

## About the Author

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## Key Points

- ◆ Led by Joseph Kony since the late 1980s, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is a brutal militia force that survives by massacring civilians, looting villages, and abducting civilians to serve as fighters, porters, and sex slaves.
- ◆ LRA operations have spread from northern Uganda to cover an expansive territory including eastern Congo, the Central African Republic, and southern Sudan. Much of this territory is outside the day-to-day control of governments in the region.
- ◆ Since 2008, Uganda has pursued LRA forces across this expansive territory. In 2010, the Obama administration developed a U.S. strategy to increase support for regional and peacekeeping operations against the LRA.
- ◆ Success depends on the political will and military capability of Uganda, its African neighbors, and United Nations peacekeepers to separate LRA units from civilian populations and build robust capabilities to track and strike LRA positions.
- ◆ These requirements beg the question of whether or not the United States will dedicate sufficient resources to overcome current shortfalls.

# Countering the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa

by Andre Le Sage

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is one of Africa's most brutal militia forces.<sup>1</sup> It has plagued Central Africa, particularly northern Uganda, for over two decades. The group's tactics provide textbook examples of war crimes and crimes against humanity. When attacking civilians, the LRA instills fear by selecting random individuals for brutal executions. Children are abducted to serve as porters, sex slaves, and new militia. In order to indoctrinate child soldiers, young abductees are routinely forced to kill their own family members and other children, or be murdered themselves. Anyone caught trying to escape from the LRA is summarily executed. By contrast with other African rebel groups, which occasionally adopt such brutal tactics, the LRA has conducted such atrocities on a systematic and prolonged basis.

With intelligence and operational planning support from the United States, in December 2008, the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) launched Operation *Lightning Thunder* to attack LRA bases in the Garamba National Park of northeastern Congo, where the LRA had been located since 2005. The initial attack was intended to overwhelm the LRA and decapitate its leadership with a combination of airborne assaults and ground troop movements.<sup>2</sup> However, the top LRA leadership survived this initial attack, and LRA forces separated into small groups of dozens of fighters.

Nearly 2 years later, the LRA's area of operations has extended deep into the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), southern Sudan, and Sudan's Darfur region even though the LRA is now comprised of only several hundred members using small arms and light weapons. While pursued across the region by the UPDF, the LRA avoids direct

confrontations and has sustained itself by attacking and pillaging villages in remote rural areas.

Working with and prompted by nongovernmental relief and advocacy groups, the U.S. Congress passed the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009, requiring the Obama administration to develop a strategy to "mitigate and eliminate the threat to regional stability" posed by the LRA. While the LRA does not present a direct threat to the United States, its territory, or its citizens, the group's operations have become a recurring concern for U.S. policymakers focused on peace-building and regional security in Africa. LRA attacks have exacerbated African civil wars, contributed to the enormous humanitarian crisis facing Central Africa, fueled tense regional relations, and challenged U.S. efforts to promote accountability for human rights abuses.<sup>3</sup>

On November 24, 2010, President Obama delivered his administration's counter-LRA strategic plan to Congress. The four highlighted objectives are to "(a) increase protection of civilians; (b) apprehend or remove from the battlefield Joseph Kony and senior commanders; (c) promote the defection, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of remaining LRA fighters; and (d) increase humanitarian access and provide continued relief to affected communities."<sup>4</sup> This strategy is in line with a strong international consensus on the way forward to counter the LRA. While the United States is not committing its own forces to attack the LRA directly, and identifying resources to implement the strategy is an ongoing challenge, the extent to which the Obama strategy will improve anti-LRA efforts on the ground is not yet clear.

In order to assess the opportunities, challenges, and role that U.S. efforts can play in combating the LRA, this paper begins with an in-depth analysis of the militia, including its historical development, the inability of past offensives to succeed against it, and the current force disposition of the group. The paper then examines current U.S. and international thinking on how expanded efforts to counter the LRA could work best in the field. It highlights how U.S. strategy makes a range of assumptions that must be met in order for counter-LRA operations to succeed.

The paper concludes that the United States must be willing to make significant investments in support of regional and peacekeeping partners in order to defeat the LRA in the absence of greater, direct U.S. military engagement.

## Understanding the LRA

The LRA is a challenge to categorize. Due to statements by its leaders in support of governing Uganda according to a strict interpretation of the Ten Commandments, the group is most often portrayed as a millenarian Christian cult.<sup>5</sup> The LRA has certainly been informed by its leaders' understanding of Christianity, particularly as it has been mixed with the traditional ethnic cosmology of their Acholi tribe. However, the LRA also needs to be understood as a product of northern Ugandan grievances against southern Ugandan political domination, as a manifestation of proxy struggles between regional powers in the Horn of Africa, and as a classic example of unaccountable warlordism in one of Africa's least governed spaces. Each of these narratives has its own truths and limitations, and is necessary but insufficient for answering the question, "What is the LRA?" Together, they help to explain the LRA's durability despite worldwide condemnation.

***Ugandan Politics.*** First, the LRA is an outcome of Uganda's internal political history. The LRA's commanders and the majority of its forces are ethnic Acholi from northern Uganda. Despite regularly attacking their own tribal community, the LRA has tried to legitimize itself by issuing manifestos claiming to represent the Acholi and other northern Ugandan interests against the Kampala government. Uganda has long been wracked by a north-south political divide that is generally coterminous with national ethnic divisions. During the British colonial period, Southerners received better access to education, economic investment in agriculture, and civilian posts in government. Northerners, by contrast, were deemed suited for military service, and their region was seen more as a source of inexpensive labor than as a location for enduring investment. On the one hand, southern leaders asserted their suitability to lead the country's government and were supportive of the constitutional



Source: Humanitarian Information Unit, Department of State

monarchy of the Buganda community. On the other hand, the “Acholi in particular had been told by their colonial masters that they were born warriors, effectively transforming them into a military ethnocracy.”<sup>6</sup>

This pattern created enduring ethno-regional resentments and competition. From independence in 1962 until today, these tensions have laid the foundation for national political struggles, military mobilization, and countermobilization. Uganda became the site of brutal insurgency and counterinsurgency campaigns, particularly in the “Luwero Triangle” area north of Kampala, during northern-dominated governments led by Milton Obote, Idi Amin, Obote again, and finally Tito Okello. Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) eventually overthrew Okello in 1985 and has led Uganda’s government ever since. “For many, the NRA insurgency against Obote was merely a continuation of the ethnic competition that typified Ugandan politics—a case of

Bantu-speaking Southerners wanting to remove from power Northerners speaking Nilotic languages.”<sup>7</sup> As a result, commanders and soldiers of Obote-led forces, known as the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA), fled to northern Uganda where they renamed themselves the Ugandan People’s Defence Army (UPDA). Once the UPDA was defeated, many commanders and soldiers from this group would eventually join the ranks of the LRA, giving it a grounding in northern resistance to southern political and military domination.

