

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

|                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Bilagsnr.:</b>                  | <b>181</b>                          |
| Land:                              | Uganda                              |
| Kilde:                             | The Enough Project                  |
| Titel:                             | The Lord's Resistance Army of Today |
| Udgivet:                           | 1. november 2010                    |
| Optaget på<br>baggrundsmaterialet: | 17. maj 2011                        |



**enough**

The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity

# The Lord's Resistance Army of Today

Ledio Cakaj November 2010

The Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, in existence for more than two decades, is the rebel group responsible for Africa's longest running armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> Led by Joseph Kony, the inner workings of the LRA remain relatively unknown to the outside world, including the Ugandan army officers and policy makers in Africa and the West who are leading efforts to remove the rebels from the battlefield. This has been particularly true during the last 22 months, a period in which the LRA has undergone significant changes. Despite a wealth of information on the LRA pre-December 2008, misconceptions and myths related to Kony's group remain.

The ongoing Ugandan army offensive against the LRA and renewed interest on the LRA issue in the West spurred by a bill recently signed in the United States necessitate a better understanding of how the LRA operates. A thorough analysis of the LRA's modus operandi, leadership, and aims is lacking, even though substantive assets and valuable time are spent fighting the rebels by the Ugandan army with support from the U.S. government.

It seems overtly difficult to engage a group of fighters, whether militarily or peacefully, without knowing what they stand for. Such lack of understanding, arguably throughout the entire existence of the LRA, has played a significant role in the failure to resolve the conflict. Erroneous descriptions of the LRA as a Christian fundamentalist group composed of drugged children led by a madman have led to a profound underestimation of the strength and military ability of the LRA.

Based on extensive research in all areas where the LRA operates, as well as in northern Uganda where the LRA originated, this paper aims to shed light on the nature of the "new" LRA in the hope that some of the information presented here can help to finally bring an end to the conflict that is taking place outside of Uganda but which continues to affect northern Uganda also.<sup>2</sup>

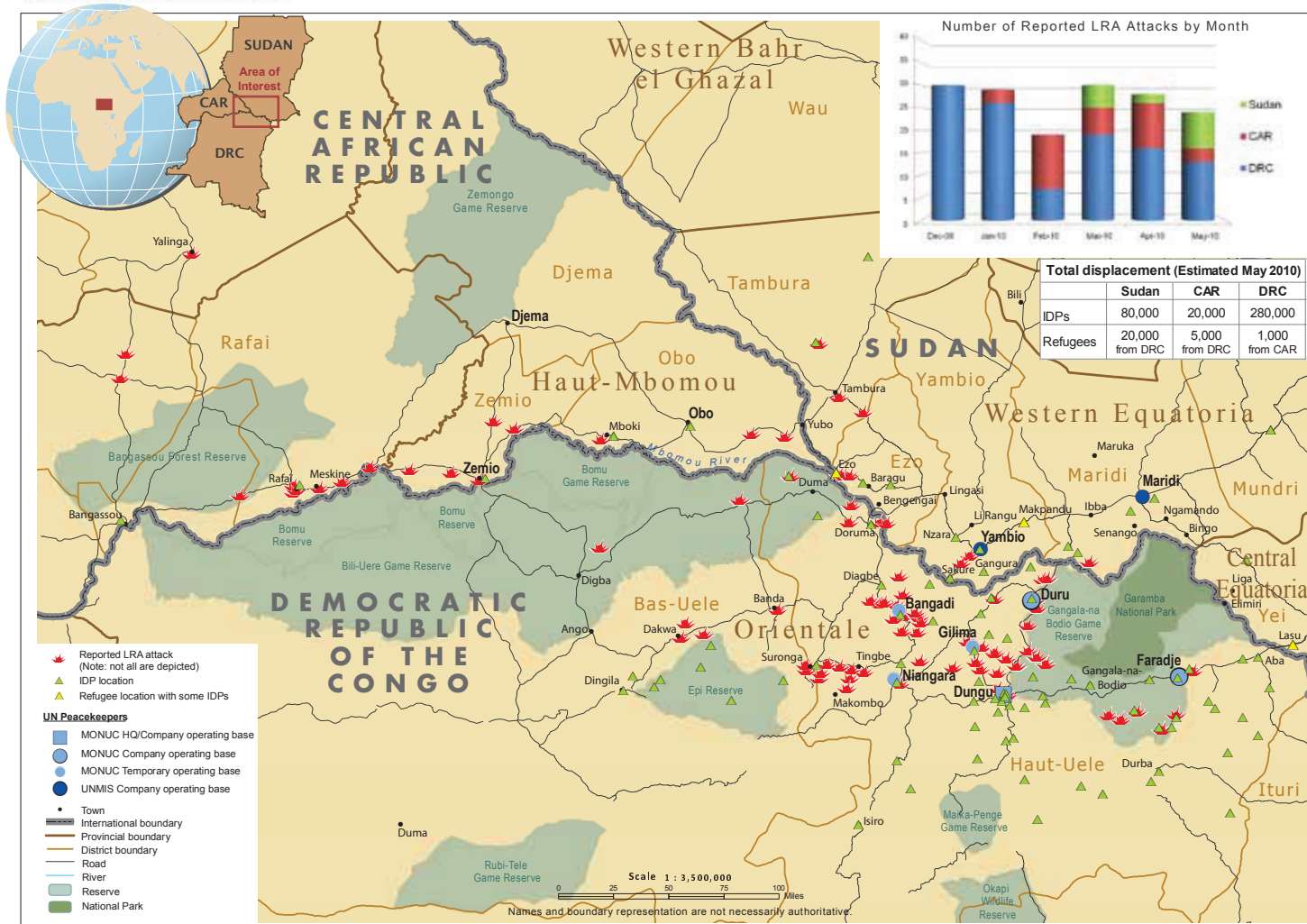
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## The LRA in history

A detailed historical account of the LRA is beyond the scope of this report. However, a few key aspects from the group's past remain important to understanding the LRA at present. It is important to understand, for instance, how Kony incorporated elements of

# Lord Resistance Army reported attacks (December 2009-May 2010), displacement, and peacekeepers

HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION UNIT



Source: U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit, USG, MONUC, UN OCHA, UNHCR, Resolve Uganda, ENOUGH, Human Rights Watch.

military strategy and religious fervor into the LRA, learning from prior failed rebellions in northern Uganda against the regime of President Yoweri Museveni. One important aspect that emerges strongly throughout the existence of the LRA is the organization's adaptability to ever-changing circumstances. Kony's skill in using lessons learned from the past to evolve as needed accounts for a great degree of his personal longevity and that of his organization.

The influence of the Holy Spirit Movement, or HSM, on the LRA cannot be underestimated. Led by Alice Auma, who claimed to have been possessed by spirits, the HSM enjoyed widespread support in the North in 1986, immediately after Museveni came to power. HSM soldiers "purified" of evil by potions concocted by Auma, marched mostly

unarmed against the soldiers of Museveni's National Resistance Army, or NRA, advancing across much of the country before eventually succumbing to the NRA's superior numbers and firepower.

Kony was trained as a traditional healer at some point in his youth, and learned to use to his advantage the potent mix of Catholicism and traditional Acholi beliefs, initially practiced by Auma. But Kony was no spiritual figurehead; instead, his role was more of a political commissar who instilled an ideology, often in the form of religious beliefs, to motivate the LRA.

A more direct influence on Kony and the LRA was the Uganda People's Democratic Army, or UPDA, a group of former Acholi officers from the Ugandan national army from before Museveni came to power. One of the UPDA's founders, Odong Latek, was the first military commander and trainer of fighters in the organization later to be named the LRA. After Latek was killed in 1989, LRA military training continued under other former Acholi soldiers, including Ceasar Achellam and "Nixma" Opuk Oryang, who remain in the LRA today.

