could directly or indirectly discuss local food, the ability to stop moving frequently and acquire or claim land, or the possibility of being buried in one’s homeland. For LRA groups operating in Congo, messages could reiterate that combatants are already in close proximity to Uganda. They could also recall the LRA’s last formal, peaceful meetings with Acholi community leaders in nearby Nabanga, South Sudan, as a way to encourage them to defect.

Come Home messages could also promise better health care for LRA defectors, which would appeal to commanders who are sick, injured, or older. If possible, messages should draw upon intelligence gathered from LRA defectors about specific health problems that LRA commanders face.

Communications strategies to encourage homesickness should also be targeted at Zande abductees within the LRA, with Zande leaders taking a leading role in developing culturally appropriate messages. Leaflets and community FM radios are likely the most effective mediums to deliver such messages.

#### *Avoid lying or straying from truth*

Even as Come Home message content producers seek to encourage homesickness within LRA members, they should take great pains to be truthful. Ugandan LRA members are aware of continuing economic and political difficulties in Uganda, and any attempt to over-emphasize the quality of life and opportunities back home will likely be detected and reinforce LRA propaganda that Come Home messages are misleading.

Past examples of leaflets designed by Come Home content producers, while largely accurate, have included some details that could be used by LRA commanders as propaganda. For instance, one leaflet about the death of Binany showed a photo of a casket being buried in northern Uganda, but LRA members likely know that he was buried in the bush.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, content producers should be careful about designing leaflets with photos of escaped LRA commanders posing happily in freedom if they are in fact still in UPDF custody, as is the case with Caesar Achellam. Leaflets with Achellam posing happily will look particularly duplicitous if the Ugandan government decides to prosecute him.

Come Home radio broadcasts should note that the am-

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<sup>89</sup> Author interviews with former LRA combatants, April 2013.

nesty provision has been reinstated to Uganda's Amnesty Act. However, they should be careful to state that civil society activists are still working to ensure that returning combatants consistently receive amnesty, and that the Ugandan government is trying to prosecute Thomas Kwoyelo. As LRA members are likely aware of Kwoyelo's prosecution via radio news programs, any perceived attempt by Come Home programs to hide this fact could diminish their credibility.

#### *Exploit schisms in the LRA command structure*

As discussed in Section II, there has been significant upheaval in the past year within the LRA ranks, including Achellam's defection, the killing of Binany, Kony's execution of several officers, and the transition of power to younger Ugandan officers. This upheaval, combined with the awareness that Kony and senior officers have of the declining will to fight in the ranks, likely makes senior officers suspicious, and even paranoid, of each other.

Come Home messages addressing these dynamics and targeting specific commanders could exploit these tensions in order to weaken the LRA. Unfortunately, the lack of a comprehensive mapping of LRA commanders and combatants limits the ability to properly target messages. Even so, commanders at whom Come Home messages are targeted could be inspired to finally defect, or feel forced to do so by fear that Kony will lose trust in them. Should commanders choose not to defect, Kony may very well react to such messages by choosing to demote, punish, or kill officers, which would also weaken the LRA. Such an outcome, though far less ideal than a peaceful defection, could in turn spark others to defect.

Despite these tensions, many Ugandan commanders and fighters still feel loyalty to Kony, or at the very least fear him. Come Home content producers should be careful to separate the act of escaping from betraying Kony. They should encourage combatants to think of leaving the LRA not necessarily as an affront to Kony, but rather due to changed circumstances.

This method could be particularly effective on commanders and combatants, such as those in Congo, who have had little contact with the LRA leader in recent years. Similarly, Come Home messages could encourage older LRA commanders who have been marginalized within the LRA to consider their defection more of a "retirement" than a full-scale betrayal of Kony and the LRA.

Dominic Ongwen may be one commander who could be effectively targeted by a Come Home campaign. He has had a tumultuous relationship with Kony, who has periodically demoted or placed him under escort. Ongwen was also abducted as a child, which could mitigate any future punishment of him by the ICC.<sup>90</sup> It is possible that an information campaign aimed directly at Ongwen explaining mitigating factors to his case and emphasizing that the ICC does not issue death penalties could persuade him to escape.

David Olanya, Kony's half-brother, may also be susceptible to targeting. He has a reputation for being disorderly and misbehaved, and reportedly drew Kony's ire in 2012 by sleeping with one of his "wives." A messaging campaign could encourage him to defect before he receives any further punishment from Kony. If he defects, it could open up other possibilities for Come Home message action strings, such as those highlighting that even Kony's family members are no longer willing to fight.

### 3. Utilize former LRA members

The effectiveness of Come Home messages depends on the content producer's grasp of the psychology of the target. The LRA's insular and unique nature makes it extremely difficult for outsiders to understand what factors may influence the decision-making of LRA members still in the bush. Consequently, former LRA combatants can provide Come Home content producers with invaluable insight into how to compose and deliver messages, as well as provide specific details about LRA members still in the bush that can be used in communications campaigns targeting specific commanders.

Recent Ugandan defectors should also be directly featured in Come Home campaigns. Ugandan LRA combatants are most receptive to messages from former combatants who come out and talk directly to their friends in the bush on radio programs, and to leaflets with photos of recent defectors.<sup>91</sup> Immediately after Ugandan members of the LRA defect, new radio programs and leaflets should be produced with their voices or photos, as well as other practical and encouraging information, such as where they made contact with local communities, who received them, and what medi-

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<sup>90</sup> For more on Ongwen, see Baines, Erin, "Complicating Victims and Perpetrators in Uganda: On Dominic Ongwen," Justice and Reconciliation Project, 31 July 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Former Ugandan LRA members interviewed for this report expressed this sentiment almost unanimously.

cal care they received. Such messages will undermine Kony's claims that Ugandan authorities kill defectors. Messages recorded by combatants who escaped some time ago should include proof that they were recorded recently.

Come Home content producers should seek to ensure that former Ugandan combatants who participate in communications campaigns are not exploited, particularly as many of them already have trouble sustaining a livelihood. They should consider compensating participants in some fashion, while taking care that participants are not motivated by purely financial considerations. They could also form an "advisory council" of former combatants, which could serve the dual purpose of allowing former combatants to collectively brainstorm Come Home messaging ideas while also giving them a communal, constructive outlet for discussing their experiences within the LRA.<sup>92</sup> Content producers could also test the effectiveness of planned content with such an advisory council.

Similarly, Zande former LRA abductees can contribute meaningfully to Come Home messaging campaigns. In Obo, former abductees have hosted programs broadcast on Radio Zereda in which they use Zande, Sango, and Acholi to urge LRA members to defect. As in northern Uganda, such initiatives can also provide abductees with a positive outlet for traumatic experiences they had while with the LRA.

#### 4. Prioritizing community input

Civil society leaders interviewed for this report in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan expressed the growing weariness of communities in the face of persistent LRA violence and the willingness of the population to participate in any initiative that might help bring the conflict to a close. However, civil society leaders stressed that DDR actors, particularly in Congo and South Sudan, have done an insufficient job of attaining the input and buy-in of local communities into defections campaigns. Often sensitization efforts attain superficial buy-in from the community, but not true ownership. As one Congolese community leader put it: *"Community leaders have given their surface support to the idea, but the broader populations are not supportive."*

Civil society leaders stress that religious and traditional leaders, as well as local authorities, must take a leading role in sensitizing local populations on defections

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<sup>92</sup> As with any forum that brings together former LRA members, great care is needed to prevent the replication of unhealthy power relationships that existed in the bush.

campaigns such as Come Home messaging and SRS projects. They also emphasize the importance of methodical, face-to-face consultations, such as community town hall meetings, in which community members have a chance to vent their concerns, ask questions, and actively participate in the process of designing and implementing new initiatives. Sensitization via FM radio, mobile cinema, and other tools can be useful, but personal interactions with communities remain the most effective.

## **B. Shortwave and FM Radio**

*"We did not think about coming out earlier but only recently because the radio programs have allowed us to know that people who come out are alive, not killed. In the past we were told by others that if you came out you were killed, it made us afraid. But now the radio programs help us understand that it is not true."* Former Ugandan member of the LRA captured by Garamba Park rangers in May 2013

Former LRA combatants confirm that both shortwave and FM radio broadcasts help reaffirm the decision to leave the LRA. At least seven of 25 Ugandan LRA members who defected in 2012 had heard Come Home messages via radio, though it is not clear how much this influenced their decision to defect relative to other factors.<sup>93</sup> The current approach to radio broadcasts is based largely on the experience in northern Uganda, but has been adapted to take into account more recent developments in the operating environment, including changes to LRA composition, different national contexts in the affected states, and the growing difficulties of command and control within the LRA.

### 1. Establishing a target audience

Kony and other commanders listen to a range of shortwave channels, including BBC, RFI, UBC, Radio Miraya, and Voice of America. All senior Ugandan LRA commanders listen attentively to any broadcasts that mention them by name. Many of them will also tune into broadcasts discussing conditions at home in northern Uganda.