**The Holy Spirit Movement.** Second, the LRA needs to be understood as the successor to the Holy Spirit Movement/Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSM/HSMF). Alice Auma, a self-proclaimed spiritual medium in northern Uganda, created the HSMF in 1987. Auma, better known as Alice Lakwena, declared that a spirit named Lakwena came to her as a messenger of the Holy Spirit and instructed her to organize a war against evil forces

that had come to plague the Acholi. The HSMF garnered substantial local support in northern Uganda from Acholi and other Nilotic tribes that supported HSMF efforts to oppose Museveni, restore stature in northern Ugandan politics, and lead a cleansing of Acholi society. Because the HSMF emerged at the precise moment when the post-Okello UNLA/UPDF forces had stagnated, Alice Lakwena was able to absorb these northern forces into her group. The HSMF launched several successful attacks against the NRM government and was able to advance within 100 kilometers of Kampala before the group was roundly defeated near Jinja. Lakwena fled to neighboring Kenya, where she lived until her death, on January 17, 2007, in the Ifo refugee camp near Dadaab.

Joseph Kony forged the LRA and its political program out of the ashes of the HSMF. Before founding the LRA, Kony was an altar boy. “[L]ike Alice Lakwena and the HSMF, Kony does not function in his own capacity, but as *loar* or messenger of the spirits. Operational orders from the spirits are passed by Kony to his military commanders.”<sup>8</sup> The most infamous (and ludicrous) of such orders was for HSMF and LRA forces to walk openly against their enemy’s attack with nothing but “holy water” to protect them from bullets and explosions. At other times, the use of ritual and terror served more strategic purposes. They were used to instill fear among northern Ugandan and other LRA-affected populations to ensure victims did not resist LRA predation or cooperate with the Ugandan government and military. Organizationally, the quasi-religious edicts were variations of “a traditional practice of Acholi elders to draw up a catalogue of prohibitions in times of crisis, the observation of which is supposed to cure a disturbed moral order.”<sup>9</sup> When such edicts were not followed, the LRA deemed that violent retribution was permissible.

***Sudan’s Proxies.*** Third, the LRA is as a proxy militia that has served the interests of regional powers in the Horn of Africa and Central Africa. In 1994, the government of Sudan began providing critical military and logistical support for the LRA. At that point, the LRA had, for several years, used parts of southwestern Sudan, particularly Eastern Equatoria Province, as a rear base to escape

UPDF pursuit. However, in 1994, the Khartoum government decided to engage the LRA as a partner in its struggle against the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and its struggle for an independent state of South Sudan. This made sense on a tit-for-tat basis as the government of Uganda was already providing assistance to the SPLA. When the LRA moved its base of operations to Eastern Equatoria, particularly the Imatong Mountains, it effectively joined efforts with several other militia forces that Khartoum had also co-opted against the SPLA, including the Southern Sudan Independence Army/Movement led by Riek Machar and the Equatorian Defence Force.

Sudan’s support for the LRA continued unabated until 2001. At this time, the U.S. Government placed the LRA on its Terrorist Exclusion List and brought increased pressure to bear on Khartoum to cooperate with the U.S.-led war on terror. Sudanese engagement with the LRA was suspended and, between 2002 and 2005, negotiations between the government of Sudan and the SPLA succeeded in crafting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to end that country’s civil war. By 2005, the LRA had uprooted itself from Sudan and moved en masse to Haut-Uele Province in northeastern Congo. That same year, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants—the first ever for that organization—for Joseph Kony and four other LRA commanders for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

## Counter-LRA Limitations

In February 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, “I have been following the Lord’s Resistance Army for more than 15 years. I just don’t understand why we cannot end this scourge.”<sup>10</sup> The answer to her question lies in the fact that concerned countries in the region and outside have not devoted adequate resources and commitment to the campaign against the LRA. Operation *Lightning Thunder* is not the first effort to find a military solution to the LRA. In fact, the history of the conflict has been punctuated by a series of heavy-handed security operations that have failed to capture or kill Joseph Kony and other senior LRA leaders but have had

dire humanitarian consequences and led to public distrust of the Ugandan government. According to Ronald Atkinson, each effort to deal with the LRA militarily has begun “with a period of acute insecurity and violence, followed by an interval during which these gradually decline—but, until the recent [Juba] peace talks, never to the point of real (even if still tentative and fragile) peace. Each new phase, with its spikes of violence, followed flawed or failed efforts at peaceful solutions to end the conflict.”<sup>11</sup>

**Operation North.** In 1991, while the LRA remained based in ethnic Acholi areas of northern Uganda, the Ugandan government launched Operation *North*. The campaign was intended to cut off the LRA from any support it was receiving from the local population. As part of the offensive, local self-defense militia, known as Arrow Boys and Rhino Group, were created to defend local communities from LRA predation.<sup>12</sup> Because of Ugandan government fears that the Acholi self-defense militia could use any weapons they received to revolt against Kampala, they were outfitted with only bows, arrows, and other traditional weapons. The result was increased LRA attacks and violence as Kony and his commanders retaliated against the local communities.

Operation *North* nevertheless drove the LRA out of northern Uganda, while LRA atrocities demonstrated to the Acholi community that the group did not serve local interests. At this time, the LRA moved to southern Sudan and, by 1994, began receiving substantial military support from the Sudanese government in Khartoum. The Ugandan government also decided to relocate all northern civilians to “protected areas.” This decision resulted in the displacement and impoverishment of some 200,000 northern Ugandans, who received little aid and still lacked protection from LRA attacks. Many Acholis believed that Kampala was simply using its war with the LRA as an excuse to steal their land.<sup>13</sup>

**Operation Iron Fist.** Uganda launched another offensive in 2002, following the suspension of the government of Sudan’s assistance to the LRA. After reaching an agreement with Khartoum for the UPDF to enter southern Sudan, Uganda initiated Operation *Iron Fist*. Involving some 10,000 troops, it destroyed several LRA camps, including the group’s main base at Lubanga-tek, but did not capture

or eliminate any senior LRA leaders. Some LRA units retreated farther into Sudan, while others infiltrated northern Uganda and launched new attacks there.<sup>14</sup> Over time, however, the LRA progressively moved its operations from northern Uganda to southern Sudan to eastern Congo.

**Failed Peace Efforts.** In between military offensives, the Ugandan government with international support engaged the LRA in a number of aborted peace negotiations. These included mediation efforts in 1993–1994 and 2004–2005 led by Betty Bigombe, an ethnic Acholi minister in Museveni’s government; efforts by the international and local civil society leaders, including the Community of Sant’Egidio and the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative; and finally, from July 2006 to November 2008, an internationally supported peace process with LRA representatives in Juba, southern Sudan. In the so-called Juba process, LRA combatants were offered amnesty as well as guarantees for their leaders’ welfare and physical security.<sup>15</sup> Commitments to development aid, security, and government employment have also been given to all northern Ugandan communities.