Following the defeat of both the UPDA and HSM rebellions, the majority of people in northern Uganda were understandably hesitant to engage in further conflict, despite abuses on the part of NRA soldiers and Karimojong tribesmen taking advantage of the chaos created after Museveni took power. Kony, who started his movement toward the end of 1987, was finding difficulty attracting followers by 1988. He then turned to a practice widely used by Museveni's NRA: the recruitment of children. Learning from Alice Auma's father, Severino Lukoya, who abducted children from the North in order to continue his daughter's rebellion, Kony put in place a strategy the LRA still uses today: abducting young men and women and forcing them to fight for the LRA.

The abductions and forced recruitment quickly lost the LRA any popular support it might have initially enjoyed in northern Uganda. By 1994, Kony was feeling the strains of a Ugandan army offensive against the LRA and was allegedly prepared to agree to peace as part of an initiative by Acholi politician and mediator Betty Bigombe. At the same time, it appears Kony found a new sponsor in the government of Sudan, and what had been an internal conflict within Uganda became a key element within a broader regional conflict.

Khartoum commenced assistance to Kony in retaliation for Uganda's support to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, or SPLA, the southern Sudanese rebellion against the central government. The Sudanese Armed Forces, or SAF, provided a base of operations for the LRA near Juba in South Sudan, as well as ammunition, guns, uniforms, and military training. In return, the LRA attacked the SPLA. Sudanese support for the LRA only ended in 2005, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and South.

A combination of the cessation of Sudanese support and increased Ugandan military pressure forced the LRA out of northern Uganda and southern Sudan. By the end of 2006 all LRA units had moved from bases in South Sudan's Central Equatoria State to Garamba National Park in the Congo's Province Orientale. At the same time, peace talks in Juba, mediated by Sudanese Vice President Riek Machar, started in earnest. This process was widely perceived as the best chance for a negotiated end to the conflict, but the talks fell apart at the end of 2008 when Kony repeatedly failed to sign the final accord.

By December 2008, the Ugandan government had decided to deal with the LRA militarily. On December 14, 2008, the Ugandan army, with support from the U.S. African Command, launched Operation Lightning Thunder and destroyed the LRA bases around Garamba. However, all of the LRA commanders escaped unharmed. The offensive caused the LRA to scatter across the region and begin a renewed campaign of violence.

By August of 2010, LRA groups were scattered in DRC, South Sudan and very far north into CAR, close to the South Darfur area in Sudan. It is the first time in the LRA's history that the group is splintered in many small groups operating thousands of kilometers from one another.

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## The LRA today

There are many similarities between the LRA of the past (pre-December 2008) and that of the present. Kony exerts a powerful personal influence over his troops. The LRA remains a movement largely dominated by people from northern Uganda, and LRA commanders continue to tell their fighters that they will soon return to Uganda where everyone will be rewarded with posts in the Ugandan government or army.

Despite these commonalities, much has changed within the LRA in the past 22 months. Kony no longer has complete and direct command-and-control over each LRA group. As fighters from northern Uganda defect or are killed and are replaced by foreign fighters, the Ugandans are decreasing in number relative to Congolese, Central African, and Sudanese fighters.

It is fear rather than ideology that keeps Ugandan and foreign fighters in the LRA today. The LRA's rank-and-file fear being killed by their commanders if caught trying to escape or fear of being killed by the national armies or relatives of people they killed, once they return home.

Crucially, the number of fighters in the LRA is dwindling. About 400 fighters remain operational today, less than half of the number in action of two years ago. While the ranks of foreign fighters have been replenished, the Ugandan fighters are at an all-time low. There has been a slow but steady defection of Ugandans since December 2008.

Were this rate to remain constant for the next 12 months, there would hardly be any Ugandan fighters left in the LRA.

Despite being weakened, the LRA's propensity for violence remains undiminished. The LRA has become efficient at creating mass havoc with very few fighters, which is not surprising given their propensity to target unarmed civilians. What keeps Kony and other commanders going is the possibility of renewed external support, particularly from their former backers in Khartoum. Without Sudanese support, there are few options left for Kony, who has seen his organization reach its weakest point in the last 15 years. But by securing new support from Sudan, as happened in 1994 and 2002, the LRA could pose a significant threat across the region, particularly in South Sudan.

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### The role of religion and traditional beliefs

There is a persistent misconception that the LRA seeks to overthrow the Ugandan government and replace it with a government based upon the Ten Commandments, creating the impression that the LRA is a Christian fundamentalist group. This view is not only incomplete, it also underestimates the military knowhow of the LRA, portraying them as a group of religious fanatics rather than as a well-trained and highly disciplined fighting force.

For the LRA, religion serves as a code of conduct rather than a *raison d'être*. Kony and his commanders have used religion and traditional beliefs primarily to ensure adherence to military discipline and create an environment where commanders are respected and feared. As a former LRA commander said, "The man who believes [in God] is a good fighter." When infused with Kony's personal mysticism, religion in the LRA has provided a much-needed ideology to justify the violent actions of the organization, including mass atrocities against civilians.

Religion is cleverly used in the LRA to enforce military discipline. For instance, although fighters are forbidden to sleep with other fighters' "wives" because it is a sin, the practical rationale is that it ensures military coherence. Battlefield feats are regarded as condoned by God or the spirits. Defections are referred to as abominations likely to incur the wrath of the spirits no matter where the offenders go. Forced abductions and violence are often portrayed in religious terms as the cleansing and purification of sinful people, especially of the Acholi in northern Uganda.

Kony borrowed the purification theme from Alice Auma who told her supporters her mission was to cleanse the Acholi from their sins, a quasi-Biblical mission to purify Uganda's Gomorrah. However, Kony uses these religious overtones much more practically. He channels spirits who give him military orders, among other directives, and uses Biblical references to justify behavior such as polygamy.

Religion and tradition beliefs also reinforce Kony's cult of personality, which he has built through a combination of mysticism and ruthlessness. While using traditional beliefs to scare LRA fighters away from defecting—many who defected from the LRA in the past were afraid that Kony's spirits would harm them even when out of the bush—Kony also gave orders to kill those who disobeyed him. According to LRA fighters, after Kony gave orders to kill his deputy Vincent Otti in 2007, Kony gathered all of his commanders from the rank of second lieutenant and above. Kony told them that he was not a general (a title he conferred upon himself) because of his praying but because of his killing. "There is no general in the world who did not kill," he said, according to former fighters who were present.

By the end of 1999, Kony underwent a transformation from a leader with mystical powers to a military commander with religious convictions. At that time Kony gathered most of his fighters in Sudan and told them that the spirits he had channeled had abandoned him. According to former fighters, people in LRA camps were deeply troubled and scared that since the spirits left Kony they were doomed. Kony responded that the spirits from then on came to him only in his dreams. A commander was assigned to write down Kony's dreams and interpret them, a sort of a modern day oracle.<sup>3</sup> While it is unclear why Kony decided to take such action, it appears he wanted LRA fighters and commanders to fear him as a military man or a "general who kills," rather than respect him as a mystic.

More recently, belief in Kony's supernatural powers has waned among LRA fighters. After December 2008, when the LRA had scattered across three countries, fighters who defected rarely referred to fear of Kony's spirit powers as a reason for staying with the LRA. In recent interviews with ex-LRA fighters, most say that the only reason why low level fighters stay with the LRA is fear of being killed by their commanders if caught trying to escape or of being killed or mistreated by Ugandan soldiers.

It should be possible to increase the incentives for soldiers to defect by improving the quality of information campaigns and ensuring that those LRA fighters who do defect are treated fairly by the Ugandan government.

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## Numbers and composition

Based on Enough interviews with former LRA fighters, there are about 400 LRA fighters operating in three countries. This number does not include women, children, and abductees who are used solely to carry food and other looted materials. Close to 250 fighters are Ugandans, the other 150 being from Sudan, Congo, and CAR. The Ugandan army claims that from December 14, 2008 through August 2010, the UPDF killed 397 LRA fighters and captured 63, with another 123 defections. The UPDF has not specified the nationality of fighters killed or the exact number of fighters remaining in the LRA.