In recent years, Kony has restricted access to handheld radio receivers in an attempt to limit the permeation of Come Home messages among LRA members. For this reason, it may make sense to target many Come Home radio broadcasts at senior commanders, as they may be the only ones who will be able to hear them. Such broadcasts are good vehicles to deliver complex

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<sup>93</sup> LRA Crisis Tracker, "2012 Annual Security Brief," 2013.



or nuanced messages targeting specific commanders that could not be conveyed on leaflets.

However, there are renewed indications that despite Kony's orders, many low-ranking fighters and abductees may have periodic access to radio broadcasts. The scattering and reduction in size of LRA groups makes it more difficult for senior commanders to sustain discipline in the ranks, meaning some LRA groups, particularly those with no senior officers present, may no longer abide by the radio ban. This is especially true in Congo, where Kony is a remote figure and command structures have been upended by Binany's death. Even in groups in which commanders maintain restricted radio access, combatants, "wives," and abductees tasked with preparing food and sleeping arrangements for senior officers occasionally overhear broadcasts.

The heterogeneity of LRA groups provides an opportunity for community FM radio stations, which have a limited broadcast range, to play messages targeting specific commanders that operate nearby, or to target lower-ranking LRA members, as well as commanders in areas such as Congo where discipline is weaker.

## 2. Honing the message

Come Home radio broadcasts should include messages that are short, concise, and varied in content. Most of the messages should be crafted with the understanding that the majority of those in the LRA want to come out but are still trying to figure out the final details of their escape. Whatever their content, radio messages should be short and frequently changed.

Whenever possible, messages should be recorded live in an impromptu or loosely scripted manner, allowing the speakers to express their feelings in the most natural way possible.<sup>94</sup> Those in the bush pick up on the most subtle nuances, which they interpret defensively. They are very quick to assume that messages are the result of coercion. Having former combatants talk directly to a person still in the LRA and referring to specific events in the bush is the most effective way to gain the trust of remaining fighters. Similarly, addressing commanders directly by referring to their families, both in the bush and outside, is crucial. It is, however, not a good idea to try to counter Kony's lessons or otherwise speak badly of him and his actions as Kony is still a charismatic leader who has managed to convince

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<sup>94</sup> There is however the risk that such messages might not be heard during the time of broadcast, thus recorded messages and reruns of live broadcasts are also needed.

many followers that he is the single source of truth and is acting in a noble cause. Direct criticism of him may play into his hands.

Former high-ranking LRA commanders, particularly those who left the LRA a long time ago, have little credibility in the eyes of the remaining LRA. Commanders tell their followers that senior commanders who came out a long time ago are either paid spies or are under some form of house arrest and coerced to talk on the radio. Any speaker who is openly affiliated with Ugandan government officials, such as local government councilors, army representatives, or ruling party politicians, runs the risk of delivering counter-productive messages, and should not be used for Come Home programming.

Former combatants interviewed for this report almost unanimously agreed that they felt most convinced when hearing from those who had been their friends in the bush, or other combatants who had been abducted like them, and who knew the situation well. Messages from such speakers undermine Kony's claims that the Ugandan authorities kill defectors.

A very good model speaker would be a male former LRA junior officer. He would ideally have spent between 10-20 years in the LRA and would be well known by other top commanders. If such a speaker were to announce that the LRA propaganda that he had supported in the bush was all lies, his message would be powerfully persuasive to those still in the bush.

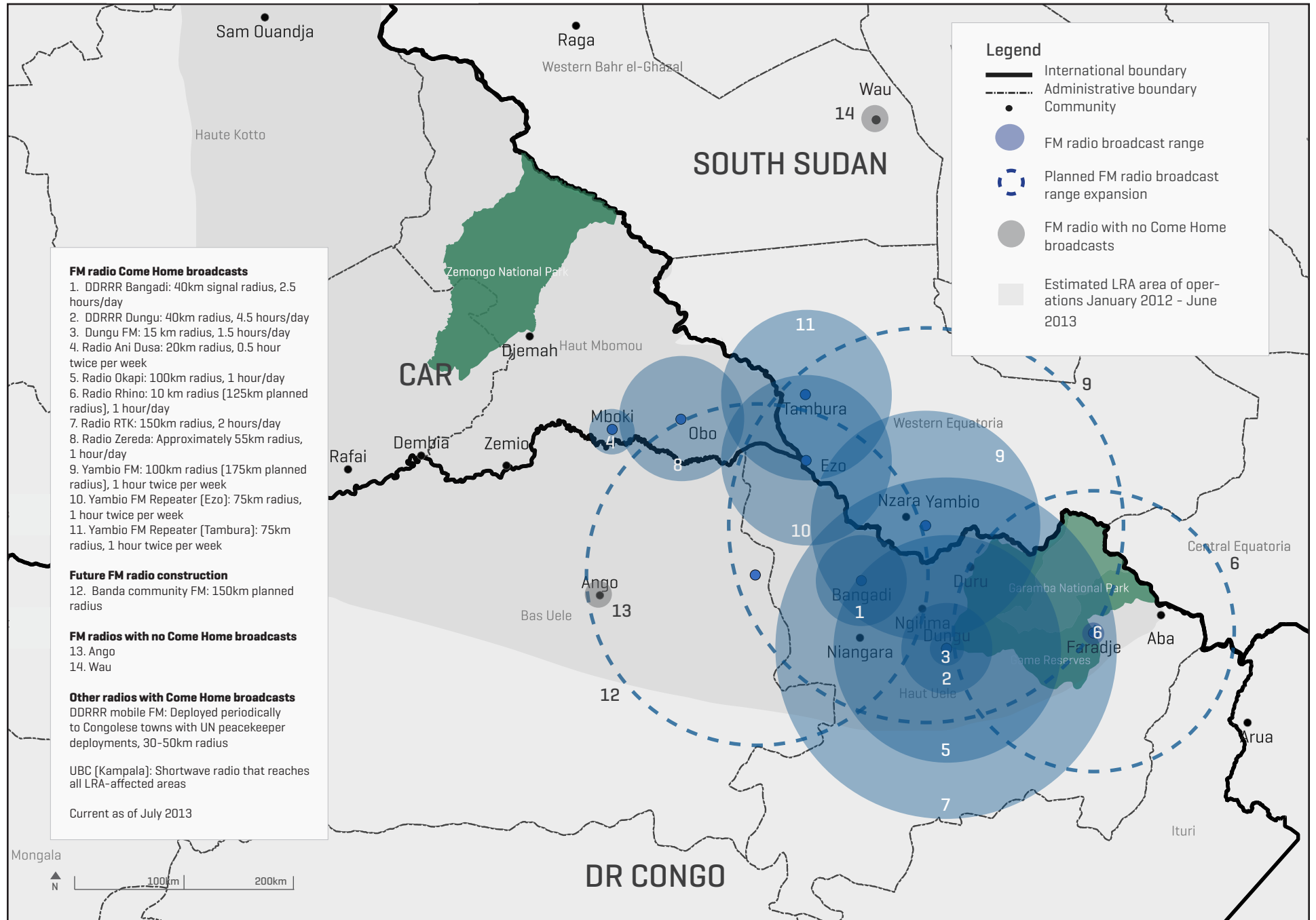
Other suitable speakers include: male former low ranking combatants, women and children formerly in the LRA, and relatives of those still in the bush, particularly mothers, wives, fathers, children, and siblings. Family members can be especially effective for Come Home programs that are more heavily produced and include music and other forms of entertainment.

## 3. Expanding radio broadcast coverage

Donors and civil society groups should urgently invest in expanding FM radio Come Home broadcasts in LRA-affected areas. The map on page 45 compares current broadcast coverage of FM radios playing Come Home messages to the LRA's area of operations. These figures clearly demonstrate that many LRA groups operate outside the range of FM radios and that even in existing areas of coverage, Come Home messages often play for just a few hours a week.



# Map: FM radio Come Home broadcast coverage vs LRA area of operations



### *Expand UN and AU radio coverage*

UN missions throughout the LRA area of operations should be consistently playing Come Home messages. Specifically,

- UNMISS, the AU – UN Mission in Darfur (UN-AMID), and BINUCA should consistently play Come Home messages on their respective national radio stations;<sup>95</sup>
- MONUSCO DDRRR should expand its mobile radio program to all MONUSCO bases in Haut Uele and Bas Uele where they do not already have a permanent radio;
- MONUSCO DDRRR should be provided with the funds and personnel to expand permanent FM stations to bases in Duru and Ango;
- The EU should fund the dispersal of mobile FM radios to be used by AU RTF forces operating in LRA-affected areas, particularly to UPDF tracking teams that have close proximity to LRA groups.

### *Expand community FM radio coverage*

Donors and international NGOs should also seek to construct more community FM radio stations in the LRA's area of operations, and provide capacity building to local community radio associations to broadcast Come Home messages and ensure the radio stations are commercially viable. Target towns for new or expanded community radio FM stations, or capacity building to expand Come Home messaging, include:

- Raga, South Sudan (possibly by building a relay station for the Catholic FM radio station in Wau)
- Bakouma, CAR
- Bangassou, CAR
- Birao, CAR
- Ango, Congo

## **C. Leaflets and other physical items**

Numerous Ugandan and non-Ugandan defectors in the past two years have reported seeing leaflets while in the bush, and some have even escaped carrying leaf-

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<sup>95</sup> Their respective radio stations are: Radio Miraya (UNMISS), Radio Dabanga (UNAMID), and Radio Ndeke Luka (BINUCA).

lets.<sup>96</sup> Though senior LRA commanders forbid combatants and abductees to touch leaflets, many are able to view or pick them up when they are collecting food, water, or are otherwise out from under their commander's watchful eye. Consequently, like billboards along a highway, leaflets are hard to miss and act as constant reminders about the possibility of escape to fighters and to their commanders, who fear defections.