The commitment of the LRA to finding a peaceful solution to the crisis has always been questionable. Kony appears to engage in peace talks sporadically as a tactic to reduce military pressure on the LRA and garner time and space to regroup his forces. For instance, during the Juba peace process, the LRA was based in Garamba National Park in Congo, and received international aid shipments of food and medicine as well as computers and communications equipment with which to engage the international community. However, in 2007, Kony reportedly ordered the killing of the LRA’s deputy commander, Vincent Otti, due to the latter’s support for a negotiated solution as part of the Juba peace process. Although the Juba process led to a peace agreement that was signed by the government of Uganda, Kony never showed up to finalize the deal.<sup>16</sup> After repeated extensions to the signing deadline, the talks broke down after 2 years in November 2008, leading to Uganda’s decision to restart military operations.

**Operation Lightning Thunder.** After the failure of the peace talks, Uganda launched Operation

*Lightning Thunder* on December 14, 2008. One particular factor made the military offensive appear a viable initiative. Regional political dynamics and diplomatic breakthroughs in 2008 made possible regional cooperation between Uganda, DRC, and the Government of Southern Sudan.<sup>17</sup> Prior to the rapprochement between Ugandan President Museveni and Congolese President Joseph Kabila, there would have been no authorization for deep and sustained penetration of Congo's territory by the UPDF. Furthermore, with implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan ongoing, the cessation of north-south hostilities in that country led to the reduction, if not elimination, of Khartoum's support for the LRA and to the potential for Southern Sudanese military cooperation with Uganda.

However, the offensive was remarkably ineffectual in the opening days and weeks of the campaign. While UPDF strategists believed the operation would last only 1 month, their efforts to defeat the LRA outside Uganda have now been ongoing for more than 2 years. Moreover, "due to 'unpredictable' factors such as weather, the lack of roads in the area, wide rivers, and other largely foreseeable logistical difficulties, it took over a month just to move all of the forces into place."<sup>18</sup>

In addition, commitments to regional cooperation and joint operations did little to augment UPDF strike capabilities and even less to ensure civilian protection. The LRA responded by launching a series of brutal attacks.<sup>19</sup> In the 6 months after Operation *Lightning Thunder* began, the LRA "brutally murdered more than 1,000 people in northeastern Congo and southern Sudan and abducted nearly 250 children. In at least one case in northeastern Congo's Orientale Province an entire village was pillaged and burned to the ground. More than 180,000 Congolese have been forced from their homes, while in southern Sudan, a further 60,000 have been displaced."<sup>20</sup> The most notorious attack—the "Christmas Massacre"—took place less than 2 weeks after Operation *Lightning Thunder* began. Over 400 people were killed in several Congolese villages when the LRA either

hacked them to death or forced them to walk into burning buildings.<sup>21</sup>

Since Uganda's military operation began, the UPDF has essentially been engaged in a hot-pursuit chase of LRA units. Given the weakness of regional militaries from DRC, CAR, and Sudan, it has not been possible to implement a more appropriate "hammer and anvil" strategy to contain fleeing LRA units and then strike them. Unfortunately, only a limited number of UPDF forces are available to cover an area roughly the size of Iraq. In addition, a lack of local human intelligence sources and the UPDF's limited air mobility for rapid response to LRA sightings have prevented successful action.<sup>22</sup> Now there is a real danger that the LRA may simply outlast the willingness of the UPDF to pursue them. Faced with funding shortfalls to continue military operations, President Museveni may opt to declare victory based on the success Operation *Lightning Thunder* has achieved in driving the LRA away from Uganda's borders. As several LRA units move to northeastern CAR near the border with Sudan, there is potential for them to slip away from their UPDF pursuers entirely.

## The LRA Today

Despite the difficulty of defeating the group, the LRA is not a large, technologically advanced, or well-organized enemy today. Until the start of Operation *Lightning Thunder*, it was possible to describe the overall command and control structure of the LRA with some certainty. Joseph Kony held the positions of chairman and commander. Together with senior officers specializing in intelligence, logistics, personnel, training, and religious affairs, the LRA high command was known as the "Control Altar." Below the generals were four brigades (the Gilva, Sinia, Stockree, and Trinkle Brigades, or simply Brigades 1–4), each containing varying numbers of battalions.<sup>23</sup>

The LRA is ostensibly the military wing of the broader Lord's Resistance Movement. However, this political structure has never truly evolved any independent identity or authority to speak for LRA leaders or to exert influence over the LRA.<sup>24</sup> Without renewed sponsorship by Sudan and without financial or logistical support from any lo-

cal or diaspora constituency, the group's primary means of survival is to prey on local villages and civilian populations. While many African militias, including other groups operating in DRC and CAR, finance themselves by controlling gemstone and mineral mining, this is not the case for the LRA.<sup>25</sup> In fact, adopting a fixed base to exploit mining operations would pose an operational risk to the LRA by enabling the UPDF or other security forces to find and fix LRA positions for a military strike.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, no substantial relationship or operational/tactical coordination has ever been proven to exist between the LRA and other antigovernment movements such as the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, or political opposition groups in Central Africa.

Following Operation *Lightning Thunder*, the LRA fractured and dispersed, and several LRA commanders have defected or have been killed. At present, numerous unofficial reports estimate that the overall strength of the LRA is only 300–400 combatants. More than half of these are believed to be abductees.<sup>27</sup> The group's constituent units are separated by difficult terrain and must maintain long operational lines. LRA commanders have stopped using cell phones or other means of electronic communication and have shifted to the use of couriers for passing messages and coordinating their operational strategy. The LRA is thus viewed as being highly vulnerable to a decapitation strategy that focuses on the elimination of Kony and another dozen or so senior LRA commanders. The exact command and control structure of the LRA is hard to describe today using a traditional line-and-block chart. Since the LRA has dispersed and has no single base of operations, communications between LRA leaders are considered to be limited.

Under these circumstances, the most accurate means of describing the LRA's structure is to identify the geographical locations of its main units. According to Ledio Cakaj, "As of January 2011, the majority of the LRA forces appear to have gathered in the vast Haut Uélé Province in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo."<sup>28</sup> He identifies approximately 10 different LRA units, usually comprised of 30–40 militia members each. Most of these are in DRC, but several operate into southeast CAR and the Western

Equatoria state in southern Sudan. These latter units are under the control of senior LRA commanders including Caesar Achellam and Dominic Ongwen. This represents a return south by the LRA over the past 6 months since reports of LRA movements and attacks from late 2010 put a growing number of their forces in northeastern CAR, near the border with the southern Darfur region of Sudan.