Despite the relatively large number of foreign fighters, the Ugandans dominate the LRA. Only the Ugandans are promoted to senior ranks and everyone is forced to learn Lwo, the dominant language of northern Uganda. Some Ugandan fighters who recently defected do not even refer to foreigners as fighters; in their eyes only the Ugandans are “real fighters.”

The number of foreign fighters and “wives” per LRA group are mostly kept constant based on the group’s ability to feed, clothe, and arm a certain number of people at a given time. Perhaps fearing a mutiny, LRA commanders usually keep more armed Ugandan fighters than armed foreigners in their groups and always more Ugandan officers. Many foreign fighters are armed with machetes and knives rather than sub-machine guns.

Contrary to the commonly-held belief that the LRA is composed mostly of children, the majority of people in the LRA are adults. At least one third of abductees are less than 18-years-old, of which the majority are girls taken by commanders as “wives.” A great number of abductees are either killed or escape within the first few weeks after being captured. Those who stay tend to go through a trial period when they are forced to carry and prepare food. This time period varies and depends upon the circumstances facing the particular LRA group at a given time.

After a period of 15 to 30 days, the abductees are provided weapons, starting with machetes and eventually sub-machine guns. Abductees can quickly gain the status of “fighters” if they can kill government soldiers and steal their guns. Some LRA groups, including Kony’s, continue to practice “cleansing” ceremonies for new recruits. A “controller,” (a young fighter, usually Ugandan, with experience in LRA practices) anoints with oil or “holy water” the new recruits as a way to signal their entry to the LRA as fighters. There is very little military training offered to abductees who are then forced to bear the brunt of attacks. Instead they are “trained on the job,” according to one former LRA commander. Foreign fighters sustain the highest number of casualties in the LRA due to their lack of experience and training.

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## Organizational hierarchy

The LRA’s chain-of-command bears a strong resemblance to that of the Ugandan army, with the following officer ranks in order of increasing authority: Sergeant, Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier, and Major General.

Ranks are assigned by Kony himself, mostly based on bravery shown during battle. Commanders operating separately from Kony’s group typically ask for Kony’s permission before promoting soldiers in their groups. Time spent with the LRA does not guarantee an officer’s rank above that of a sergeant. Education is also not a factor, with the notable exception of Okello Patrick ‘Mission’ who graduated from Makerere University



## LRA organizational structure—August 2010

Approximate total operational fighting force = 400

Approximate Officer Corps (captain and above) = 70

Number of officers (captain and above) captured or killed since December 2008 = 26

Total number of captured, killed or defected since December 2008 including officers\* = 583

### **Maj. General Joseph Kony (Cmdr. in chief/chairman of the LRA/command alter)**

Lt. Col. Otoo Agweng (Chief security/cmdr. HPU\*\*); Col. Leonard 'Lubwar' Bwone (Grp. cmdr.\*\*\*); Capt. Labalpiny (Signaller); Maj. Okumu Dombola (Chief of personal detail); Lt. Col. Charles Komak-ech (Dir. home guard—chief security for Kony's family); Capt. Justine Atimango 'Lakwena' (Dir. of religious affairs/Kony's spiritual adviser); Capt. Otika (Bodyguard/messenger); Lt. Alex Ojara (Sick bay)

### **Brig. Okot Odhiambo (LRA Army cmdr./cmdr. 'Nigeria')**

Col. Onen Acirokop 'Unita' (Deputy); Lt. Col. Acaye Doctor (Grp. cmdr.); Lt. Col. Francis Abucingu (Grp. cmdr.); Maj. Olanya (Grp. cmdr.); Maj. Odooki (Grp. cmdr.)

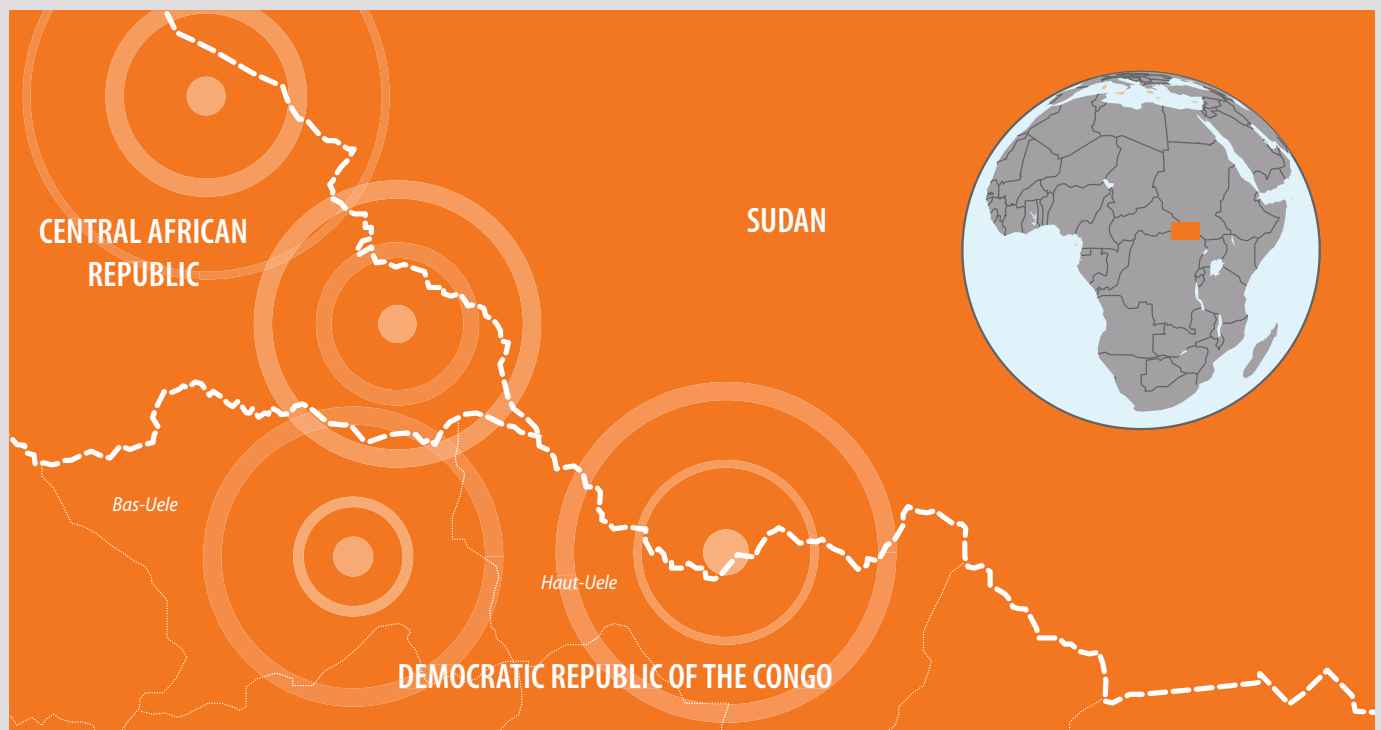
### **Brig. Caesar Achellam (Grp. cmdr.)**

Col. Alphonse Lamola (Deputy/Kony's personal envoy)

### **Brig. Dominic Onwgen (Cmdr. of Congo ops.)**

Lt. Col. Okumy Binansio 'Binany' (Deputy); Brig. Ochan Bunia (Grp. cmdr./sick bay); Col. Ochan Labongo (Grp. cmdr.); Lt. Col. Opiyo Sam (Grp. cmdr./Kony's personal envoy); Lt. Col. Achellam Smart (Grp. cmdr.); Lt. Col. Okot Odek (Grp. cmdr.); Brig. 'Nixman' Opuk Oryang (Grp. cmdr.); Maj. Odano (Binany's deputy/Grp. cmdr.); Maj. Obol (Grp. cmdr.)

## LRA area of operations



\* Ugandan army statistics. The number includes non-combatants like women and children.

\*\* High Protection Unit, Kony's personal security detail, at times referred to as HAPPO Brigade, a corruption of HPU.