### 1. Technical considerations

A leaflet should be designed with the knowledge that it likely will be hidden on the body or in the personal effects of someone in the LRA. It should therefore be small and easily bendable but not easily destructible, as it must endure the elements.

Within these physical constraints, a leaflet must include practical information in as few words as possible. A typical LRA combatant was abducted at a young age and is possibly illiterate or functionally illiterate (i.e., able to read the words but unable to comprehend sentences), therefore cannot fully evaluate the substance of long text. This underscores the need for leaflets to have as much visual material as possible, including maps, photos, and drawings.

Apart from being unable to read well, many in the LRA might also have difficulty fully grasping notions that might be normal to those living outside of the bush. As LRA commander Alphonse Lamola once told an LRA analyst, "I don't know what peace is, exactly."<sup>97</sup> A leaflet that promises peace, demobilization, reintegration, and so on, might not be fully understood, certainly in the absence of significant text. It is therefore important to portray notions of peace, or rather the absence of strife, in images.

### 2. Honing the leaflet message

Like radio messages, leaflets help LRA members to make the final decision to defect. Interviews with former combatants indicate that LRA members who manage to secretly keep leaflets often show them to friends and discuss them in detail. Photos of former fighters, as well as images of friendship – particularly in a Ugandan context, such as people watching and playing soccer, eating together, and watching movies – can be especially useful in convincing LRA members to finally

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<sup>96</sup> At least 10 Ugandans who escaped the LRA in 2012 reported seeing defection leaflets while in the bush. LRA Crisis Tracker, "2012 Annual Security Brief," 2013.

<sup>97</sup> Author interview with Ugandan political analyst, Kampala, 23 June 2013.

attempt escape.

But given that most LRA members already want to leave the group, leaflets should focus primarily on giving them practical information on how to defect safely. In this they may have some comparative advantage to radio messages, because leaflets can provide LRA members with information that they can keep and review multiple times.

To ensure such messages are understood clearly, Come Home leaflet producers should consult with former combatants. LRA combatants can provide valuable insight into how the LRA interprets the physical and human geography of the region, including by showing which major towns, rivers, landmarks, and campsites are most known within the LRA, and the “LRA names” the group uses to refer to these sites. Also, leaflets should show clearly the location of Safe Reporting Sites or other locations where LRA members can come out with minimal chances of being harmed.

Like the radio broadcasts, leaflets should be varied and changed often to reflect changes in the LRA or to portray those who came out most recently. Whenever a Ugandan member of the LRA escapes, leaflet designers should create new versions in which the escapee is clearly featured. If possible, such new versions should include photos of recent defectors, as well as where they made contact with local communities, who received them, and what medical care they received.

Other leaflet campaigns should send messages to commanders and fighters directly. Localized leaflet distribution can provide a certain degree of assurance to commanders by addressing specific concerns they have about how and where to safely defect, and what will happen to them after they do so. Many of those interviewed for the report said that group commanders often referred to the leaflets, with some asking their group members to fetch the leaflets, while others forbid their collection.

### 3. Expanding leaflet coverage

The map on page 35 shows the location of select leaflet drops in LRA-affected areas from January 2012 to July 2013. Though MONUSCO DDRRR, US military advisers, and Invisible Children have collectively dropped nearly one million leaflets in the past 18 months, there remains an enormous untapped potential to get more leaflets into the hands of more members of the LRA. DDR actors should take the following steps to expand the range, targeting, and saturation of leaflet drops in

the LRA’s area of operations:

#### *Expand the geographic range of leaflet drops*

- The AU should request permission from authorities in Bangui for the US and UPDF to distribute leaflets in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haut Kotto, and Vakaga, targeting areas along the Mbari and Vovodo-Chinko river systems, the Bangassou-Bakouma-Nzako axis, and areas bordering the Kafia Kingi enclave;
- MONUSCO should expand leaflet drops into Bas Uele, focusing along known areas of LRA movement between Ango and Zemio, CAR.

#### *Improve the targeting of leaflet drops*

- Increase the frequency of leaflet drops along river crossings, Mbororo cattle trails, historic LRA campsites, and other known paths of LRA movement so that groups find leaflets as they walk;
- Increase the frequency of leaflet drops onto known LRA campsites in northern Garamba National Park, the Vovodo-Chinko forest, and the Ango-Zemio axis;
- DDR actors should target 20-25 LRA officers with Come Home leaflet strategies over the next six months, specifically tailored to the potential vulnerabilities, experiences, and family ties of each.

#### *Increase the saturation of leaflet drops*

- DDR actors should set a collective goal of dispersing at least 300,000 leaflets per month for the next twelve months;
- The EU should supplement funds currently being provided by Invisible Children to print leaflets in order to expand production.

#### *Moving beyond airdrops of standard leaflets?*

To date, DDR actors have focused primarily on airdrops of leaflets as the medium to deliver physical messages to the LRA. In recent months, however, US military advisers have encouraged Mbororo cattle herders and traders to disperse leaflets along trails and to any LRA members they meet. Such strategies can carry risks to participants, but have shown some promise, including the defection of several Ugandan combatants in Mbo-ki, CAR, in late 2012 following contact with Mbororo herders. DDR actors should expand on efforts to use non-airdrop distributions of leaflets. For instance, they

should work to ensure UPDF tracking teams operating in the bush disperse leaflets consistently during military operations.

In addition, DDR actors should experiment with other physical items to drop beyond standard leaflets. These could include “talking leaflets,” using technology similar to that used in commercial greeting cards. The small, embedded speakers could include instructions in Acholi for how LRA members can safely defect. DDR actors could also experiment with dropping items intended to make Ugandan LRA members nostalgic for home or remind them of the hope of a better life, such as toys, Ugandan shillings, or rosaries. Talking leaflets and other items would be more expensive to produce than standard leaflets, limiting their use, but could be used when the location of targeted groups was known and the chance of reception was higher.

Similarly, DDR actors could experiment with radical breaks in the design of standard leaflets. One option would be to design some less as practical information delivery vehicles, but more to represent abstract ideas that, again, remind LRA members of home or the hope of a better life. Such leaflets could be designed to look like school report cards, or to simply include large photos or drawings of items not available in the bush, such as Acholi food, school materials, medicine, sports equipment, or cultivated fields. Such leaflets, as well as other physical reminders of northern Uganda, could be especially useful if inserted among more standardized leaflets, so that LRA groups coming across an area that has been blanketed would not see simply one design repeated uniformly, but a mix of items that would both remind them of home and provide practical information about how they can get there.

#### **D. Helicopter loudspeakers**

Helicopter loudspeaker Come Home broadcasts, pioneered by US military advisers and the UPDF, began in southeast CAR in late 2012. Mechanical problems with helicopters, delays in speaker procurement, and political instability have limited their use, but the small sample size available indicates that they can be an effective and innovative delivery mechanism for Come Home messages. Several LRA defectors in 2012, including at least four Ugandans, referred to hearing messages from loudspeakers mounted on helicopters flying close to their locations.<sup>98</sup> However, mechanical problems with contracted helicopters, as well as a lengthy approval process to authorize missions, has limited their use and

the ability of advisers to react rapidly to reports of LRA movements.

As of May 2013, there had been no helicopter speaker sorties in Congo. The Congolese government denied permission to the US government, as well as NGOs, to conduct targeted flights in April and May 2013 in response to reports that a large LRA group near Faradje wanted to defect. MONUSCO has expressed interest in using its helicopters for speaker missions, but had yet to do so by May 2013.

#### 1. Opportunities and challenges

Helicopter speaker broadcasts initially confused LRA commanders, who traditionally have enforced an anti-helicopter drill in which all members would scatter and hide at the first sound of an approaching helicopter. This strategy worked well to protect LRA elements from the possibility of observation or gunship attack and also created an excellent listening opportunity when loudspeakers were used. In some cases, the messages could not actually be heard but the dispersion reaction created opportunities for scattered elements to crawl away to eventually defect.

However, LRA commanders have since adapted their reactions and changed their drills, likely aware now that the helicopters with loudspeakers are not attack gunships. One possible way of exploiting this would be to alternate types of helicopters so that LRA elements cannot tell in advance which drills are appropriate.

In general, helicopter speaker broadcasts should follow the same messaging guidelines as FM radios and leaflets. However, helicopter speaker missions have a unique value in providing flexible platforms for DDR actors to respond to new opportunities. For instance, DDR actors should encourage Ugandan combatants who defect from the LRA to participate in “live” helicopter speaker missions soon after they defect.<sup>99</sup> Unlike new radio programs or leaflets, which take days or weeks to produce, such missions could immediately be deployed to target areas where the combatant’s former group is still operating. However, the US must ensure that all available helicopters are in good working condition, and that advisers have the authority to immediately approve speaker missions in response to

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<sup>98</sup> LRA Crisis Tracker, “2012 Annual Security Brief,” 2013.