Interviews with escaped abductees conducted by human rights and advocacy groups have highlighted a number of new leadership dynamics. First, the attrition of senior leaders from the LRA has reduced the ranks of ethnic Acholi Ugandans in the group, and the LRA is now increasingly dependent on the motivation of fighters from Sudan, DRC, and CAR. Most of the fighters have been abducted, and appeals to their Acholi nationalism or demands for justice in Uganda do not resonate.<sup>29</sup> Second, senior leader attrition has provided the opportunity for several junior officers to take on high-profile command responsibilities.<sup>30</sup> This is certainly the case with Lieutenant Colonel Okot Odek, who assumed command of a brigade only after his first commander was killed in action and his next commander, Charles Arop, decided to surrender.

## The Strategy Consensus

Despite public recriminations about the failure of Operation *Lightning Thunder* to deal a decisive blow against the LRA's leadership and the resulting surge of atrocities committed by the LRA against civilians across Central Africa, a general sense of agreement now exists on the way forward.<sup>31</sup> There is a strong desire inside the U.S. Government and among its international and nongovernmental partners to forestall further human rights abuses and prevent the LRA from regrouping by increasing and better coordinating international security efforts in the region.<sup>32</sup> Even Human Rights Watch—not usually considered to be a group supportive of military action—has called for greater efforts against the LRA. Their proposal is couched in terms of "apprehending" Kony and other top LRA leaders who are subject to ICC arrest warrants.<sup>33</sup>

The U.S. strategy is centered on shifting anti-LRA operations from an open-ended and underresourced

chase that has paid too little attention to civilian needs, into a more comprehensive, integrated, and supported effort involving four major lines of effort:

- ◆ increase protection of civilians
- ◆ apprehend or remove from the battlefield Kony and senior commanders
- ◆ promote the defection, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of remaining LRA fighters
- ◆ increase humanitarian access and provide continued relief to affected communities.<sup>34</sup>

Each line of effort requires resources and commitment to succeed.

**Protection of Civilians.** The Obama administration's first commitment is to increase the level of protection afforded to civilian populations in LRA-affected areas of Central Africa. Civilian protection is a debated concept in both the peacekeeping and humanitarian worlds.<sup>35</sup> To some, protection requires efforts to guarantee the physical security of civilian populations in conflict zones. National or multinational security forces may create a defensive zone where combatants cannot operate or undertake offensive operations to disarm or defeat potential threats.

To others, the simple provision of humanitarian relief to meet the emergency lifesaving needs of war-affected civilians constitutes protection. The direct provision of food, water, sanitation, and shelter is a common aid response. Improved communications can also provide protection. When civilians have advanced warning, they can avoid or flee their would-be attackers. In all cases, however, civilian protection requires that security and humanitarian actors are present on the ground to provide support to local communities.

Already, a wide array of actors with the potential to provide protection services is present in LRA-affected areas. Key actors whose roles and actions need to be coordinated and monitored include national police, gendarmes, and military forces from Uganda, DRC, CAR, and Sudan; multinational peacekeeping forces; tribal militias and self-defense groups; and foreign aid providers, including international donors, United Nations (UN)

agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

International partners need to establish a clear division of labor between the UPDF and other forces in the area of operations. In order for the UPDF to track and engage the LRA, it needs to remain a light and highly mobile force that can respond to sightings of LRA units. Involving the UPDF in the protection of civilian populations outside of Uganda's borders impedes this mission. Instead, a mix of national military, police, and gendarmerie forces and multinational peacekeeping forces (including both military and civilian police) needs to be deployed to major towns and population centers in LRA-affected areas outside Uganda. The priority areas can be identified according to the location of recent LRA activity and the reported trajectory of LRA movements. The operations of all of these forces need to be better coordinated, possibly through the creation of joint operations centers. Moreover, peacekeeping forces need to have appropriate mandates and operational capabilities.

Deploying additional national military and peacekeeping forces could succeed in accomplishing three objectives: increasing protection for civilian populations that are vulnerable to LRA attacks; increasing information and intelligence collection; and degrading the LRA's room for maneuver. To the extent that these forces conduct active daytime and nighttime patrolling outside of towns into rural areas and have robust rules of engagement should they encounter LRA units, this could serve as a platform for the traditional counterinsurgency tactic of *quadrillage* to block insurgent movements, isolate individual insurgent units from one another, and break the LRA's interior lines.<sup>36</sup>

Given the vast area in which the LRA operates, there will always be insufficient numbers of forces to protect every town and village from attack. Thus, the ability to share and willingness to act on time-sensitive security information that can be used to guide security forces to patrol near newly identified LRA positions will be critical. The only alternatives are for civilian populations to



flee these areas and for relief agencies to provide support for communities that have been displaced or attacked.

One challenge is that peacekeeping forces in Central Africa have yet to prioritize anti-LRA efforts. The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is focused on eastern DRC and has limited capacity in LRA-affected territories, and the UN Mission in Central Africa Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) is drawing down its forces. The United States will need to work closely with the UN and its missions in Central Africa to make anti-LRA efforts a greater priority and shift additional peacekeeping resources to LRA-affected areas. In addition, French forces, which are already present in CAR, could take a direct role against the LRA or support the increased presence of CAR security elements in LRA-affected regions.

An alternative is to establish a new peacekeeping mission with its own forces that can be deployed on a regional basis across the LRA-affected area. In October 2010, an African Union meeting in Bangui endorsed plans to create a joint command center to manage a regionally constituted military brigade to conduct operations against the LRA.<sup>37</sup> This initiative, however, has not been robustly supported at either the African or international levels. Another option would be the establishment of a UN-led support operation in Central Africa that would provide a dedicated channel for increasing financial contributions and logistical support for anti-LRA efforts by existing peacekeeping forces in the region.<sup>38</sup>

Other means are also available to enhance community protection and at the same time gather information and intelligence. National and multinational forces should be prepared to field civil affairs teams to conduct relief and rehabilitation programs. Translators and community liaison officers should be deployed to improve relations and build trust with local leaders. Providing funding and logistical support for local area experts—ranging from academic researchers to the U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) Socio-Cultural Research Advisory

Team—to conduct assessments of protection needs and opportunities would also be useful.

In the absence of national or foreign forces that are able to provide protection and conduct patrols in remote areas, support could be given to local communities to raise tribal militias and self-defense units. Already, the Arrow Boys in southern Sudan and several spontaneous self-defense forces have emerged. Without sufficient support, they are ill-prepared to take on the LRA and serve little value to intelligence collection if they are not prewired into anti-LRA communications efforts. There are also questions of control and accountability of local forces, as well as their inclusion of children, which limits the interest of the international community in providing support.