\*\*\* Grp. cmdr. = Commander of satellite unit within bigger groups. Commanders of smaller groups, usually junior officers, are not included. Each big group splits often in many small groups to avoid being tracked or to attack swiftly.

before joining the LRA in 2007 during the Juba Talks. Mission, who has claimed he was sent by Kony to negotiate on his behalf with the Sudanese Armed Forces in October 2009, was known as the LRA political commissar, but his exact rank was unclear. LRA fighters with a medical background are also given junior officer ranks.

Kony assigns ranks arbitrarily, so as to reward or punish fighters and entrench his influence over them. Kony is often reported to have demoted officers on the spot for misbehavior or to have granted high ranks to young fighters, depending on his mood. Kony made one of his sons, Salim Saleh (named after Museveni's brother and a general in the Ugandan army) a sergeant at age five. Saleh, now 21 years old, holds the rank of captain and travels in Kony's group.

Once assigned, ranks are highly respected and discipline is strictly observed. Everyone in the LRA, including the newly abducted, is aware of officers' ranks in their groups. Officers receive preferential treatment when it comes to food, service, and women. Only officers, from the rank of sergeant and above, have the right to take "wives," who are usually assigned by the highest ranking officer in the group. Officers are allowed to listen to radios for entertainment. Officers also decide who lives or dies.

Officers have a higher survival rate than the rest of the fighters in the LRA, as they try to avoid direct contact with military forces. Kony, who calls himself a major general, the highest rank in the LRA, does not fight. When camping, the most senior officer in the group resides in the middle of the group, protected on all sides by his fighters. The lower the rank the further out in the circle a fighter is positioned, and the more likely he is to be attacked by an incoming force. In the absence of material benefit, all the perks given to officers are intended to encourage privates to fight harder and climb ranks.

Many former fighters say that promotions are mostly desirable due to the respect shown by other fighters. Given the relatively young age of LRA fighters, LRA commanders have effectively used ranks not only to encourage bravery in the battlefield but also to control the lives of the young fighters who after being bestowed a certain rank feel bound to the organization. "I tried very hard to become a lieutenant," said a former fighter who was captured by the UPDF, "and once I succeeded I wanted to become a captain so I fought hard and obeyed all orders."

Unlike in a regular army, rank in the LRA does not necessarily translate to commanding a given number of fighters. The highest ranking officers are also not always in charge of a particular group. Brigadier Nixman Opuk Oryang, a former Ugandan army officer and the LRA intelligence officer before December 2008, served at some point under the group of Lt. Colonel Achellam Smart in Congo.

Few non-Ugandans hold officer ranks in the LRA. There are reportedly at least two Congolese and one Sudanese lieutenants and a few more hold the rank of sergeant. A

Sudanese Acholi by the name of Santo Acheta, who surrendered in April 2010, was a captain, the highest ranking foreign officer in the LRA.

At least one Acholi woman, Captain Christine Aling, is known to be a commander. Aling is a wife to Major Odooki and the only remaining female officer, three others having been killed in the past. One of Kony's "wives," a Sudanese woman Kony calls the First Lady, appears to have assumed the role of an officer and wields significant power in the LRA. It is unclear why this woman is powerful given that Kony has many "wives," including the sister of one of his top commanders Dominic Ongwen, none of which have real power in the LRA.

Other members of Kony's family fighting in the LRA include two of his sons, both of whom were born and raised in the LRA ranks. Apart from Salim Saleh, Kony's other son, Ali, is in his late teens and is a private. One of Kony's half brothers, Olanya Richard, is a major in the LRA and almost always operates near Kony's or Odhiambo's group.

### The LRA high command

Four commanders make up the high command of the LRA, all of whom hold the rank of Brigadier with the exception of Kony. In order of influence they are: 1) Joseph Kony, 2) Okot Odhiambo, 3) Ceasar Achellam, and 4) Dominic Ongwen. There are two other brigadiers in the LRA – Ochan Bunia and Nixman Opuk Oryang – but they do not have the same power as the top four mostly due to old age.

Two very influential commanders, Colonel Santo Alit and Brigadier Bok Abudema, were killed in 2009. Abudema was a confidante of Kony and his personal executioner, responsible for executing the former LRA deputy Vincent Otti on Kony's orders in October 2007, as well as Otti's allies in the LRA, Brigadier Ben Achellam and Major Alfred Otim "Record."

### Joseph Kony

Kony's influence in the LRA remains unchallenged. Despite being on the run for more than 21 months, Kony has tried to maintain control over his scattered troops. He relays orders to his commanders by using messengers (runners) and sporadic text messages sent via satellite phones. Kony has also tried to 'inspect' and rally troops personally. In March 2010 Kony crossed from CAR, where he had spent the past 10 months, into northeast Congo. He was believed to have met with commanders in Congo before returning to CAR. Apart from decisions on strategy, Kony has continued to personally assign ranks to fighters and has sought to reestablish contact with the SAF via his personal envoys.

Kony's resolve to fight until the end appears strong. Former fighters claim that Kony, who refers to himself at times as King David, Solomon, or even Hitler, has said he will

never be captured alive or surrender. Kony apparently fears being killed or poisoned by the Ugandan government if he decided to come out peacefully. Kony has been known to frequently mention the case of former SPLA leader John Garang who died in an air crash aboard a Ugandan army helicopter in July 2005 returning from a visit in Uganda. Kony believes he will suffer a similar fate.

Some former fighters, notably Okello Mission, have said that Kony is open to resuming peace talks and even tried to reach out to the Juba Talks mediator Riek Machar. One of Kony's wives captured in July 2010 said that Kony thinks the International Criminal Court, or ICC, indictments are the biggest stumbling block to peace although he apparently also fears that he will hang if he agrees to go to The Hague. Even though Kony was briefed on the ICC indictments during two years of negotiations as part of the Juba Talks, he appears to not understand some of the basic functions of the ICC.

#### *Okot Odhiambo*

After Kony, Okot Odhiambo is technically second in command of the LRA, although Caesar Achellam has recently become very powerful due to his alleged dealings with the SAF.

Designated Head of the Army, as opposed to Kony who is Chairman of the LRA and overall commander, Odhiambo is Kony's most loyal commander. Odhiambo was entrusted by Kony to carry out many operations, including abductions in CAR during the Juba Talks, which he did successfully. For the last year, Odhiambo has almost always operated in the vicinity of Kony's group in CAR.

Wielding enormous influence, Odhiambo has acted as a go-between with LRA commanders in CAR, Sudan, and Congo. Odhiambo's authority is unquestioned and his orders come directly from Kony. Odhiambo has also been in charge of doing Kony's dirty work. Odhiambo gave the order to his second-in-command, Brigadier Bok Abudema, to execute Otti and his commanders, while Kony hid nearby, according to former fighters. Odhiambo also ensured that there was no mass exodus following the execution, as Otti was widely respected in the LRA. Odhiambo was the person who profited most from Otti's elimination, effectively taking his place as the de jure number two in the LRA.

Odhiambo will likely continue to follow Kony's lead, although some former fighters believe that Odhiambo could be persuaded to surrender if he were promised safe return to Uganda and material benefit for himself and his soldiers. On January 2009, a man claiming to be Odhiambo and wanting out contacted representatives of United Nations organizations in Uganda, although it appears that was a hoax. There have been no efforts by the Ugandan government to engage Odhiambo in talks as was the case with Otti.

### *Cesar Achellam*

Cesar Achellam is one of the most important LRA commanders and potentially the only commander, apart from Kony, that might hold the key to dismantling the LRA. A former professional soldier, Achellam is sometimes referred to by other LRA fighters as major general, the same rank Kony holds.

It is possible that Achellam became Kony's deputy after Vincent Otti was executed in 2007, although some LRA commanders who are now in Uganda claim that position was never filled. Achellam is believed to be Kony's envoy liaising with the SAF. According to Okello Mission and another former LRA fighter, Captain Kenneth Oyet, Achellam led an LRA group to meet with SAF officers in October 2009.

Achellam should be encouraged as much as possible by the Ugandan government to leave the LRA. He has more reasons than any other top LRA commander to defect. He is one of the LRA's oldest commanders (reportedly in his early 60s) and may not want to spend the rest of his life in the bush. Achellam is the only commander in Kony's inner circle to have incurred the wrath of the LRA leader in the past but who remains alive and powerful. In June 2007 Achellam was allegedly put under arrest after Kony suspected him of wanting to come out of the bush in light of the Juba Talks.