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<sup>99</sup> DDR actors would have to ensure that LRA combatants had received adequate medical help before conducting such missions, that they did them voluntarily, and that such missions were limited to a few days so that former combatants could still promptly return to Uganda and not be drafted into the UPDF.



information about LRA group movements.

Though helicopter speaker missions might have already achieved diminishing returns, the perception of military pressure the helicopters provide is significant. Since the most important process leading to defections is perceived pressure, usually relating to the fears associated with military action, messages via helicopters seem to provide better results than other methods.

## 2. Expanding helicopter speaker coverage

The map on page 35 shows the location of helicopter speaker sorties in LRA-affected areas as of July 2013. To expand on the use of this innovative tactic:

- US military advisers and the UPDF should immediately restart helicopter broadcasts in Haut Mbomou, CAR;
- The AU should request permission from authorities in Bangui for the US and UPDF to fly helicopter speaker sorties in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haut Kotto, and Vakaga;
- MONUSCO should immediately start flying sorties in Haut Uele and Bas Uele;
- The US ambassador to Congo should work with the UN SRSG for Congo to acquire permission from the Congolese government to conduct helicopter speaker sorties in Haut Uele and Bas Uele, particularly in and near Garamba National Park.

## **E. Safe Reporting Sites (SRS)**

Possibly the most important factor in facilitating successful defections, establishing Safe Reporting Sites constitutes the logical conclusion to the hard work of persuasion in the form of leaflets and radio and helicopter broadcasts. Given that Ugandan LRA defectors fear retribution from local community members, establishing fixed sites throughout the LRA area of operations where all parties agree that defectors will be safely received addresses a key barrier to increasing defections.

### 1. Attaining community input and buy-in

After much dialogue between US military advisers and local community leaders, the towns of Obo, Djemah, Zemio, and Mboki were finalized as Safe Reporting Sites in CAR, while the towns of Sakure, Nabanga, and Ezo in South Sudan were also designated as SRS locations. MONUSCO initiated a similar project in Haut

Uele, Congo, but is currently reevaluating their model, in which sites were placed away from population centers, which failed to attract defectors. Moving forward, MONUSCO should move to establish SRS locations in Haut and Bas Uele, keeping in mind that ideally an LRA escapee should be able to report into any MONUSCO military post.

Experience in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan points to several lessons learned and recommendations for attaining community buy-in and input into SRS projects:

#### *Establish clear guidelines for receiving defectors*

International DDR partners such as the US military, MONUSCO, and Invisible Children should continue to work with local communities to refine the guidelines for receiving defectors. Such guidelines should cover topics such as how community members should behave towards potential LRA defectors, who they should alert when an LRA member defects, and which local authorities will take custody of defectors until they begin the journey home.

#### *Establish sustainable reception committees*

To help ensure such guidelines have support at the local level, communities should form reception committees composed of community and religious leaders and local government officials, with international DDR partners participating as needed. Given the uncertainty about how long US military advisers will be deployed in CAR and South Sudan, such committees could ensure that the SRS project is sustainable beyond their deployment.

To help ensure this, the US should set aside enough funding to support regular meetings of reception committees for at least one year after US military advisers withdraw. It should also ensure that State Department field representatives maintain engagement with reception committees for at least one year following the withdrawal of US military advisers.

#### *Encourage and fund local sensitization efforts*

Community-led sensitization programs in the form of community workshops or town hall meetings, mobile cinema, and radio programs are of primary importance and need to be conducted alongside the establishment of each SRS and reception committee. They can play a critical role in addressing grassroots concerns about the project and ensuring that all community members are aware of the guidelines for safe defections. Donors should provide funding to community groups to con-

duct such outreach.

### *Provide additional incentives to communities*

As soon as a community agrees to become a Safe Reporting Site, it takes on the risk associated with the possibility of LRA reprisal attacks. However, because LRA defection patterns are so unpredictable, it could be months or even years before an LRA member defects there. To help communities see tangible results for their efforts sooner, international DDR partners should provide them with additional incentives, such as funding for community reconciliation and abductee-reintegration projects, or assistance in repairing local infrastructure.

### *Be consistent with community outreach*

US military advisers have been largely successful in securing community support for SRS projects in CAR and South Sudan. But community feedback suggests the need for more consistent outreach to community members, particularly as personal relationships with community members are upended each six months once advisers rotate out. The MONUSCO DDRRR team has an even greater task in repairing its severely damaged reputation with local communities.

LRA DDR actors should draw on the lessons learned from MONUSCO DDRRR's successful work in protecting, screening, repatriating, rehabilitating, and reintegrating former combatants from the Front Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in eastern Congo. There, locally hired community sensitizers are spread out across the region to act as contact persons and conduits for would-be defectors. Over the years, the community sensitizers have developed a number of local innovations that allow them to establish contact with FDLR fighters and to begin the process of negotiating their defections. In the case of the LRA, direct contact with the groups is difficult and dangerous but similar community sensitizers could be used to inform community members on what to do when coming into contact with would-be LRA defectors.

## 2. Keeping civilians safe

History has shown that LRA commanders can exact revenge on communities perceived as hosting escapees, thus making local communities less willing to assist defectors and would-be defectors fearful of encountering local hostility should they escape.<sup>100</sup> The LRA need

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<sup>100</sup> The need to protect committees is paramount as in at least two cases in Uganda and one in Congo, communities

only succeed once in recapturing defectors in the vicinity of an agreed SRS, or in committing a brutal reprisal attack against an SRS community, to discredit the SRS model in the eyes of potential defectors and host communities. This is particularly likely if there is no effective response from military forces.

Given the weak capabilities of military forces in the region and the LRA's stealth in committing attacks, the risk of such reprisals cannot be completely eliminated. MONUSCO's experience with the FDLR suggests that successful sites will soon be monitored by the LRA command structure and that potential defectors will quickly lose trust in them if LRA commanders decide to set ambushes somewhere near one of the sites. Again, experience in eastern Congo suggests that each defection will require some level of risk as well as a little creativity on the part of all those trying to complete a defection.

To mitigate the risk of LRA reprisals, international DDR actors and military forces must improve on civilian protection.

### *Establishing guidelines for local protection*

Before a community decides to become an SRS location, international DDR actors should ensure it is clearly aware of what level of protection local military forces can provide. DDR actors, military forces, and community leaders should also ensure that modalities of behavior from both civilian communities and military installations are assured by clear procedures and constant supervision. Such initiatives require an enormous amount of effort and it is not a given that the various parts that must work together will agree or that channels of communications will operate as they should. The history of cooperation between national military, MONUSCO forces, and local communities is not promising.

### *Deploying rapid reaction forces*

The need for rapid response and pursuit after any attack on a SRS community cannot be overstated. Static guards are likely to be bypassed by the LRA. But the LRA would be deterred by the credible threat of pursuit. In Congo, the strategy currently being developed through DDRRR, with MONUSCO military support, should address some civilian protection concerns. However, it still lacks a credible rapid response mechanism should one of the communities around the SRS

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that had facilitated LRA defections were attacked by LRA commanders angry that their fighters were escaping.

locations be attacked.<sup>101</sup>

In SRS locations in CAR, it has been possible to manage the LRA threat in large part because of the threat of immediate pursuit by UPDF elements should there be an attack. However, US forces may withdraw from CAR as early as late 2013, and Ugandan forces would likely withdraw soon after US forces do. If that happens, they will have left SRS locations in CAR extremely vulnerable to LRA reprisals. They could take some steps to mitigate the risk by encouraging the CAR government or incoming AU peacekeepers to deploy in southeast CAR. But such steps would only slightly mitigate the threat of LRA reprisals, highlighting the risks of a US-Uganda pullout from CAR.

In South Sudan, US and Ugandan troops play a similar deterrent role. Should they pull out however, local Arrow Boy militias will still provide a rapid reaction force, and Rwandan UNMISS troops provide additional reasons for LRA forces to not risk launching major attacks in Western Equatoria.

### 3. Expanding the range of SRS projects

International DDR partners should work with local communities to expand the SRS project into the following communities and locations

- Birao, CAR
- Bangassou, CAR
- Bakouma, CAR
- Ango, Congo
- “Camp Swahili,” Congo (one of the LRA’s old campsites in Garamba National Park during the Juba peace talks)
- Raga, South Sudan (in collaboration with UNMISS)
- Nabanga, South Sudan

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<sup>101</sup> As described in Section IV, MONUSCO’s previous attempt at providing rapid reaction capabilities through its Community Action Network (CAN) collaboration with the local Catholic Church was largely ineffective, with responding forces never once arriving in time to pursue or make contact with LRA raiding parties. The US military is currently vetting the FARDC contingent to the AU RTF with the hopes they will be able to provide them with training in order to protect the SRS location in Faradje.