***Searching and Striking.*** The second line of effort proposed in the U.S. strategy to confront the LRA is to eliminate the threat directly by searching for and striking at LRA positions. It is believed that the capture or elimination of Kony and a dozen LRA leaders would effectively destroy the group and prevent it from reconstituting. While such a “decapitation strategy” may not work against insurgencies with broad popular support and leadership redundancies in their command, the LRA lacks both of these qualities. Still, searching for and striking at the LRA’s commanders require enhanced efforts to collect actionable intelligence on the location of LRA units as well as stronger military capabilities to conduct decisive operations. At a minimum, the U.S. strategy to eliminate the LRA threat should increase ongoing support to the UPDF pursuit effort, as well as building the capacity and willingness of peacekeeping and national forces to support the UPDF.

The United States could consider supporting UPDF efforts with remote intelligence collection efforts, including aerial reconnaissance, communications monitoring, and other sensory capabilities. However, tracking of LRA units needs both high-tech and low-tech solutions. Signals intelligence against the LRA is likely limited since the group abandoned most electronic means of communication in favor of couriers. Yet its militia forces are still vulnerable to airborne reconnaissance

efforts. Crucially, given the vast forested areas of the region where the LRA can hide, air assets will require thermal imaging capabilities and the ability to loiter in key locations at night to identify LRA bed-down locations.

Other than directly locating the position of LRA forces through intelligence means, the best source of information on LRA movements is likely to come from local communities, which have seen or have been attacked by the LRA. Suitable personnel must be assigned to debrief LRA defectors in order to learn as much as possible about the location, structure, direction of movement, habits, planning, and decisionmaking of LRA commanders and militia. These capabilities need to be developed by the UPDF, but also by other national security forces (including police, gendarmes, and the military, all of which need to be bolstered with civil affairs capabilities) and peacekeepers. The collection of additional information and intelligence by these actors then needs to be supported with sufficient personnel and technical systems to ensure quality analysis and timely sharing.

While many humanitarian groups are reluctant to cooperate with foreign security forces, they may be willing to do so privately if they know their information will be used to enhance civilian protection efforts. Such cooperation could become the basis for a UN-led system to feed relevant information for civilian early warning and alert aid providers to impending LRA attacks. Several groups have argued for the need to expand local communications capabilities—including access to shortwave radios, GSM phones, and satellite phones—through direct distribution of equipment and foreign investment in commercial efforts to extend telecommunications to remote areas.<sup>39</sup>

On the military front, in the absence of commitments by the United States or European partners to deploy high-end special operations forces to track and engage the LRA, the main requirement is to improve the capabilities of the UPDF to track LRA positions and to strike rapidly once they are identified. The UPDF requires assistance to improve its means of integrating intelligence collection with operations, provide the necessary logistical support to sustain its expeditionary

units, and ensure adequate communications for effective command and control and information-sharing over long distances. Access to helicopters for reconnaissance and rapid troop deployments and cargo aircraft for resupply missions is an additional urgent need. Finally, the simple question of funding for extended UPDF operations needs to be addressed.

UPDF forces operating far from Uganda require additional logistical support. Forward operating bases are therefore essential, and foreign-operated or contracted air cargo capacity may be required. The extent to which existing UN peacekeeping forces in DRC and CAR can meet these requirements should be explored. Investments in infrastructure would enhance rapid reaction capacity. This would involve airstrip and road rehabilitation projects in areas where anti-LRA forces need to conduct patrols or establish bases. Such efforts, if planned correctly with local authorities and development partners, could have positive social and economic effects that last well beyond short-term military priorities.

The involvement of Western forces in countering the LRA should not be discounted as an option. In 2003, French forces led the European Union–mandated Operation *Artemis* in Ituri Province in eastern Congo. Lasting only 3 months, the operation successfully used some 1,800 European forces to restore order until UN peacekeeping capabilities were bolstered. A similar deployment of Western forces could be used to increase rapidly the search and strike capability against the LRA or to bolster blocking and protection efforts. In the case of insufficient U.S. interest to deploy its own forces, Human Rights Watch has identified several highly professional militaries, including those of the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, and South Africa, that would be able to undertake anti-LRA operations.<sup>40</sup> Each of these countries is a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, and the court could call on them to support regional efforts to apprehend Kony and other indicted LRA leaders.

***Demobilizing the LRA.*** The third line of effort in the Obama administration's strategic plan is to "promote

the defection, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of remaining LRA fighters.” This effort seeks to generate additional exit options for LRA combatants to leave the battlefield peacefully. It is recognized that many LRA leaders will be unwilling to defect from the group unless they are under immediate military pressure. Their commitment to the LRA’s militant cause and way of life, the belief that they cannot return to a normal life after years of fighting, lack of knowledge of amnesty and transitional justice plans, and the simple fear that they will be killed by more senior LRA leaders for even considering dialogue or surrender are among the inhibiting factors.

The majority of LRA militia members are not ICC-indicted war criminals. Rather, they were abducted and forced to fight for the LRA in order to survive. These individuals, particularly children, are an appropriate focus of increased communications efforts to build LRA combatants’ knowledge of their exit options, the provision of additional and better coordinated reception opportunities to receive LRA defectors, and further investment in efforts to reintegrate former combatants.<sup>41</sup>

In practical terms, leaflets and radio announcements, including interviews with demobilized LRA officers, are already being used to encourage defections. These need to be increased and distributed more widely as the LRA area of operations increases. They must also use local languages and graphics that can be understood by non-Acholi speakers and those who cannot read. At the current time, some LRA fighters wishing to defect may fear summary justice by fearful communities when they exit the bush. Additional reception planning and mobile reception centers are required closer to these LRA areas of operations. Humanitarian agencies already recognize the need to learn from regional experiences and further invest in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration capabilities. These efforts include the challenging and time-consuming area of psychosocial rehabilitation of former combatants, including child soldiers.

Finally, efforts to encourage disarmament and demobilization will need to be maintained over the medium to long term, and cannot end if or when Joseph

Kony and other senior LRA leaders are apprehended or killed. Even if the LRA itself is disbanded, it is certain that a portion of its militia will flee and continue to plague Central Africa. These remnant forces may lack a political objective of their own, but are likely to turn to armed criminality or agree to serve as mercenaries for other armed groups in DRC or CAR.

*Humanitarian Assistance.* The fourth and final line of effort elaborated in the U.S. response is to increase humanitarian assistance to LRA-affected populations. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) already is leading these efforts and is planning to increase its level of engagement on two fronts: first, the provision of immediate, lifesaving assistance, and second, when possible, the promotion of early recovery efforts. A surge in humanitarian assistance for LRA-affected areas cannot be expected to address the enormous scale of humanitarian and development challenges in Central Africa. Rather, the objectives should be to ameliorate LRA-induced emergency conditions in order to establish an acceptable regional situation from which standard development objectives can eventually be met, and to reconcile the Acholi people to the Ugandan government in a meaningful way.