According to one of his "wives" who recently came out, Achellam risked being executed alongside Otti in October 2007 but was apparently pardoned by Kony. His escort however was reduced to only two soldiers, a public humiliation, given that other commanders holding his rank had 13 or more soldiers. Achellam is also the only top commander not subject to an ICC arrest warrant. Given that his knowledge of the LRA is on par with that of Kony, the apprehension or defection of Achellam could significantly destabilize the LRA.

### *Dominic Ongwen*

Dominic Ongwen is a powerful commander who is widely feared in the LRA, and the current commander of LRA forces operating in Congo. Alongside with Binany, Ongwen was commander of Central Brigade, trusted with Kony's security when based in Garamba. One of the fastest risers in the LRA—he was a major in 2002—Ongwen, who is in his early 30s, is the youngest LRA fighter to hold the rank of brigadier.

Former fighters claim that Ongwen is the only LRA commander to openly debate and disagree with Kony in the post-December 2008 era. At the same time, his loyalty to Kony has helped to cement his position of influence in the organization. Ongwen is also one of the fiercest and most brutal LRA commanders. It is no coincidence that Ongwen was put in charge of Congo operations after December 2008 and that he has been able to operate independently for most of the last 21 months. If Kony is killed or captured, Ongwen will likely continue the fight, especially if he can keep Kony's elimination secret from other fighters. Like Kony and Odhiambo, Ongwen is under ICC indictment and less likely to want to leave the LRA ranks.

Ongwen is the only senior LRA commander and ICC indictee, who was abducted as a teenager and has spent most of his life with the LRA. If he is encouraged to come out of the bush he will be able to significantly destabilize the LRA as he could bring out with him a considerable number of fighters and commanders. In order to come out he will need to be promised that the ICC indictment will be lifted and that he will receive a salary and perhaps a position in the Ugandan army. Ongwen has claimed, not without justification, that the Juba Talks were insufficient in offering LRA commanders incentives to defect.

### Mid-level leadership

The mid level leadership of the LRA has gained significance in the last two years because some of these commanders have been operating independently of Kony for a while now. Mid level commanders can also provide the answer to dismantling the LRA. If the right incentives to defect are offered to these commanders, who are not under ICC indictments, the LRA, especially the groups in Congo and South Sudan, will cease to exist. Messages designed to encourage the defections of LRA fighters should be specifically designed to persuade these commanders, who all listen to radios, to abandon the LRA.

Some of the most prominent names in the second tier of the top leadership of the LRA are Colonels Alphonse Lamola, Onen “Unita,” and Lubwar Bwone, as well as Lt. Colonels Okot Odek, Achellam Smart, Binansio “Binany” Okumu, and Otoo Agweng. Replacements for the top LRA command will come directly from these commanders.

Odek and Smart have been acting independently for the last 20 months. Odek was charged with the important task of maintaining a presence in the Garamba National Park as well as protecting caches of ammunition buried in the pre-Operation Lightning Thunder days. This is an important task if the theory is true that Kony plans to come back to Uganda via Garamba. Smart was in charge of securing the area of Ango territory to the north of Bas Uele in Congo but later he moved to CAR on Kony’s orders, leaving Nixman Opuk Oryang in charge. On the border with CAR, northern Ango territory is strategic for the LRA as it provides a safe passage for top commanders and fighters escaping Ugandan army attacks in CAR or neighboring Haut Uele.

Okot Odek should be vigorously encouraged to leave the LRA. He served under the command of Lt. Colonel Arop, who surrendered to Ugandan forces in November 2009. Odek is the only commander from Arop’s group who remains in the bush. According to Arop, Odek was open to leaving the LRA when Arop called him just before surrendering. Two lieutenants who defected said morale in Odek’s group was low but fear of being killed by the UPDF stopped the other fighters from surrendering. Odek has operated virtually independently for the past 21 months with no control from LRA’s high command.



Agweng and Binany are important officers mostly because of the fear they inspire in other LRA fighters. Agweng is Kony's chief bodyguard and responsible for many deaths ordered directly by Kony. He is thought to have shot together with Abudema, Vincent Otti's allies, Ben Achellam and Otim Record. Agweng travels with Kony and 12 other bodyguards and enjoys legendary status among the LRA fighters, who regard him as invincible. Given his close proximity to Kony, Agweng can be very useful in disclosing LRA's secrets if captured or convinced to surrender.

Binany, on the other hand, is reportedly a sadistic killer. He is known for killing most civilians he comes across in Congo. The unit he operates northwest of Dungu in Haut Uele is responsible for some of the worst recent massacres in Makombo and Tapili. As one of the fighters under his command said, "Binany liked to kill civilians. He said [the civilians] were all enemies and would tell the UPDF about our locations." Binany and his men are also responsible for indulging in the vile practice of mutilating civilians. Given that Ongwen appears to have crossed in Sudan recently, it is important for the Ugandan army to convince Binany to surrender. If both Binany and Odek come out, the LRA's operations in DRC will be significantly hampered.

There are at least 80 other officers in the LRA most of whom are from northern Uganda. Given that all these officers listen to radio programs, messages aimed at encouraging LRA defections should exclusively target them. Mid-level and junior officers should be made to feel that they face no repercussions in Uganda and that they will be able to find opportunities to start life afresh in Uganda, including resuming studies and being trained in vocational skills. Targeting LRA privates via radio messages is ineffective given they are not allowed to listen to radios.

However, there are signs that some of the radio programs on Uganda's Broadcasting Cooperation as well as from local stations sponsored by the United Nations (mostly MONUCSO) are having some positive results. A UPDF officer pursuing Odhiambo's group in May 2010 found 40 destroyed radios in one of the group's camps. While it is possible Odhiambo mistakenly thought the radios could be used to track the group, it is likely he ordered to destroy the radios to stop his commanders from listening to programs encouraging defections.

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## Military strategy and troop movement

The LRA previously operated as a highly centralized organization controlled by Kony and his top commanders. In the aftermath of Operation Lightning Thunder, Kony met with most of his commanders and assigned them areas of influence in Congo, CAR, and Sudan. Three days after the initial UPDF bombardment of their base in Garamba, LRA fighters regrouped and started to move in five big groups following the same line of command as before Lightning Thunder. But the appearance of UPDF ground forces

forced the LRA groups to fragment into even smaller groups. See the Appendix for details on the specific LRA groups, composition, and likely locations.

There are two types of fighters in LRA groups; active soldiers and nonactive soldiers. Active soldiers do most of the fighting. Assigned in so-called “standby teams,” active fighters receive training in battle formation, escape tactics, ambush strategies, and handling weapons including mines and heavy machine guns. Active soldiers are promoted faster than the nonactive soldiers. A former LRA fighter stated that members of his old standby unit kept a tally of how many people each person had killed, a game the commanders also encouraged.

Nonactive soldiers do not go on sorties and are not part of standby teams even in small groups. According to former LRA fighters, nonactive soldiers (known as “pretenders;” they pretend to be sick when asked to go on sorties) are classified as such because they have shown no courage in battle. Nonactive soldiers are put in charge of guarding the camp or abductees. The highest rank nonactive soldiers receive is Second Lieutenant.

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of nonactive soldiers but these are the soldiers who tend to leave the LRA when they can. Because they have not participated in many massacres or killings, these fighters have less reason to fear persecution by families of LRA victims in Uganda. Messages encouraging defections should be directly targeted at some of these fighters who are most prone to surrender especially if they were convinced they would not be harmed back in Uganda.

### Groups' movements

Most LRA groups are constantly on the move as they are pursued by Ugandan army troops. Mobility is critical to all the groups, and anyone who is considered to be slowing down the group is abandoned and usually killed. All fighters move in military formation, usually in single or double file if needing to move fast.