## **F. Reintegration assistance**

*“The community treats us like we are still LRA. We were treated better in the bush than we are now. Someday I will rejoin the LRA and come back to kill those who have taunted me.”* Zande man held captive by the LRA for over four years, April 2013

More effective reintegration of people who return from the LRA is not only a moral imperative, it is a critical incentive for LRA members to undertake the risk of defecting.

### 1. Fairness and clarity for Ugandans

The first step in reintegrating Ugandan returnees from the LRA is to ensure that they return to Uganda safely. Though the Ugandan military should be allowed to gather intelligence from adult Ugandan defectors immediately after they return, former members should not be forced or intimidated into joining the Ugandan military. They should be granted amnesty and given a mandatory six-month “readjustment period” to undergo medical and psychosocial treatment and get reacquainted with family and community members before being allowed to join the UPDF. This will help ensure that former combatants are able to make an informed choice between civilian and military futures.

The US government, given its support to the UPDF, should play a leading role in advocating for these measures. US advisers in the field should encourage UPDF colleagues to allow Ugandan LRA defectors to return home, and report to higher-ranking US officials when Ugandan troops do not allow defectors to do so. The US embassy in Kampala should also advocate for the UPDF to formally institute the six-month readjustment period before Ugandan LRA combatants can join the UPDF.

US and international partners should also advocate with the Ugandan government to provide more clarity about the criteria it will use to decide which senior LRA commanders are given amnesty and which are deemed ineligible. The prosecution of mid-ranking commanders such as Thomas Kwoyelo and the uncertain fate of Caesar Achellam likely have a chilling effect on mid-to-senior ranking officers within the LRA who may want to defect. Ideally, the Ugandan Department of Public Prosecutions could publicly release a list of top LRA commanders it intends to prosecute which should include no more than 5-10 of the most senior officers within the LRA. Come Home content producers should then communicate these developments to LRA



groups via leaflets and radio and helicopter broadcasts.

## 2. Reintegration for Ugandan returnees

The Ugandan government should also give the Amnesty Commission the resources and political support it needs to promptly provide amnesty certificates for all Ugandans returning from the LRA, as well as provide amnesty certificates to returnees who did not receive one in the past several years. As appropriate, returning combatants should also be given the opportunity to participate in community reconciliation and traditional justice projects, in line with the guidelines being developed in consultation with northern Ugandan communities for a more comprehensive national transitional justice framework.

The Ugandan government should also increase funding for the Amnesty Commission to resume disbursing robust reintegration packages for LRA returnees, or formally request the World Bank or another donor to provide such funding. To encourage the Ugandan government to do this, donors and UN agencies should take up the topic through one of their informal working groups in Kampala.

Finally, donors should increase funding for flexible, civil society-led reintegration aid that aims to ease the transition from LRA membership to civilian life. Most immediately, they should ensure GUSCO and World Vision have the funding necessary to provide short-term medical and psychosocial support to returnees. Donors should also fund longer-term projects that help returnees build sustainable livelihoods, which should benefit both returnees and the communities they are reintegrating into, as well as scholarship programs for returnees who wish to resume interrupted schooling.

## 3. Reintegration for non-Ugandan returnees

Zande returnees from the LRA currently face far less risk of prosecution for crimes committed while with the LRA than their Ugandan counterparts. However, the governments of CAR, Congo, and South Sudan should urgently draft amnesty provisions for those who have been abducted by the LRA into national law. This could be especially important if some Zande combatants rise to become commanders responsible for atrocities, which would necessitate a distinction between low-ranking combatants forced to commit crimes who should be given amnesty and officers who should be held accountable for their crimes.

More importantly, Zande returnees are in need of greater reintegration support. The first step is to reduce

stigma, a task that requires more leadership from religious and traditional leaders, as well as local authorities. They should facilitate reintegration introductions and reconciliation ceremonies between returnees and their home communities, proactively mediate any conflicts between returnees and community members, and go on community FM radio programs to sensitize communities.

There is also a need for large-scale reintegration projects that benefit both the community and returnees. Such projects can be healing for both as communities see positive contributions returnees can make. Reintegration projects should place particular emphasis on helping adults who have escaped, and should accommodate the particular livelihood activities of Zande community members such as farming, hunting, fishing, and petty trade. The focus areas of such initiatives should be informed by a more complete mapping of atrocities and disappearances attributable to the LRA, as well as by where returnees from LRA captivity are currently living.

International donors can play a critical role in funding and providing capacity building to local organizations. However, international donors must take great care to avoid mistakes made in previous reintegration programs seen across the continent, in which huge sums of available funds have been invested in international staff and logistics, or controlled exclusively by international NGOs. Wherever possible, donor funds should directly support locally-driven, locally-led projects that are more attuned and responsive to community needs. They should also avoid the trap of supporting programs only in the handful of major towns such as Dungu, Obo, and Yambio where most international agencies have their local headquarters, and instead seek to ensure that rural areas that were hardest hit by LRA violence are included.

## **G. Expanding into fresh mediums**

Helicopter-mounted loudspeakers provide a good example of how innovative new tactics can spark new defections. All Come Home mediums are subject to counter-measures, but each new innovation stresses LRA control and provides an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of information campaigns, especially when mixed with other mediums.

### 1. Direct negotiations

Initiating direct contact with LRA commanders would require acquiring the number of one of the LRA's few



satellite or mobile phones, cracking into their HF radio network, or sending a messenger directly into a remote LRA camp. The first two options are extremely difficult to do, and the third is difficult and very dangerous. Even if contact is established, any LRA commander would be hostile or at the very least suspicious of any communications from the outside world.

However, given the state of the LRA today and the possibility that some commanders are disillusioned with or physically distant from Kony, there is some hope that direct contact could bear fruit. Potential targets include the so-called exiled commanders (Angola, Abuchingo, Lamola, and Bwone), those in need of medical attention (Odhiambo), or those who are directly threatened by Kony (Olanya and Ongwen).

There is also hope that LRA commanders could initiate contact with outside actors with the intent of defecting. Since December 2008, such cases have been few and far between, with some even perpetrated by con men.<sup>102</sup> However, there have been a number of cases in the recent past in which groups of would-be defectors have tried to communicate their desire to come out in writing, sending verbal messages with abductees they release, or even waving flags by the side of the road.

These cases, which have occurred almost exclusively in Congo's Haut Uele district, seldom lead to successful defections because of the difficulty of establishing trust. In 2013, DDR actors attempted to react to reports of an LRA group wanting to defect by bringing in a Ugandan who hosted Come Home radio programs. However, this initiative did not succeed in part because of difficulties in establishing some form of direct communication that would be needed to work out the next steps in arranging safe defections.

One way of facilitating direct contact between LRA groups and DDR actors is to use preset call times. If defectors are trying to report in areas that fall within range of cell phone service, DDR actors could distribute mobile phones to the LRA either via airdrops or, if contact through the local community is viable, one of these phones could be sent out with an agreed contact time or pre-set numbers to call that connect to an Acholi speaker. Such an initiative could be supplemented by Come Home messages that give LRA members phone numbers to call should they want to arrange a defection.

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<sup>102</sup> For instance, news agencies falsely reported the surrender of Okot Odhiambio in 2009. Xan, Rice, "Uganda deputy rebel leader defects," *The Guardian* 29 January 2009.

## 2. Information rewards programs

The LRA's isolation provides a steep challenge to the US State Department's War Crimes Rewards program seeking the arrest of Kony, Odhiambo, and Ongwen. The only people with information about their whereabouts are within the LRA, so LRA defectors have the greatest chance of providing the correct information. The US should expand its information campaign to explain the program to LRA members, via leaflets and radio broadcasts, but it is best to do so outside of the Come Home framework in order to avoid contradictory messages. Even if the defectors are not able to provide information that leads to the arrest of the LRA commanders, messages related to the War Crimes Rewards program could reinforce schisms within the command structure that lead high-ranking officers to defect.

It is possible that non-LRA members, such as hunters, poachers, or traders could have information about the whereabouts of the top three LRA commanders. This is especially true in northeastern CAR and Kafia Kingi. The US should seek to sensitize such populations via radio broadcasts, including via stations listened to in northeastern CAR and Kafia Kingi, or direct outreach with community members by US military advisers. However, as with similar rewards programs for suspected Rwandan génocidaires, some people do not believe that \$5 million is actually available, or cannot visualize having that much money. In addition, the program could encourage people in northern Uganda who might still have contact with the LRA to come forward with information, though there is little evidence that such direct contact still exists.

In addition to these initiatives, US military advisers should continue to use the less-publicized DOD rewards program as a tool to encourage community involvement in defections initiatives.

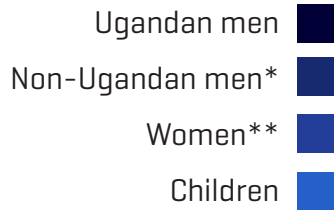
## VII. CONCLUSION

While it is tempting to focus on all that is wrong with the current counter-LRA effort, it is vital that all engaged agencies continue their work and collaborate to overcome remaining obstacles. The research conducted for this paper indicates that the LRA is losing cohesion and facing command and control problems that are a direct result of the pressure that has built up over the past few years. This pressure is the product of aggressive UPDF and US military action astride the main lines of communication between LRA command headquarters and dispersed units in southern CAR and northern Congo, the increased presence of AU and UN military installations in Congo and South Sudan, the aggressive defensive activities of the Arrow Boys in South Sudan, and the relentless defection campaigns conducted by US personnel, MONUSCO DDRRR, local civil society leaders, and international NGOs such as Invisible Children. Just the number of helicopter broadcasting messages addressed to the LRA adds to the pressure that is building.