Even with additional funding, those who provide humanitarian assistance in LRA-affected areas are experiencing a number of critical challenges. Successful relief operations must overcome the security challenges of working in high-risk areas. The affected population is also located in remote areas that are difficult to access, especially since passable roads are few and far between and aviation access is limited. Even if USAID does not face funding shortfalls, there are too few reliable operating partners, including both UN agencies and NGOs, who have the willingness and capability to work in LRA-affected regions. In addition to financial needs, these groups must confront staffing, infrastructure, communications, and other logistics limitations. The highly mobile nature of LRA units makes it difficult to target aid interventions to locations with LRA-induced needs.

Stabilization efforts to bring lasting peace in northern Uganda will require more sustained commitments.

For instance, in northern Uganda alone, ethno-regional grievances have been well documented by the Juba peace process and are consistent with previous findings of international monitors and local civil society advocates. The Juba talks concluded with Uganda's commitment to the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) and a wide range of transitional justice mechanisms. The former commits Uganda to facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to their homes; provide essential social services including water, health care, and education; rebuild derelict and war-ravaged infrastructure; and encourage greater economic investment for agriculture and trade. The latter commits Uganda to the creation of specialized courts to hear claims against senior LRA commanders, offers of amnesty for lower ranking LRA combatants, and empowering traditional justice mechanisms (particularly the Acholi *Mato Oput* process) to achieve grassroots reconciliation.

While these commitments exist on paper and in political rhetoric, it has been noted that the Ugandan government's implementation has been slow and half-hearted despite significant UN, World Bank, and foreign donor investment.<sup>42</sup> Justice, security sector reform, and development are critical means of ensuring a lasting peace in northern Uganda and the region. In their absence, tensions will rise again and violence will reemerge no matter the fate of the LRA. Genuine democratic reforms in Kampala are essential to ensure national cohesion based on legitimacy.

## Challenging Assumptions

If all of the lines of effort outlined in this paper are robustly implemented by the United States and its partners, there is a high probability that the LRA can be defeated. Even then, the U.S. strategy to eliminate the LRA threat in Central Africa is based on several critical assumptions. These include the commitment of the government of Uganda to continue its pursuit of the LRA, the willingness and ability of peacekeeping and national forces to support anti-LRA efforts, and the continued presence of LRA leaders in areas that

are accessible to regional or other foreign forces. Given circumstances in the region, none of these conditions should be taken for granted.

**Uganda's Commitment.** First, there is no guarantee that future Ugandan operations against the LRA will continue at the same level as today. Although not defeated, the LRA threat has been pushed far enough away from Uganda's borders that it does not pose a short-term threat to the country. Uganda's President Museveni already appears to have reduced the number of UPDF soldiers involved in anti-LRA operations. This reduction was not surprising when Museveni faced a reelection campaign earlier in 2011, but deployments have not increased since then. Uganda has also publicly signaled that it cannot sustain the financial costs of the long-distance efforts to pursue individual LRA units. Moreover, additional UPDF forces are in short supply as Uganda forms the backbone of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Finally, with independence looming for South Sudan in July 2011 and the lingering potential for conflict in this new country, the UPDF may deploy additional forces to protect their northern border against the spillover of any crisis.

**Limits of Peacekeeping.** Second, U.S. strategy must confront the limited capability of UN peacekeeping forces in the region to confront the LRA challenge. The LRA area of operations is located on the margins of several different UN peacekeeping missions in eastern DRC, northeastern CAR, southern Sudan, and Darfur. Although the MONUSCO mission in DRC has been mandated to provide assistance to regional forces when requested by the local government, none of these missions has been directly tasked to counter the LRA. Peacekeepers have generally failed to protect civilian populations. They maintain only a minimal force presence in LRA-affected areas, if any; conduct limited coordination with the UPDF; and are not equipped or mandated to pursue the LRA themselves. Moreover, international planning for reduced peacekeeping missions in Central Africa is out of sync with the growing international commitment to defeat the LRA. Decisions by host nations to scale back MONUSCO and

to conclude MINURCAT will actually reduce the number of multinational forces in Central Africa.

**Limited Regional Attention.** Third, relying on DRC, CAR, or SPLA to provide forces to combat the LRA is equally problematic despite ongoing U.S. and European capacity-building efforts with their security sectors. The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) are notorious for their lack of professionalism, war profiteering, and brutality. While the government in Kinshasa has allowed the UPDF to operate on DRC territory, it views the LRA as a primarily Ugandan, not Congolese, problem. In CAR, the situation is not much different. The southeastern provinces of that country enjoy little government presence, and President François Bozizé is focused on maintaining control of the capital city and containing CAR rebels further to the north. There are concerns that the CAR government is only interested in supporting the anti-LRA campaign to receive foreign materiel and funding for these purposes.

For several years now, the SPLA was focused on implementing its peace agreement with Khartoum and protecting its position in the lead-up to the January 2011 referendum on secession. LRA-affected regions of Western Equatoria and, more recently, the farthest reaches of Western Bahr el Ghazal have never been critical locations in the north-south confrontation and have only limited SPLA troop presence. Even if issues of presence and motivation could be resolved, the SPLA would face serious challenges building local support, ensuring that its units have the mobility to respond to LRA attacks or actually pursue LRA units, and developing the fighting capability to pursue and engage the enemy.

**Sudan's Uncertain Role.** Fourth, there is always potential for the Sudanese government to restart military cooperation with Joseph Kony in order for Khartoum to use LRA as a proxy force against South Sudan and/or Uganda in the event of hostilities following South Sudan's independence in July 2011. In late 2010, there was concern that the LRA found safe haven in the southern Darfur region of Sudan. While meetings apparently took place between LRA leaders and Sudan

Armed Forces representatives, no support appears to have been promised, and the LRA subsequently moved back down the CAR-Sudanese border to northeastern Congo.<sup>43</sup> However, Khartoum's calculations could always change. Negotiations between Khartoum and Juba on border demarcation, oil revenue sharing, and other post-independence plans are ongoing, and Khartoum is already accused of arming proxies such as George Athor to pressure southern leaders.<sup>44</sup> If Sudanese support did restart, Kony and other LRA commanders would be able to regroup and rebuild their forces.

**Diplomatic Requirements.** Fifth, it will be critical for the United States to gain acceptance of and support for its LRA strategy by other major external actors, including the European Union, United Nations, and African Union. They will need to devise a common international strategy that can be taken to the UN Security Council for endorsement, particularly if additional peacekeeping forces and new mandates or structures are required. Further transatlantic dialogue will be required to determine what resources and assistance France—or other individual European partners with substantial influence in Central Africa—is able and willing to commit to the problem.