Most LRA commanders use maps and compasses for orientation. Some commanders, including Kony, are reportedly in possession of GPS devices. The UPDF has often captured LRA messengers with coded GPS coordinates intended to inform commanders of rendezvous locations. LRA groups move alongside rivers and secondary roads. In the past two years, LRA fighters have also used cattle paths, created by the nomadic Mbororo cattle herders who move with their cattle between CAR, Congo, and Sudan.

LRA groups use advanced parties composed of a few soldiers who walk ahead of the rest of the group to ensure the group does not fall into an ambush. There is also a rear guard made up of a handful of soldiers. Abductees, women, and children usually walk in the middle carrying food and other materials. LRA groups usually walk during the day and rest for a few hours at night although at times they walk during the night also.

For the most part Kony moves only with his personal escort and joins his family when the group camps for the night. Kony always walks in the middle of his escort but when escaping an attack he runs by himself or with one bodyguard. His bodyguards and small groups of LRA fighters from Kony's large group walk in a military formation aimed at shielding Kony from danger. "Imagine a spider web with bells attached to it," said a former LRA commander describing Kony's formation. "When there is an attack to the left of Kony, bells ring and he moves to the right." Kony's fighters are also adept at providing blocking tactics; they provide cover for Kony when he escapes and stay behind to fight incoming forces. The discipline and bravery of Kony's bodyguards and fighters is the major reason Ugandan forces have rarely been able to get close to Kony on the ground.

### Pre-attack tactics

LRA groups almost always follow the same method before attacking a location. They try to gain as much knowledge about the place they are attacking as possible by capturing and interrogating locals or by sending spies. More often than not, the LRA prefer to abduct people just before an attack to extract information regarding any defenses. The LRA will use fighters as spies, but also employ abducted people or Mbororo cattle herders. In the case of the Mbororo, their families are usually held hostage by the LRA and they are forced to spy. This has led some people in Congo and Sudan to accuse the Mbororo of willingly collaborating with the LRA, which has generally not been the case.

Overall, LRA groups are extremely cautious when planning an attack, unless they are desperate. If they lack advance information or if there is a military force stationed around a potential target, they will usually refrain from attacking. The exception is when they receive explicit orders from Kony or top commanders to attack, or when Kony or other commanders are in imminent danger. When this is the case, LRA fighters will attack no matter the troop strength of their enemies.

LRA fighters have usually refrained from attacking UPDF soldiers but not always. There are a few known cases during the past year when the LRA attacked UPDF soldiers in Sudan and in Congo. In July 2010, UPDF commander of Land Forces Katumba Wamala stated that LRA fighters had killed 32 UPDF soldiers from June 2009 until July 2010. Privately however, UPDF sources say more than 100 UPDF soldiers have died while pursuing the LRA since December 2008. Some of these soldiers were killed by the LRA; others perished to disease. Other armies, particularly the Congolese army, or FARDC, are frequently targeted by the LRA, mostly to steal their uniforms, guns, and ammunition.

## Uniforms

In the past, LRA soldiers wore uniforms stolen from the UPDF and the SPLA. LRA-inspired symbols and epaulets were sewn on commanders' uniforms to indicate rank. LRA uniforms were also designed to look like UPDF uniforms in order to confuse the people LRA fighters were about to attack and preserve the element of surprise crucial to LRA attacks in northern Uganda.

After December 2008, LRA fighters and commanders have worn mostly old uniforms, stolen from the UPDF, the FARDC, or the SPLA. They continue to use uniforms as a means of deception. In an attack in Mboki in CAR on July 24, 2009, LRA fighters trying to enter the town's market told civilians they were from the UPDF, which had just entered the neighboring town of Obo. Similarly, LRA fighters wearing FARDC uniforms have been reported in attacks in Congolese towns in Haut Uele.

A great number of LRA fighters lack uniforms and wear civilian clothing, especially those who were abducted and forced to fight since December 2008. While there have been no reports of LRA fighters in possession of new uniforms, one exception is worrying. Former LRA fighters claimed Ongwen's fighters were recently wearing brand new uniforms and boots and possessed new guns and plenty of ammunition. This is especially troubling as it coincides with Ongwen's move into Sudan. People abducted by Ongwen's forces in Congo who recently escaped did not report new uniforms or guns in their groups.

## Weapons

The Kalashnikov assault rifle is the weapon of choice for the LRA. Most of the fighters use Chinese-manufactured AK-47s. These weapons, and ammunition for them, are widely available throughout the region as they are used by both the FARDC and SPLA.

It is not always clear exactly how LRA fighters obtain their ammunition. Former LRA say they get their bullets from dead Congolese and Sudanese soldiers, but recent testimonies regarding Ongwen's group differ. A former "wife" to Ongwen said in July 2010 that in Sudan, Ongwen's group was in possession of hundreds of rounds of AK-47 ammunition dispatched from new tin cans. She did not know where the ammunition or the uniforms came from.

Other weapons used by the LRA include the Hechler & Koch G3 7.62 mm battle rifle, the M16 5.56 mm rifle, and the Israeli made Galil 5.56 mm assault rifle. The SAF likely supplied the LRA with G3s (very likely the Sudanese built equivalent known as the Dinar/G3) but the M16s were possibly stolen from Garamba park rangers. LRA fighters took the Galils and a few blue berets from MONUSCO peacekeepers they killed in Garamba in January 2006. The Galils are almost certainly not in use any longer due to lack of ammunition.

Apart from small arms, LRA groups are in possession of rocket-propelled grenades, antipersonnel mines, and squad-level support guns such as the Russian-made PK 7.62 mm general purpose machine gun. In the past, the LRA have used Russian-made 82 mm illuminating mortars supplied by the SAF but it is unclear if LRA groups still use such weaponry. Similarly, the SAF supplied the LRA with Russian-made SPG9 73 mm caliber recoilless guns but whether LRA groups still possess such guns is not clear.<sup>4</sup>

## Communications

Despite being regarded as a rag tag band of illiterate fighters, LRA commanders have successfully used sophisticated communications technology in the past. Apart from the use of maps and satellite phones, Kony and his commanders also use dual systems phones (using satellite and mobile phone coverage), GPS monitors which the LRA commanders use to navigate and arrive at prearranged meeting places, maps, and laptops. The laptops and satellite phones were supplied to the LRA during the Juba Talks or were stolen later. The laptops, powered by solar panels, are mostly used to watch movies when groups camp for the night, LRA commanders continue to keep coded notes in notebooks. There have also been rumors that Kony has been using a Blackberry-like device.

The LRA is highly adept at finding ways to communicate without jeopardizing their security. In the mid-2000s, LRA groups used two-way radios but when they realized the Ugandan army was listening in, they started to use code language. A Ugandan army officer said he was bewildered when he first received transcripts of LRA chatter that included phrases like “did you sew the jacket?” and “did you collect the rain water?” He later found out that those particular sentences meant “did you close the road?” and “did you cross the river?”

Beginning in late 2008 and early 2009, Kony repeatedly asked his commanders to stop using radios, rightly guessing that they were used by the Ugandan military (with help from the U.S. army) to pinpoint the positions of the commanders who were then attacked. Similarly, satellite phones were initially used by the LRA right after the Juba peace talks. The Ugandan army believes that the peace delegation, which went to meet with Kony twice in 2007, brought him satellite phones and laptops. Kony, who is still believed to have at least 16 Thuraya satellite phones, ordered his commanders to use their satellite phones sparingly after May 2009.

In an attempt to avoid the triangulation of the satellite phone signal, LRA signalers started to walk for over 10 miles before making a phone call, then immediately going back to their base. This gave the Ugandan army, which receives coordinates of locations from U.S. intelligence at least 24 hours after the call is made, a vast swath of territory to cover. Frequently lacking helicopters, the Ugandan army is unable to act upon the high-value intelligence it receives.

Since May 2009 when Kony ordered his fighters to not make calls on their satellite phones some LRA commanders have continued to send coded text messages from their Thurayas. Former LRA fighters recently captured near Yambio in Sudan said that LRA fighters in Western Equatoria state were using cell phones, taking advantage of mobile coverage in South Sudan, to talk to one another.