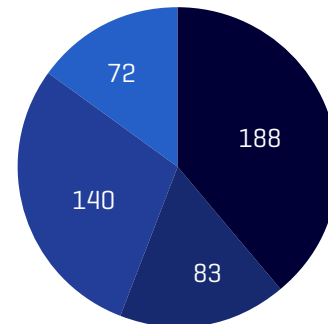
Though the AU RTF remains an unmet promise and the FARDC, supported by MONUSCO, continue to maintain a defensive posture that fails to deliver effective protection to civilian communities, their presence acts as a potential risk to the LRA that they struggle to manage. While it is unlikely that dramatic improvements to military effectiveness can be achieved without investing significant diplomatic and financial capital, it is possible that a modest investment in improving the defection campaign will push the LRA to the point of despair – and possibly collapse.

## ANNEX I. ESTIMATED LRA COMPOSITION

### Estimated LRA composition, April 2013

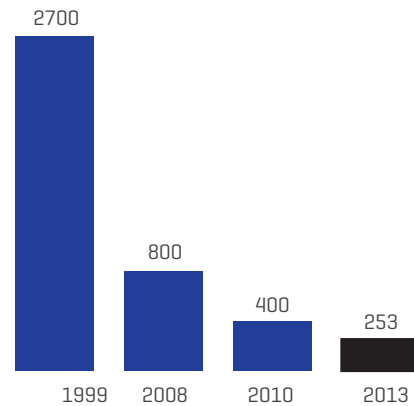


\*Primarily Zande abductees from CAR, Congo, and South Sudan  
 \*\* Including approximately 40-60 Ugandan women

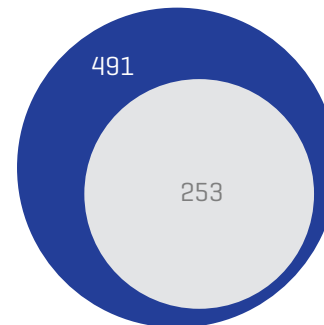
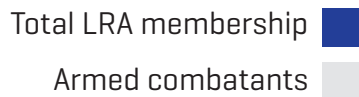


### Estimated LRA combatant capacity, 1999-2013\*

\* A significant majority of LRA combatants are Ugandan males, but some Ugandan women and abductees from CAR, Congo, and South Sudan also serve as combatants



### Estimated number of armed LRA combatants vs total membership, April 2013



Note: These graphs represent estimates of membership within the LRA. At least 59 reported adult males could have been counted twice in the groups under the "LRA groups with unidentified status or location" section in Annex II. Some groups, however, might not have been mentioned at all due to lack of information from former combatants.

Estimates are derived from: Author interviews with former LRA combatants, Gulu and Kampala, 2011-2013. Cakaj, Ledio, "The Lord's Resistance Army of Today," Enough Project, November 2010. Lancaster, Philip, Guillaume Lacaille, and Ledio Cakaj, "Diagnostic Study of the Lord's Resistance Army," International Working Group on the LRA, World Bank, June 2011.

## ANNEX II. APPROXIMATE LRA GROUP LOCATIONS

Note: Groups are listed underneath their primary commander. Group locations are based on their reported presence as of April 2013, unless otherwise noted. To see the location of these groups on a map, see page 12.

### A. LRA groups in Congo

Note: Vincent “Binany” Okumu was reportedly the senior LRA commander in Congo until his death in January 2013. Since then, Major Thomas Odano has reportedly inherited Binany’s group and his status as senior LRA commander in Congo.

#### Major Thomas Okello “Odano”

Area of operations: Congo, Haut Uele district, including Garamba National Park and near the towns of Bangadi and Doruma

Odano seems to have inherited Binany’s group, after the latter’s reported death in CAR in January 2013. According to recent reports, Odano has 30 armed men in his group, mostly Ugandans, and 20 women and children. Odano’s group, which splits into smaller units, operates out of northwest Garamba Park.

#### Major Denis Obol “the one-eyed”

Area of Operations: Congo, near Bangadi

Obol used to operate under Binany in Congo but likely moved to CAR in 2011 where he took over a large group from Okello Okutti. Okutti split his group into two and left with two escorts at the end of 2011 to look for Kony. Obol’s group, now operating in Congo, has 28 armed men, 18 women, and ten children.

#### Second Lieutenant Okello Ray

Area of operations: Congo, Haut Uele district, including northern section of Garamba National Park near Nabanga, South Sudan

There are approximately 14 people remaining in Okello Ray’s group, including three armed Ugandan men, eight women, and three children.

### B. LRA groups in CAR

Note: Olanya David, Kony’s half-brother, was formerly commander of LRA groups in CAR. Jon Bosco Kibwola has reportedly replaced Olanya, who was demoted for impregnating one of Kony’s wives.

#### Major Michael Odooki “Gwee”

Area of operations: CAR, Haut Mbomou prefecture, north of Zemio

Odooki commands another satellite group of Odhiambo’s, which includes 24 people. There are 11 armed men, nine Ugandans and two from CAR. There are also ten women and two children. David Olanya, Kony’s half-brother, is reportedly part of this group. He is unarmed and without escorts.

#### Jon Bosco Kibwola

Area of operations: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, north of intersection of Vovodo and Chinko river

Kibwola’s group includes at least eight armed men. His group includes Dominic Ongwen and Okot Odek, as well as Santo Acheta, who is one of the oldest fighters remaining in the LRA. It is unclear what this group intends to do, though there are indications that it may have tried to connect with Odhiambo and move to Kafria Kingi during the 2013 rainy season in June or July.

#### Second Lieutenant Richard

Area of operations: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, west of Rafai, near Agoumar

Richard’s group has 26 people, including six armed Ugandan men and four unarmed men. Three of these unarmed men – Colonels Lamola, Bwone, and Abucingu – are former LRA senior officers treated as prisoners. Richard’s group also includes ten women and six children.

#### Major Massimiliano Watmon

Area of Operations: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, northwest of the Chinko River, far north of Dembia

Watmon’s group has between 46-50 people, including about 14 armed men, all Ugandans. It also includes 12 unarmed abductees from Congo and CAR, 20 women from Uganda, Congo, CAR, and South Sudan, and between eight and 12 children.



### **C. LRA groups in CAR and Kafia Kingi directly associated with Kony**

#### Second Lieutenant Oloo

Area of operations: Likely on the border between CAR and Kafia Kingi

Oloo, once a bodyguard to Kony, commands one of his splinter groups. He travelled to Boro Medina, South Sudan, in September 2010 with Kony, but returned to CAR after losing contact with Kony following a clash with South Sudanese and Ugandan soldiers. There are 15 people in this group, nine armed men, three women, and three children

#### Second Lieutenant Okwera

Area of operations: CAR, Haut Mbomou prefecture

Okwera commands another splinter of Kony's main group. It includes 24 people in total, nine armed men (eight Ugandans and a South Sudanese), as well as nine women and six children.

#### Captain Bosco Oroko Loriada

Area of operations: CAR, Haut Mbomou Prefecture, northeast of Obo

Loriada also commands one of Kony's satellite groups. It includes 24 people, including 17 adults, seven of which are armed men, and seven children. The group also includes three of Kony's wives and three small children he fathered.

#### Otto Ladeere

Area of operations: CAR, Vakaga or Haut Kotto prefecture, near the border with Kafia Kingi

Ladeere commands Kony's last splinter group. 17 people are in this group: eight armed men including two Congolese and one from CAR, one unarmed young person from CAR, and eight women and children.

#### Joseph Kony

Area of operations: Likely in Kafia Kingi, possibly in Vakaga or Haut Kotto prefectures in northeastern CAR

Accounts of Kony's group vary, particularly as he often changes the commanders, group composition, and number of people he personally moves with. While his group splits into smaller units to avoid detection and increase mobility, by October 2012 the collective group had 220 people in total, including 56 armed men. But as

of May 2013 Kony had four satellite groups not including his main unit, which had about 60 people including 38 armed men, 12 women, and eight children. Acaye Doctor is one of the military leaders in Kony's group.

### **D. LRA groups with unidentified status or location**

#### Captain Otim Larwedo

Area of operations: CAR, vicinity of Odhiambo's group

Larwedo's group is one of Odhiambo's satellite groups. It has 28 people, including ten armed men, of which seven are Ugandans and three are from CAR. There are also 13 women and five children.

#### Major Kidega Murefu "Min Tigi Tigi"

Area of Operations: Possibly in Vakaga or Haut Kotto prefectures in CAR, or in Kafia Kingi

It is possible that Murefu's group is one of the groups already counted under Kony's collective group. It had 31 armed men, including senior commander Nixman "Opuk" Oryang (whom the UPDF declared dead in 2009) and Achellam Smart "Ojara."