Ultimately, the most diplomatic capital will need to be spent mobilizing national partners in the region, including Uganda, DRC, CAR, and Sudan, to support the strategy with their own blood and treasure. This may require gaining regional acceptance of continued and expanded MONUSCO and MINURCAT deployments, or possibly the creation of an entirely new peacekeeping operation dedicated to the anti-LRA campaign. Pressure will need to be brought to bear on these partner nations to heed foreign strategic and operational planning advice, and especially to enhance the roles that their own security forces play in civilian protection efforts. This could certainly benefit from the deployment of additional U.S. aid workers, military advisors, and diplomats to embed at UN peacekeeping hubs and UPDF forward operating bases to support offensive and protection operations. Ensuring that Sudan abstains from supporting the LRA will also need to be placed on the agenda of the U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan.

In the absence of national support, international strategies will wither on the vine.

**Balancing U.S. Interests.** Sixth, the United States needs to balance its support to counter-LRA security efforts with wider democratization and governance concerns in Central Africa.<sup>45</sup> Uganda, DRC, CAR, and Sudan (both north and south) are countries that need to enact significant reforms to level the political playing field between government and opposition parties, address internal corruption, conduct security sector reform, ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by national security forces, enhance delivery of essential social services, and improve overall representation of public interests. In addition, the United States is committed to ending patterns of sexual and gender-based violence and the exploitation of minerals to support conflict. Both combatants and government forces in the countries affected by LRA operations have been implicated in these practices.

The multiplicity of U.S. concerns in Central Africa necessarily leads to caution. First, the United States is wary of providing “lethal assistance”—in the form of training, equipment, or shared intelligence—that could be used to organize or employ violence against illegitimate targets. Second, the United States desires to minimize its defense footprint on the African continent. The United States does not want to end up being the primary responsible foreign party for addressing any of the continent’s complex crises. This line of thinking is shored up by U.S. respect for African concerns that the creation of USAFRICOM represents a neocolonial mechanism for U.S. domination of the continent and its interests. African concerns are mirrored by the Department of State and many nongovernmental analysts that fear that the creation of USAFRICOM represents the further militarization of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

In response, the United States is rightfully concerned that providing military assistance and funding for military operations could send the wrong political signals about the need for political liberalization, reward regimes that are performing poorly, provide resource flows that further entrench illegitimate regimes, and build security

capabilities that could be misused against political opponents or local populations.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the challenge of countering and defeating the LRA is a practical one. It requires the presence of an adequate number of forces who are willing and able to protect civilian populations, isolate individual LRA units, and strike at their remote positions. Diplomatic and aid efforts are required to reintegrate combatants and address northern Ugandan political grievances. Success depends on two factors: the political and military will of African partner nations, and whether the United States and its partners will provide sufficient resources and coordinate international efforts.

For the United States, the critical question concerns the level of resources that policymakers and Congress is willing to expend, as well as the level of additional resources that the United States can expect its international partners to put forth. The LRA does not pose a direct threat to U.S. national security interests, which some may argue decreases the urgency of U.S. efforts to defeat the group. There is no claim that the LRA targets U.S. citizens, assets, or territory, or that the group provides support for transnational terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda. However, the LRA is an indirect interest for U.S. national security planners in several ways.

First, since its inception, the LRA has targeted Uganda, a key U.S. partner nation in Africa, to which the United States seeks to demonstrate its political and practical support. Second, the LRA represents a threat to regional stability in both Central and East Africa. The spree of LRA killings and abductions spread initially from northern Uganda to southern Sudan, and now has moved into DRC and the Central African Republic. Moreover, the LRA has at times been supported by the Sudanese government, and the group could again become a proxy militia for Khartoum if war reemerges.

Third, the ability of the United States, working in partnership with other nations and international organizations, to defeat the LRA may be considered a test case for USAFRICOM, created in 2008, and its ability to use U.S.

military capabilities as a force for peace and stability on the continent. Public knowledge of USAFRICOM's planning and intelligence support for Operation *Lightning Thunder* has, intentionally or unintentionally, created U.S. equities in seeing UPDF offensive operations against the LRA through to their conclusion. In addition, efforts to defeat the LRA test USAFRICOM's strategy of confronting African threats through security assistance efforts that provide training and equipment instead of direct U.S. military action. Finally, the way the LRA conducts its guerrilla campaign constitutes crimes against humanity and has become a moral abomination, which politicians and activists across the United States seek to address. Even if the United States is not itself a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the continued presence of the LRA is an affront to U.S. commitments to international criminal justice.

If these considerations are not compelling and the United States does not lead its African and European partners to increase and better coordinate their efforts to defeat the LRA, the international community will be left to answer a series of uncomfortable questions: Why did the United States not act with the speed and certainty required to end the LRA threat in its moment of weakness? Such opportunities do not come about often in African conflicts, and advantage should be taken. Why did the United States and its partners allow Joseph Kony and other war criminals to escape? This is a question that will ring loudly if the conflict in neighboring Sudan restarts and Khartoum rearms the LRA as its proxy. And finally, what will the United States and its partners do next to counter the LRA if it regroupes and continues its gruesome attacks on innocent civilians?

If such a situation comes to pass, one key lesson should be identified and learned. Before the United States commits to engage in African conflicts, an accurate assessment of the operational requirements needs to be made. Given the challenges of working through African military partners and UN peacekeeping forces, limited U.S. efforts engaged in African crises will often be insufficient. If policymakers refuse to commit the necessary U.S. resources in the absence of direct threats to national security interests, both Congress and policymakers need to ensure that their laws and pub-

lic statements do not write checks for U.S. engagement in Africa that they are ultimately unwilling to cash. Without backing up commitments with sufficient action, U.S. leadership on conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution in Africa will appear fickle, the role of USAFRICOM will remain uncertain and contested, and the legitimacy of U.S. claims to support African interests will wear thin.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>This paper benefited from presentations and discussions at the conference *Eliminating the Threat to Civilians and Regional Stability Posed by the Lord's Resistance Army* held by the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University on September 30, 2010.

<sup>2</sup>Jeffrey Gettleman and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Aided Failed Plan to Rout Ugandan Rebels," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2009. Also see John Vandiver, "AFRICOM Official Defends U.S. Role in Ugandan Mission," *Stars and Stripes*, February 14, 2009.

<sup>3</sup>See Human Rights Watch, "Trail of Death: LRA Atrocities in Northeastern Congo," March 2010, and Ledio Cakaj, "This Is Our Land Now: Lord's Resistance Army Attacks in Bas Uele, Northeastern Congo," Enough Project, April 2010.