Technology has been both a blessing and a curse for the scattered LRA groups, allowing a degree of organization but exposing the groups' locations. After it became apparent that the UPDF was listening in on LRA chatter and using coordinates to attack, the LRA went back to the traditional means of using runners to communicate. Runners are sent to find LRA commanders and convey the location and date of a meeting. Usually, runners are given the GPS coordinates and date, in code, to transmit to other commanders.

The Ugandan army has had some experience in dealing with runners, which accounted for the success of foiling one prearranged meeting in May 2009. After Operation Lightning Thunder, commanders in and around Garamba decided to meet on the first of each month in a particular location. At the end of April 2009 the UPDF intercepted a runner with a message for one of the commanders who gave vital information about the place and date of the meeting. The UPDF attacked during that meeting, killing the notorious LRA commander Major Okello 'Kalalang' and destroying several satellite phones. This attack caused the further isolation of the groups under Lt. Colonel Charles Arop and eventually caused Arop to surrender in November 2009. Close to 70 LRA fighters under Arop and his groups came out by the end of 2009.

This example is very important to understanding communication as a key weakness for the LRA. As a military analyst said, "For the LRA, communicating is a necessary evil, they have to talk to each other to plan and to survive." Kony has shown often that he is capable of adapting quickly to minimize all risks but he has not been able to completely cut off all communications.

The pursuing armies need to take full advantage of Kony's need to communicate with his far-flung commanders. It is surprising, for instance, that LRA commanders still receive airtime for their satellite phones. This vital source of support should be identified and cut off. The UPDF also needs to increase the rapid response capacity of the forces pursuing LRA commanders to utilize the intelligence it receives. If the UPDF is unable to act on intelligence it receives from the United States, the highly expensive method of collecting this information should be scrapped and funds diverted to a more efficient method.

## Overall strategy

The LRA's behavior in Congo indicates a well-developed strategy focused on maintaining a presence in Congo that enables cross-border activity in CAR, Sudan, and potentially a



route back to northern Uganda via Garamba National Park. Kony has continued to tell his fighters that ultimately the LRA will return to Uganda, overthrow Museveni, and that all LRA soldiers will become officers in the Ugandan army. A recent letter allegedly sent by an LRA group—around March 2010 when Kony moved from CAR to Congo—asks the Congolese authorities to stop attacking the LRA in return for a cessation of LRA attacks against Congolese civilians, indicating a plan for the LRA to remain present in Congo.

The LRA's activity demonstrates a commitment to maintaining the option of returning to Uganda even though some groups are now situated more than a thousand kilometers away from Uganda. A Congolese woman abducted in Banda, taken as a “wife” by an LRA commander, said that he told her, “We will wait until next year [2011] in Congo and then we will reenter Uganda.” Two LRA fighters who recently came out of the bush who operated under Lieutenant Colonel Okot Odek south of the Garamba National Park in Haut Uele, said that Okot Odek told them the LRA would soon regroup inside Garamba.

LRA movement in CAR seems designed to escape UPDF pursuing troops while keeping some presence close to the Congo border to ensure cross-border activity. Most importantly, the grouping of LRA fighters northeast of Djemah in the Zemongo forest and recent movement further north into CAR seems designed not only to hide from the Ugandan army but also to potentially link up with the SAF in their bases near the CAR border. The presence of Odhiambo and Ceasar Achellam and likely Kony in this area, and the deployment of Ongwen in South Sudan, are very troubling signs that support from Khartoum in return for destabilizing South Sudan is either planned or already in the works.

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## External support and the role of Khartoum

The LRA became a regional menace in 1994 after it started receiving support from the Sudanese government. Khartoum provided weapons and ammunition, military training, and bases in Jebelein and Rubanga Tek in South Sudan to the LRA in return for LRA attacks against the SPLA and UPDF in Uganda. Kony has indicated he visited Khartoum more than once.

Sudan's support allegedly waned in 2001 after the U.S. government put the LRA on the terrorist list but resumed in 2002. According to former LRA commanders, Kony traveled to Khartoum in 2002 before the UPDF launched Operation Iron Fist. The offensive aimed to eliminate the LRA, which prompted most LRA fighters to return to Uganda and commit many killings. Support from Khartoum very likely ended in 2005 when the government of Omar al-Bashir signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the South Sudan rebels.

Ever since Khartoum ceased its material support to the LRA, Kony has tried hard to reestablish contact with the SAF in order to secure backing once again. Odhiambo, following Kony's orders, planned to move from Garamba to southeastern CAR and

potentially to SAF bases in South Darfur. By the spring of 2007, Odhiambo had made two failed attempts to follow this itinerary but failed citing the rough desert climate.

Vincent Otti was against Kony's proposal in March 2007 to move to CAR with a view to linking with the SAF in Sudan. Kony agreed to stay in Garamba for the time being and let Otti continue with the Juba Peace Talks, partly because of Odhiambo's failed missions. This decision would later lead to Otti's death. In December 2008, the Ugandan military found in Garamba park detailed maps of the area of South Darfur with extensive notes on possible locations of SAF bases, further demonstrating Kony's efforts to reestablish contact with his former patron.

Kony has continued to find ways to link up with SAF elements in Sudan. According to Okello Mission, Kony sent a reconnaissance mission in October 2009 to South Darfur to find SAF bases. Mission, who claims he was part of this group, says that Brigadier Ceasar Achellam led the group. SPLA intelligence said an LRA group of 30 people had passed through Raja county in Western Bahr el Ghazal. The LRA group attacked a Darfuri refugee camp in Kor al-Madina on October 21, 2009 and killed five people, including three police officers.

Mission says that after a meeting, SAF officers promised that Kony's demands—delivered in a letter to an SAF colonel—would have to be run by Khartoum. It is unclear what happened next, but former LRA fighters have said Ceasar Achellam has continued to maintain contact with the SAF. Ugandan army intelligence claims that a small group of fighters crossed in Southern Darfur from CAR in the second week of January 2010 and recently LRA attacks near South Darfur have been reported. There is so far no hard proof, however, that the SAF has resumed supplying the LRA.

Regaining Khartoum's support has become the primary objective for Kony, who has pushed his troops in difficult territory and far away from Uganda. Khartoum's assistance transformed the LRA into a powerful force in the past and such support has the potential to once again reinvigorate the LRA. If Kony is unable to secure ammunition, medicine, and safe passage into northern Sudan, there is not much more he can offer his dwindling troops. Ensuring that no outside support reaches the LRA should be a priority for any strategy aimed at dealing with the LRA, through military or peaceful means.

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## Conclusion

The LRA has changed significantly since December 2008. Kony's influence on his troops has lessened since he is no longer in close proximity to a large part of his forces. Power in the LRA, previously highly centralized, has recently shifted to some LRA commanders who have operated independently of Kony in the last two years. The fragmentation

of the LRA has played a significant role in weakening the organization as witnessed in the increased role of mid-level commanders and communication challenges that have been somewhat exploited by the Ugandan army.

Fear is the sole motivation for the continuing LRA fight. The majority of the LRA fighters and commanders would leave the LRA if they were convinced that the armies and populations in Congo, Sudan, and CAR would not harm them. Many low ranking soldiers are afraid of being killed by their own commanders if caught trying to escape, as has happened in the past. Junior and mid-level commanders fear prosecution and mistreatment in Uganda if they decide to defect.

Only Kony and his top commanders—those under ICC indictments and with the most time spent in the bush—continue to say that they are fighting for the betterment of northern Uganda, according to former fighters. While such claims were perhaps legitimate in the early days of the LRA, their subsequent behavior towards northerners has stripped the LRA commanders of any legitimacy of representing true Acholi grievances.

It is important to note however, that all LRA fighters, including the highest commanders, lead a life of misery. Constantly on the run trying to escape attacks from the Ugandan army, LRA fighters suffer from many diseases including HIV/AIDS, malaria, syphilis, and malnutrition. In addition, most LRA members, including commanders, endure strict military discipline, which includes corporal punishment when orders are not carried out properly. Lacking a meaningful ideology to give the organization purpose, the LRA has become a personal vehicle for Kony's survival.