#### Okot Odhiambo

Area of operations: Likely in CAR, possibly in Mbomou prefecture near the Congo border, or possibly across the border in Congo

There are 32 people in Odhiambo's group, 13 armed men and approximately 19 women and children. Other commanders in this group including Major "Doctor" Saidi and Major Owila "Marisako."

#### Major Okot Luwila

Area of Operations: Likely CAR or Congo

Luwila's group escorted Binany from Congo to CAR on the way to Kafia Kingi in 2012. It was composed of fighters from Binany's group in Congo as well as those from Otto Agweng's unit who went to fetch Binany. In October 2012 this group had 30 people, all armed men. Binany was killed in January 2013, while a "wife" to Agweng claimed he was also killed recently. If so, and if this group is still intact, it would have 28 armed men under Agweng's deputy, Major Luwila.

## ANNEX III. PROFILES OF SELECT UGANDAN LRA COMMANDERS

This Annex contains profiles of select Ugandan LRA commanders, including their reported location as of April 2013, unless otherwise noted. Bios are absent for senior commanders about whom there is little or no available information, including some group commanders listed in Annex II. Bios are also absent for prominent LRA commanders reportedly killed in recent years, such as Otto Agweng and Otim Ferry.

Though military ranks within the LRA are intended to demonstrate the existence of an institutional hierarchy, in practice Joseph Kony has absolute authority to approve or change ranks at will. Throughout the LRA's history, he has often changed command assignments personally, ignored conventional military command structures, and given direct orders to individual commanders of all ranks. He has also ensured that an officer's rank does not necessarily correlate with the level of responsibility he has, the number of commanders he leads, or his years of experience within the LRA.

This dynamic reinforces Kony's role as the undisputed center of the LRA's universe by ensuring that every commander's position depends on Kony's decisions and not on any coherent institutional logic that could function without him. It also creates intense competition among commanders, as Kony also uses the practice of awarding rank to determine access to food rations, servants, and even women.

### A. LRA commanders in Congo

#### Denis Obol

Other names: Lawang Acel (One Eyed)

Rank: Major

Age/DOB: 36 or 37

Origin/place of birth: Pajule, Pader district

Location as of April 2013: Congo, near Bangadi

Obol was abducted in 1992 from Pajule and was initially an escort to Abudema Bok. After the LRA moved to South Sudan, Obol was trained in artillery support and became a lieutenant in 1996 after he lost his eye in battle with South Sudanese rebels. After the Ugandan military launched Operation Iron Fist in 2002, Obol moved with top commander Raska Lukwiya's group. After Ugandan soldiers shot Lukwiya, Obol joined Dominic Ongwen's group. He moved with Ongwen to Congo from Uganda, one of the last LRA groups to do so. He remained a support commander with Ongwen in Garamba, and also stayed with Achellam Smart

"Ojara." After Otti's death in 2007, he was a commander in Central Brigade, initially under Okot Odek and then Binany. Obol stayed under Binany's leadership at least until 2011 when he moved to CAR and took over Okello Okutti's group. By 2013, he was reportedly operating in Congo, near the town of Bangadi in Haut Uele district.

### B. LRA commanders in CAR

#### Alphonse Lamola

Other names: NA

Rank: Colonel

Age/DOB: Early 40s

Origin/place of birth: Omeri, Gulu district

Location as of April 2013: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, along Chinko river north of the intersection of Chinko and Vovodo rivers

Abducted at some point in the mid-1990s, Lamola was a lieutenant within the LRA by 1999. He served in the LRA's Meno Battalion in South Sudan under the command of Owor Lakati before moving to Safo battalion under Raska Lukwiya.

A bodyguard to Kony for a long time, Lamola rose to become Kony's chief bodyguard when he moved to Garamba National Park in the spring of 2006. Later that year, he was placed in charge of the High Protection Unit (HPU), the main security group overseeing all units tasked with protecting Kony and his families, but was later replaced by Otto Agweng. Lamola was then given the leadership of a small unit, one of three composing the external wing of HPU, tasked with protecting Kony's camp. Lamola was often selected to move with Kony to Nabanga and establish a security perimeter ahead of Kony's arrival.

#### Dominic Ongwen

Rank: Brigadier

Age/DOB: 1980

Origin/place of birth: Paibona, Gulu district

Location as of April 2013: In Kibwola's group in CAR, Mbomou prefecture, north of intersection of Vovodo and Chinko rivers

After his abduction in 1990, Ongwen was placed in the "household" of Vincent Otti, a senior LRA commander. Ongwen grew close to Otti, who eventually rose to be Kony's chief deputy before Kony ordered his execu-

tion in October 2007. LRA defectors report that Ongwen was the only commander who pleaded with Kony to spare Otti's life, a move that weakened his influence within the LRA. However, Kony spared Ongwen from the subsequent purge of Otti loyalists due to Ongwen's value to the LRA, particularly his ability to lead troops on daring missions. Ongwen proved his worth soon after, leading a raid on a South Sudanese military garrison in Nabanga in June 2008 in which LRA forces killed 14 soldiers. In 2005, the International Criminal Court indicted Ongwen on seven counts, including enslavement, making him the first person to be charged by the court for committing the same crime committed against him.

Ongwen is known as much for his volatile nature as his bravery, and some former LRA fighters testify he has risked Kony's wrath several times. Not only did he openly oppose Otti's execution, Ongwen also publicly stated during the Juba negotiations that he would kill Kony if the LRA leader failed to secure favorable provisions for his commanders and fighters at the negotiation table. Ongwen reportedly also refused to join other senior LRA commanders in CAR for most of 2009 and 2010 despite being frequently ordered to do so by Kony.

Though Kony has spared Ongwen's life, he has taken action to punish Ongwen. In 2009, Kony received reports that Ongwen was communicating with Ugandan officials with the intention of surrendering alongside his 60 fighters. Kony sent a large force of loyal troops to intercept Ongwen's group, which at that time operated alongside the Duru River in Congo, while frequently crossing into southern Sudan to raid civilians there. They split up Ongwen's group and replaced key members with fighters from Kony's loyalist Central Brigade. Kony reportedly also demoted Ongwen and gave Lt. Col. Binany command of LRA forces in Congo, though Ongwen remained an influential commander.

Despite all the reported insubordination – which would have likely resulted in execution for any other commander – Kony persisted in trying to convince Ongwen to join him in CAR. By the summer of 2011, Ongwen's force had reportedly dwindled to half a dozen fighters, and he then joined Kony and Odhiambo in CAR. Recent reports state that Ongwen was injured and had difficulty walking and that Kony gave Major Jon Bosco Kibwola many of Ongwen's command responsibilities. Ugandan military forces reported attacking Ongwen's group southwest of the CAR town of Djemah in August and September 2012. In early 2013

there were indications that Ongwen was again rising in stature within the LRA, but as of April 2013, Ongwen was in Kibwola's group, operating under his command in CAR's Mbomou prefecture.

### Francis Abuchingu

Other names: Lutwala, Abuchingo, Abucingiro, Abuchiu

Rank: Colonel, possibly without rank by 2013

Age/DOB: Mid to late 50s (one of the oldest remaining LRA commanders)

Origin/place of birth: Alero, Nwoya district

Location as of April 2013: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, along Chinko river north of the intersection of Chinko and Vovodo rivers

Abuchingu is one of the very few remaining commanders who has been with Kony since the founding days of the LRA. Abuchingu was reportedly part of the Ugandan People's Democratic Army (UPDA), the rebel group composed of former soldiers from the Ugandan army deposed by Museveni in 1986. Abuchingu was part of the group of UPDA fighters who joined Kony under the leadership of Odong Latek in 1987. He was also part of the spiritual wing of the LRA for many years.

### Jon Bosco Kibwola

Other names: JB

Rank: Colonel

Age/DOB: 38

Origin/place of birth: Lamogi, Amuru district

Location as of April 2013: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, north of intersection of Vovodo and Chinko rivers

Kibwola was abducted in 1992 when he was about 17. He became the commanding officer of the third battalion in Gilva Brigade in the late 1990s. He was initially under brigade commanders Jon Odur and Okello Director, who were both shot by the Ugandan military, and eventually Ochan Bunia (who reportedly died in 2010 in Congo of HIV). Kibwola assumed various positions while in Gilva Brigade and reportedly was promoted to lieutenant colonel when his group made it to Garamba National Park.

In Garamba, Kibwola was initially in charge of the first battalion of Hondo Brigade and when the brigade was dissolved he was assigned leadership of the so-called First Brigade. There were only about 30 armed fighters under his command and many more women and children. In the aftermath of Otti's death at the end of 2007, Kibwola became Deputy Director of Operations,



initially under Otto Agweng and eventually under Michael Otika. It is unclear if Otika's reported death recently means that Kibwola is now Director of Operations. There are reports that Kibwola has become effectively the leader of all CAR based groups replacing Kony's half-brother David Olanya who was demoted after reports he impregnated one of Kony's wives.