<sup>4</sup>Barack Obama, cover letter, "Strategy to Support the Disarmament of the Lord's Resistance Army," to Howard L. Berman, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, November 24, 2010.

<sup>5</sup>Mareike Schomerus, "The Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan: A History and Overview" [in Arabic], Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment Working Paper 8, Small Arms Survey, September 2007.

<sup>6</sup>International Crisis Group, *Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict*, Africa Report No. 77, April 14, 2004, 2.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>8</sup>Frank Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004), 348.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>10</sup>Statement by Hillary Clinton at U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings, quoted by Maghna Raj, "Tough Talk from Secretary Clinton, Senator Feingold on LRA," Enough Project, February 27, 2010.

<sup>11</sup>Ronald R. Atkinson, "From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army," *International Peace Institute*, December 2009, 6.

<sup>12</sup>Ted Dagne, "Uganda: Current Conditions and the Crisis in North Uganda," Congressional Research Service, January 29, 2010, 6.

<sup>13</sup>International Crisis Group, *Northern Uganda*, 14.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>15</sup>Acceptance of the amnesty offer from the Ugandan government would not, however, have resulted in the cancellation of indictments for the senior LRA leaders by the International Criminal Court. This fact highlighted tensions between peace-building and stabilization efforts and transitional justice requirements, which continue to this day.

<sup>16</sup>International Crisis Group, *Northern Uganda: The Road to Peace, With or Without Kony*, Africa Report No. 146, December 10, 2008.

<sup>17</sup>Julia Spiegel and Noel Atama, "Finishing the Fight Against the LRA," Enough Project, May 12, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>19</sup> Operation *Lightning Thunder* should not be portrayed as the only catalyst for LRA attacks outside of Uganda in recent years. In fact, in the final stages of the Juba peace process as early as September and October 2008, the LRA was already attacking, killing, abducting, and displacing civilian populations near Dundo, Congo. See “Kony’s New Front,” *Africa Confidential* 49, no. 22, October 31, 2008. Moreover, the spike in LRA killings after Operation *Lightning Thunder* began was only one of many. In 2006, a consortium of local and international NGOs published a study indicating that the rate of violent deaths in Acholi internally displaced persons camps was 146 killings per week: “Shockingly, this figure is more than three times higher than the figure reported for Iraq in the period following the Allied invasion in 2003.” See Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda, “Counting the Cost: Twenty Years of War in Northern Uganda,” March 20, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Spiegel and Atama, 4.

<sup>21</sup> BBC News, “Christmas Massacres ‘Killed 400,’” December 30, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Ledio Cakaj, “On the Heels of Kony: The Untold Tragedy Unfolding in the Central African Republic,” Enough Project, June 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Enough Project, “Wanted by the ICC: The LRA’s Leaders: Who They Are and What They’ve Done,” available at <[www.enough-project.org/files/pdf/lra\\_leaders.pdf](http://www.enough-project.org/files/pdf/lra_leaders.pdf)>.

<sup>24</sup> See Sverker Finnstrom, *Living with Bad Surroundings: War and Existential Uncertainty in Acholiland, Northern Uganda* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University Press, 2003), and a summary of key points in Schomerus, “The Lord’s Resistance Army in Sudan,” 13–17.

<sup>25</sup> See “The Impact of Minerals Smuggling in Central Africa,” in *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010), 261–266.

<sup>26</sup> There are occasional reports that local tribesmen in LRA-affected areas of the Central African Republic (CAR) and southern Sudan, particularly individuals from the Mbororo ethnic group, may be providing assistance to the LRA. However, there is no indication of a common political agenda. Rather, whatever trade exists between the two sides is likely motivated by profit or simply to prevent LRA attacks on the Mbororo. See International Crisis Group, *LRA: A Regional Strategy Beyond Killing Kony*, Africa Report No. 157, April 28, 2010, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ledio Cakaj, “The Lord’s Resistance Army Today,” Enough Project, November 2010, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ledio Cakaj, “Lords of Disorder: LRA Resist Regional Power for Two Decades,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, March 17, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> International Crisis Group, *LRA: A Regional Strategy*, 10.

<sup>30</sup> See Cakaj, “The Lord’s Resistance Army Today,” 13.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, see “From Promise to Peace: A Blueprint for President Obama’s LRA Strategy,” published by the U.S. advocacy

group Resolve in September 2010. Its blueprint is structured around the same four lines of effort as the U.S. strategy published in October 2010.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, see United Nations, “Security Council Press Statement on Lord’s Resistance Army,” UN/SC/9791, November 17, 2009; Resolve, “From Promise to Peace”; InterAction, “Lord’s Resistance Army—Affected Areas in Uganda, Southern Sudan, DRC and CAR,” policy brief, Washington, DC, January 2011; and International Crisis Group, *LRA: A Regional Strategy*.

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch, “US Comprehensive Strategy on the Lord’s Resistance Army,” letter to President Barack Obama, July 15, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Barack Obama, cover letter to Howard L. Berman.

<sup>35</sup> For details on this debate, see Victoria K. Holt, “The Military and Civilian Protection: Developing Roles and Capacities,” Humanitarian Policy Group Research Briefing 22, Overseas Development Institute, March 2006.

<sup>36</sup> *Quadrillage*, sometimes referred to as “quartering” or “gridding,” involves the use of military force to secure an area from insurgent presence, use regular patrols to prevent infiltration of that area, and then expand outward to secure additional areas. The word is often used to describe French counterinsurgency efforts in Algeria in the 1950s.

<sup>37</sup> See Ledio Cakaj, “On LRA, African Union Overestimates Military Might, Leaves Out Key Actor,” Enough Project, October 27, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> The UN Support Operation for AMISOM could serve as an example for this type of effort.

<sup>39</sup> See Resolve, “From Promise to Peace,” 20.

<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch, “US Comprehensive Strategy on the Lord’s Resistance Army.”

<sup>41</sup> For additional information on efforts to demobilize the LRA, see Ledio Cakaj, “Too Far from Home: Demobilizing the Lord’s Resistance Army,” Enough Project, February 14, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> See International Crisis Group, *LRA: A Regional Strategy*.

<sup>43</sup> Cakaj, “Lords of Disorder,” 2.

<sup>44</sup> Mayank Buba, “South Sudan’s Militias,” Enough Project, March 3, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> See Johnnie Carson, “U.S. Priorities for sub-Saharan Africa,” *Diplomacy Briefing Series*, U.S. Department of State, June 14, 2010. The five stated priorities are conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution; strengthening democratic institutions; promoting economic growth and reform; improving public health; and addressing transnational challenges.

<sup>46</sup> Lauren Ploch, “Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa,” Congressional Research Service, November 16, 2010.

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