

As LRA attacks in Congo have become less violent in recent years, it has become more difficult to distinguish attacks by the LRA from attacks by bandits, rogue security forces, and poachers. Consequently, the rise in attacks by unidentified armed groups in Haut Uele could indicate increased predation on civilians by any of these actors, including the LRA. In contrast, the number of attacks in Haut Uele committed by other armed groups - clearly identified as an actor other than the LRA - has remained extremely low in recent years.

Despite the difficulty in identifying perpetrators, reporting trends clearly indicate both a rise in LRA and overall armed group violence against civilians in Haut Uele, with the total number of attacks in the first half of 2014 the highest since early 2012. LRA forces were responsible for over half of these attacks, and possibly more depending on how many incidents categorized as unidentified armed group attacks were actually committed by the LRA. This trend demonstrates the continued threat that LRA rebels pose to Congolese communities, both as perpetrators of violence and as contributors to an atmosphere of lawlessness that encourages other armed groups to attack civilians.

Recent reports indicate that local security forces in Haut Uele have done little to mitigate the intensification of armed group violence in Haut Uele. Many Congolese civilians feel that Congolese military (FARDC) and UN peacekeeping (MONUSCO) forces frequently fail to take advantage of actionable intelligence to pursue armed groups and are able to deter attacks on only a handful of major towns. FARDC troops have also been implicated in abuses against civilians in Haut Uele in 2014, including rape, extortion, and torture.

### III. CAR: Nzako–Bakouma area remains hotspot of LRA activity

**SUMMARY** *LRA activity in the Nzako–Bakouma area of the CAR has surged in the past year, including the defection of LRA combatants, large-scale LRA attacks, and collaboration between LRA commanders and Seleka representatives. Ugandan military troops have pursued LRA forces in the Nzako–Bakouma area, attacking LRA groups several times and even clashing with Seleka forces.*

In early 2010, the LRA committed its first attacks near the towns of Nzako and Bakouma in the CAR's Mbomou prefecture, an area known for gold and uranium mining just west of the vast, forested Chinko River Basin. The group committed bold and large-scale attacks there in 2011 and 2012, taking advantage of the lack of Central African military or Ugandan military presence in the area.

LRA activity shifted in mid-2013, with the group halting attacks on civilians and instead making contact with Seleka representatives and civilians in remote mining sites near Nzako. In late 2013, Seleka forces facilitated the transfer of medical and food supplies to LRA groups east of Nzako after they claimed to be interested in a mass defection. Though no large groups ever surrendered, seven Ugandan LRA fighters defected near Nzako in the first half of 2014. In April 2014, LRA forces resumed attacks on civilians in the area, likely to resupply basic goods and possibly to retaliate against communities helping LRA combatants to defect.

As LRA activity in the Nzako–Bakouma area has intensified, Ugandan troops have steadily built up their presence there and in the neighboring Chinko River Basin, attacking LRA groups several times. The Ugandan military's presence has brought them into close proximity to Seleka troops, with tension over Seleka's continued support to the LRA bubbling over into a clash between the two forces in late June 2014.

CAR: LRA-related activity near Nzako and Bakouma | November 2013–June 2014

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