In September 2009 Kibwola was part of the group that made it to Dafak in Kafia Kingi. He was one of the fighters taken by the SAF and kept for a week in their barracks, the other being a young fighter called Oryem Komakech. Both Kibwola and Oryem were returned to the group a week after they were "arrested" by the SAF, having reportedly been taken to a larger SAF base by helicopter for interrogation. It is unclear if Kibwola has maintained relationships with SAF sources since 2009.

#### Leonard Bwone

Other names: Lubwa, Lubwar

Rank: Colonel

Age/DOB: Mid to late 40s

Origin/place of birth: Unidentified

Location as of April 2013: CAR, Mbomou prefecture, along Chinko river north of the intersection of Chinko and Vovodo rivers

A long-time member of the LRA, Bwone was in the past tasked with logistics and finances. In October 2009 he was part of the group sent to Kafia Kingi to establish contact with the SAF. Together with Agweng, he led the group and composed in English all the correspondence to SAF elements. He was also present during meetings with the SAF together with Okello Mission (now in Gulu) and Otto Agweng (possibly killed). As of March 2013, Bwone, together with Abuchingo and Lamola, was part of the exile group led by a young 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Richard.

#### Michael Odooki

(pronounced ODORRE)

Other names: Gwee ("kick")

Rank: Major

Age/DOB: Early 40s

Origin/place of birth: Unidentified

Location as of April 2013: CAR

An Odhiambo loyalist, Odooki seems also to have Kony's full trust. He has been in charge of one group that operates under Odhiambo in CAR for more than three years. One of his three wives is Christine Aling (Alinga), the only remaining female officer holding the

rank of captain. After giving birth to two children, Aling does not carry a gun or fight any longer but former combatants describe her as a tough and able commander

#### Okumu Santo Acheta

(pronounced ACHERRA)

Other names: Mango Dingodi

Rank: Captain

Age/DOB: Early to mid-50s

Origin/place of birth: Anaka, Gulu district

Location as of April 2013: Possibly in a group led by Kibwola in CAR

Acheta was abducted in the late 1990s from his birthplace of Anaka where he worked at the local hospital as a nurse. One of the oldest people in the LRA, Acheta was in charge of the Sick Bay in Garamba National Park during the Juba peace talks. He later moved to CAR where he joined a group led by Odhiambo, then Olanya, and most recently Kibwola. He has reportedly also served as a personal doctor to Kony in the past.

#### Olanya David

Other names: NA

Rank: Major, possibly without rank in 2013

Age/DOB: Late 30s

Origin/place of birth: Odek, Pader district

Location as of April 2013: CAR, north of Chinko, in Odooki's group

David Olanya is Kony's half-brother, from his father's side. Olanya joined the LRA during the Juba talks at Kony's request. He stayed in the bush after Operation Lightning Thunder started and moved with Kony to CAR. Kony promoted him quickly and eventually placed him in charge of all LRA groups in CAR, having him reporting directly to Okot Odhiambo who was still considered Army Commander, thus effectively becoming the third-ranking commander in the LRA. But in April 2012, one of Kony's wives who moved in Olanya's group gave birth even though she had not seen Kony for over a year. It transpired that Olanya was the father of the child, and the matter was reported to Odhiambo. He replaced Olanya with Kibwola and demoted and disarmed the former. Olanya is now reportedly under arrest, moving in the group of Major Odooki. It is unclear what fate awaits Olanya, particularly when he meets Kony, who by the end of 2012 had not yet been able to see his half-brother.



### **C. LRA commanders in CAR and Kafia Kingi directly associated with Kony**

#### Joseph Kony

Rank: General

Age/DOB: Circa 1961

Origin/place of birth: Odek, Pader district

Location as of May 2013: Likely in Kafia Kingi, possibly in northeastern CAR

Joseph Kony is the founder and leader of the LRA. He is the Chairman of the Lord's Resistance Movement. The International Criminal Court indicted Kony on 33 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in 2005. Kony was based in Congo's Garamba National Park for a majority of the Juba peace talks from 2006-2008, and fled to CAR in 2009 following the launch of Operation Lightning Thunder. Since then, he has operated primarily in eastern and northeastern CAR as well as in the neighboring Kafia Kingi enclave. He reportedly fled his camp near Dafak in Kafia Kingi in early 2013, possibly returning to nearby northeastern CAR, but by May 2013 had likely returned to the enclave.

#### Kidega Murefu

Other names: Min Tigi Tigi ("flicker")

Rank: Major

Age/DOB: Mid to late 30s

Origin/place of birth: Pajule, Pader district

Location as of April 2013: CAR, possibly in Haut Kotto prefecture

A former bodyguard to Kony and his personal envoy to Nabanga and Rikwangba during the Juba peace talks, Murefu is possibly the most photographed LRA fighter to date. He appears to have taken over command of Kony's group, possibly replacing Michael Otika, Kony's former chief security officer, who was killed in 2010. Murefu is considered to be an influential commander now that he moves exclusively with Kony and is his escort.

#### Otto Ladeere

Other names: NA

Rank: Major

Age/DOB: Mid 30s

Origin/place of birth: Pajule, Pader district

Location as of April 2013: CAR, Vakaga or Haut Kotto prefecture, near the border with Kafia Kingi

Ladeere was initially trained as a signaler in South Sudan under the unit of Patrick Lumumba, Director of Communications. After his initial training in the late

1990s, Ladeere was assigned as a reserve signaler in Kony's compound, a task he continued to do simultaneously while being an escort to the LRA leader.

In Garamba National Park, Ladeere had become one of Kony's top bodyguards. At the end of 2006 Ladeere was the commanding officer of Independent Battalion, one of Kony's security units composed of about 36 fighters. In that post he replaced Otto Agweng who became head of High Protection Unit.

During the Juba talks, Kony promoted Ladeere to Director of Intelligence for the entire LRA. Independent Battalion became a brigade with between 80 and 100 fighters and was led by Charles Arop. After Otti's death in October 2007, Kony boosted Independent Brigade, the main supplier of fighters, to his own bodyguard ranks, with more troops and renamed it Central Brigade.

In recent years, Ladeere reportedly operated under Binany. It is unclear whether he was demoted or if he was Kony's personal envoy in Binany's group tasked with overseeing various directives from Kony, including securing ivory. Following Binany's death in January, Ladeere was reportedly given command of a satellite group of Kony's operating in Haut Kotto or Vakaga prefecture in CAR, near the border with Kafia Kingi.

### **D. LRA commanders with unidentified location**

#### Achellam Smart

Other names: Sasa, Ojara (six fingers)

Rank: Unidentified

Age/DOB: Unidentified

Origin/place of birth: Unidentified

Location as of April 2013: Unidentified; possibly dead

The UPDF reportedly killed Achellam Smart in action. It is unclear if he is actually dead or if he has been confused with another fighter. Ojara means "six fingers," and there are at least three fighters still in the LRA nicknamed Ojara. In the Acholi tradition a sixth finger is cut, leaving a small stump.

#### Okot Odhiambo

Rank: Lieutenant General

Age/DOB: Circa 1970

Origin/place of birth: Palugula, Gulu, Uganda

Location as of April 2013: CAR, possibly in Mbomou prefecture near the Congo border

Not much is known about Okot Odhiambo, who assumed the role of Kony's chief deputy following the execution of Vincent Otti in October 2007. He likely joined the LRA in the late 1980s and rose through the ranks thereafter. He was allegedly in charge of two separate brigades when the LRA was based in what is now South Sudan. He has demonstrated absolute loyalty to Kony, who has rewarded him with senior positions within the LRA, including that of Army Commander. In 2005, the International Criminal Court indicted Odhiambo on ten counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Following the Ugandan military's launch of Operation Lightning Thunder in December 2008, Odhiambo and his fighters were the first to move towards CAR. On Kony's orders, Odhiambo stopped near the Congo-CAR border in May 2009 and allowed Kony to cross first. Odhiambo then followed Kony into CAR. As of early 2013, Odhiambo was likely operating in CAR, possibly in Mbomou prefecture near the Congo border, or possibly across the border in Congo.

#### Onencan Aciro Kop

Other names: Angola Unita

Rank: Colonel

Age/DOB: 45

Origin/place of birth: Unidentified

Location as of April 2013: Unidentified

It is unclear if Onencan Aciro Kop is his real name, as Aciro Kop is the name of his mother or a female relative. Aciro is a female name in Luo meaning "to persevere" while Kop means "words" or "things people say." Onen means "to see" and Can is "poverty." It is also unknown why he uses the nickname Angola Unita but it is unlikely that he has any connection to the Angolan rebel group.

Onencan is a senior commander that has occupied various important posts in the LRA in the last 15 years. Like Abuchingo, Onencan was part of the spiritual wing of the LRA. By the late 1990s, he was Chief Controller, in charge of all groups that organized prayer services. He was reportedly part of LRA teams in the early 2000s that were sent by Kony to meet with various external peace negotiators. Onencan was reportedly placed under Odhiambo in the last few years, since Otti's death in 2007, but former combatants rarely mention his name, indicating that he may have a low profile. He had reportedly been placed in the so-called "exile groups" alongside Abuchingo, Lamola, and Bwone, but as of April 2013 was no longer with them.