Left with little else, Kony is desperately trying to reconnect with his former backers in Khartoum. If he succeeds, the LRA will regain the sense of purpose and will pose a renewed regional threat in Central Africa. A successful approach to end this conflict once and for all should be designed to address fundamentally these two issues: the promise of support from Khartoum or any other outside sources, and the fear most LRA fighters experience when deciding to surrender. If Kony is barred from gaining any assistance and the fighters are further encouraged to leave the ranks, the LRA, at least in its current form, will soon cease to exist.

## Appendix

### LRA groups and locations as of August 2010

| Group                                                                                                                | Location                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Kony's group</b><br><br>Known as Control Alter or Central Brigade                                                 | Current location unknown, but Vakaga prefecture in CAR close to the border with South Darfur remains a strong possibility.<br><br>Kony remained in Congo until May of 2009 and then proceeded to CAR. In CAR, settled north of Obo but after UPDF attacks moved northwest towards Djemah. In October 2009, Kony's group was attacked north of Djemah and split into two. One group under Ceasar Achellam moved northeast towards Sudan while Kony moved southeast in CAR and crossed into Congo in March of 2010. | Kony moves in or with a group of 120 people, at least 80 of whom are fighters. When on the run, Kony separates from this larger group and moves with his escort comprised of 13 fighters led by Otoo Agweng.<br><br>Kony has three chief bodyguards: Agweng, Major Okumu Dombola, and Captain Otika, who frequently act as his messengers or representatives. Otika for instance was sent by Kony after Operation Lightning Thunder to supervise a unit of LRA fighters gathering intelligence in Garamba on the incoming UPDF forces. |
| <b>Odhiambo's group</b><br><br>Known as Nigeria, after the name of Odhiambo's and Abudema's base in Garamba pre-OLT. | Odhiambo has very likely pushed far into northeast CAR, possibly as far north as Birao. Previously moved between CAR and Congo, and was reportedly northeast of Djemah on May 22, 2010.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Consists of 50 people, of which 30 are fighters. Colonel Onen Aciro-kop "Unita Angola" and Kony's half brother, Major Olanya were in Odhiambo's group in May 2010. Odhiambo commands at least one other satellite group, which operates under Major Odooki northeast of Djemah and includes the only female LRA commander, Captain Christine Aling.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Achellam's group</b>                                                                                              | Likely moving between Yata Ngaya forest in CAR and Sudan's Umm Dafag area. Achellam reportedly was sent by Kony to meet the Sudanese Armed Forces in Sudan's South Darfur state.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Former LRA have said that Ceasar Achellam has 20 fighters under him and a few wives and abductees. Achellam's troops are allegedly responsible for attacks in Raja county in Western Bahr el Ghazal state in October 2009 and July 2010, on the way to SAF's base in Kafia Kingi, north of Raja county.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Ongwen's group</b><br><br>Known as Kiswahili, after his camp in Garamba                                           | It is likely Ongwen left Congo in July 2010 and moved to South Sudan. According to one of his former "wives," who was captured by the Ugandan army in July near Yambio in Western Equatoria state, Ongwen is in the vicinity of Yambio, likely in Ezo. It is not inconceivable however that he moves between Sudan and DRC as he has done in the past.                                                                                                                                                            | Dominic Ongwen has 80 people under his command, 15 of whom are unarmed women and children. Most of the officers under Ongwen in Sudan are young captains who lead small satellite groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Binany's group</b>                                                                                                | Likely operating around Dungu in Haut Uele, Congo.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Binany is now in charge of Ongwen's group in Congo. A recently escaped former LRA fighter says that Binany has 40 armed fighters under his immediate command.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

### Smaller LRA groups

| Group                                      | Location                                                                                                                                                       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Two CAR groups                             | One group of 15-20 fighters operates north of Obo. Another group moves between northern Bas Uele and southern CAR, near Rafai on the Chinko river.             | The commanders for these groups are junior officers, probably lieutenants.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Colonel Ochan Nono Labongo                 | Operating near Duru in Haut Uele, Congo                                                                                                                        | Colonel Labongo's group of 20-30 fighters includes notoriously brutal officer Lt. Colonel Opiyo Sam. They seem to be strategically placed to ensure LRA movement from northern Haut Uele to South Sudan and southeastern CAR. Labongo would have taken over Ochan Bunia's group if the latter was indeed killed by the Ugandan army. |
| Brigadier Ochan Bunia                      | UPDF twice claimed that Bunia was killed, but in June 2010 LRA defectors claimed he was alive and operating in Congo north of Garamba around Aba, Haut Uele.   | Bunia's group of 15 fighters and a large number of abductees reportedly separated from Kony's group in March 2010. Allegedly responsible for attacks in Aba in May and June 2010.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Lt. Colonel Okot Odek                      | Operates south of Garamba between Nabanga ya Talo and Ndedu in Haut Uele.                                                                                      | Command approximately 35 fighters, although the group often splits in two. Odek's orders have been to stay close to Garamba.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Lt. Colonel Achellam Smart.                | Moved to Bas Uele immediately after OLT, attacking Dungu on their way to Banda, where they killed 30-50 people in March 2009, and then split into four groups. | Before splitting, this group comprised more than 100 fighters. Smart now commands around 30 fighters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Major David Lakwo and 'Nixman' Opuk Oryang | Northern Bas Uele, between Sukadi and Gwane.                                                                                                                   | The UPDF claims to have killed Lakwo in July 2010, leaving this group of 30 fighters under the command of Nixman, the LRA's oldest commander.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Lt. Colonel Odeng Murefu                   | Poko territory Southern bas Uele.                                                                                                                              | Murefu commanded 15-20 fighters and was reportedly killed in 2009.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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## Endnotes

- 1 This paper is written on research based on 68 interviews with former LRA fighters from Northern Uganda and over 150 interviews with citizens of Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan who were abducted by the LRA and spent time with the group. Interviews were collected over a period of 14 months in four different countries in Central and East Africa. At least two dozen interviews with Ugandan, Congolese, and Sudanese military officers and local officials have also helped informed the research for this paper. All quotes come from these interviews, unless otherwise noted.
- 2 For LRA's recent activity in DRC see Ledio Cakaj, "This Is Our Land Now: Lord's Resistance Army Attacks in Bas Uele, Northeastern Congo" (Washington: Enough Project, 2010), available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/%E2%80%9C-our-land-now%E2%80%9D-lord%E2%80%99s-resistance-army-attacks-bas-uele-northeastern-congo>, and Ledio Cakaj, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: LRA Attacks and Congolese Army Abuses in Northeastern Congo" (Washington: Enough Project, 2010), available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/lra-army-abuses-congo>. For an analysis of the LRA in the Central African Republic see Ledio Cakaj, "On the Heels of Kony: The Untold Tragedy Unfolding in the Central African Republic" (Washington: Enough Project, 2010), available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/heels-of-joseph-kony-commander-of-lords-resistance-army>. For Enough's analysis on the LRA in Sudan see Ledio Cakaj "The Lord's Resistance Army and the Threat Against Civilians in Southern Sudan" (Washington: Enough Project, 2009), available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/lra-threat-southern-sudan>.
- 3 Jenaro Bongomin, LRA's director of religion, appears to have assumed this role, but he was later killed and replaced by another commander. Currently Captain Justine Atimango fills this position.
- 4 The SAF also supplied the LRA with B 10 recoilless rifles which were apparently abandoned in Sudan due to their weight.

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Enough is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on the crises in Sudan, eastern Congo, areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army, and Somalia. Enough's strategy papers and briefings provide sharp field analysis and targeted policy recommendations based on a "3P" crisis response strategy: promoting durable peace, providing civilian protection, and punishing perpetrators of atrocities. Enough works with concerned citizens, advocates, and policy makers to prevent, mitigate, and resolve these crises. To learn more about Enough and what you can do to help, go to [www.enoughproject.org](http://www.enoughproject.org).

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