LRA CRISIS TRACKER

ANNUAL SECURITY BRIEF
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2013
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Table of Contents

Executive summary: The five most important LRA trends of 2013

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacks and abductions continued to decline in 2013, hitting their lowest levels since 2008, and military operations and defections significantly weakened the group's fighting capacity. The notable exceptions to these trends were a resurgence of large-scale LRA looting raids in areas of Central African Republic (CAR) under the authority of Seleka fighters and the first LRA attacks in South Sudan since 2011.

1. The LRA lost as much as one-fifth of its core fighting capacity

Fate of Ugandan
LRA combatants
(2013)

■ Defected ■ Killed or captured
■ Possibly killed or captured   ■ Remaining with the LRA
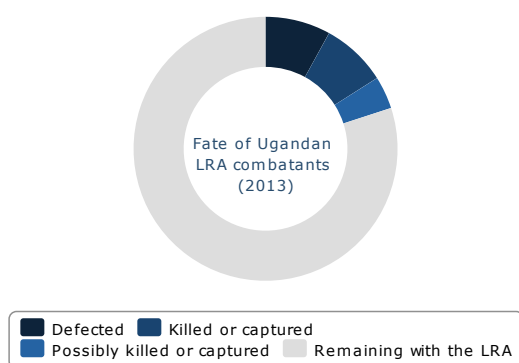
The LRA's greatest weakness is its inability to replace the male Ugandan combatants that comprise the core of its command structure and fighting capacity. In 2013, 16 Ugandan combatants defected from the LRA and another 16, including four senior officers, were confirmed killed or captured. Ugandan troops operating under the African Union Regional Task Force (AU RTF) may have also captured or killed as many as eight additional fighters.

In total, the LRA has lost 32–40 (16%–20%) of the estimated 200 Ugandan officers and fighters that were in its ranks at the beginning of 2013.

2. LRA commanders are also losing the captives they depend on most

Sixty-two women and children who had spent at least six months in LRA captivity returned home in 2013, a significant portion of the experienced labor that senior LRA commanders rely on to sustain day-to-day life in the bush. A vast majority (73%) either escaped with defecting LRA combatants or were released by LRA fighters, including 28 women and children released in a single incident in March 2013.

■ # of women and children who escaped long-term LRA captivity in 2013
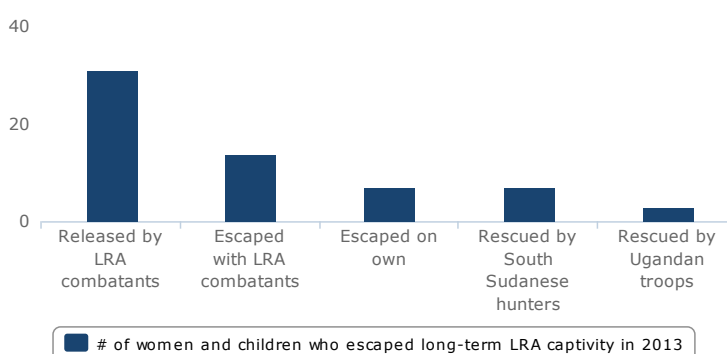
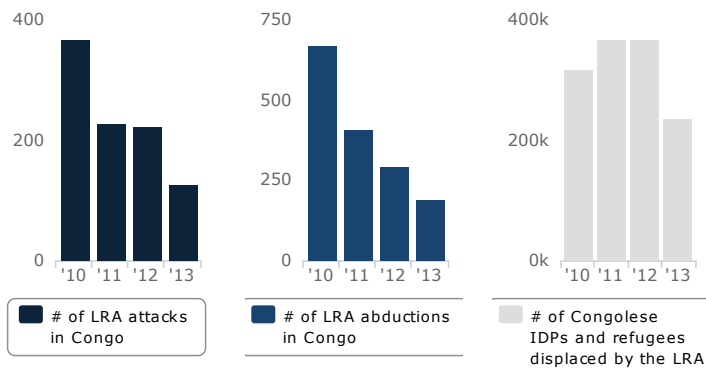## 3. The AU RTF severely disrupted the LRA's supply networks and safe havens

In recent years, LRA commanders established a network of safe havens across the region, including semi-permanent camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) from which they illegally poached elephants. LRA commanders smuggled ivory and other supplies into LRA camps in the Sudanese-controlled Kafia Kingi enclave. There the group bartered the ivory and

received limited supplies from Sudanese troops. In late 2013, LRA forces claiming to negotiate Kony's surrender even convinced transitional authorities in CAR to provide them with rope, food, and medical supplies.

Tasked with leading counter-LRA operations, Ugandan RTF troops secretly destroyed the LRA's Kafia Kingi camps in early 2013.

They also recovered supplies provided by Central African officials in a raid on an LRA group that had abandoned the 'negotiations' in November 2013. In September 2013, South Sudanese and Congolese RTF troops destroyed two LRA camps in Congo in the first offensive operations against the group there in over two years.
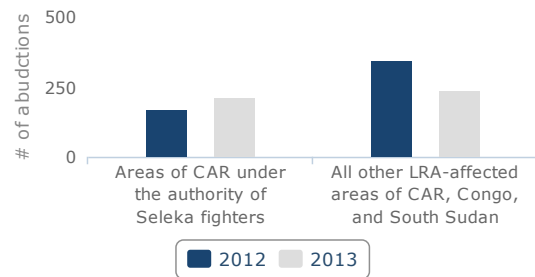
4. LRA attacks and abductions in Congo dropped significantly

400	**750**	**400k**	

# of LRA attacks in Congo

# of LRA abductions in Congo

# of Congolese IDPs and refugees displaced by the LRA

LRA violence in Congo declined for the fourth consecutive year, with attacks dropping 44% and abductions dropping 35% from 2012–2013. The number of Congolese civilians displaced by LRA violence has dropped less dramatically in recent years, indicating LRA violence remains severe enough to prevent many civilians from returning home.

5. The LRA exploited insecurity in CAR to conduct its most violent attacks

Unlike trends in Congo, LRA violence in CAR increased to its highest point since 2010. This trend was driven by the abduction of over 200 people in a series of particularly violent attacks in areas under the authority of Seleka fighters where AU RTF forces have limited access.
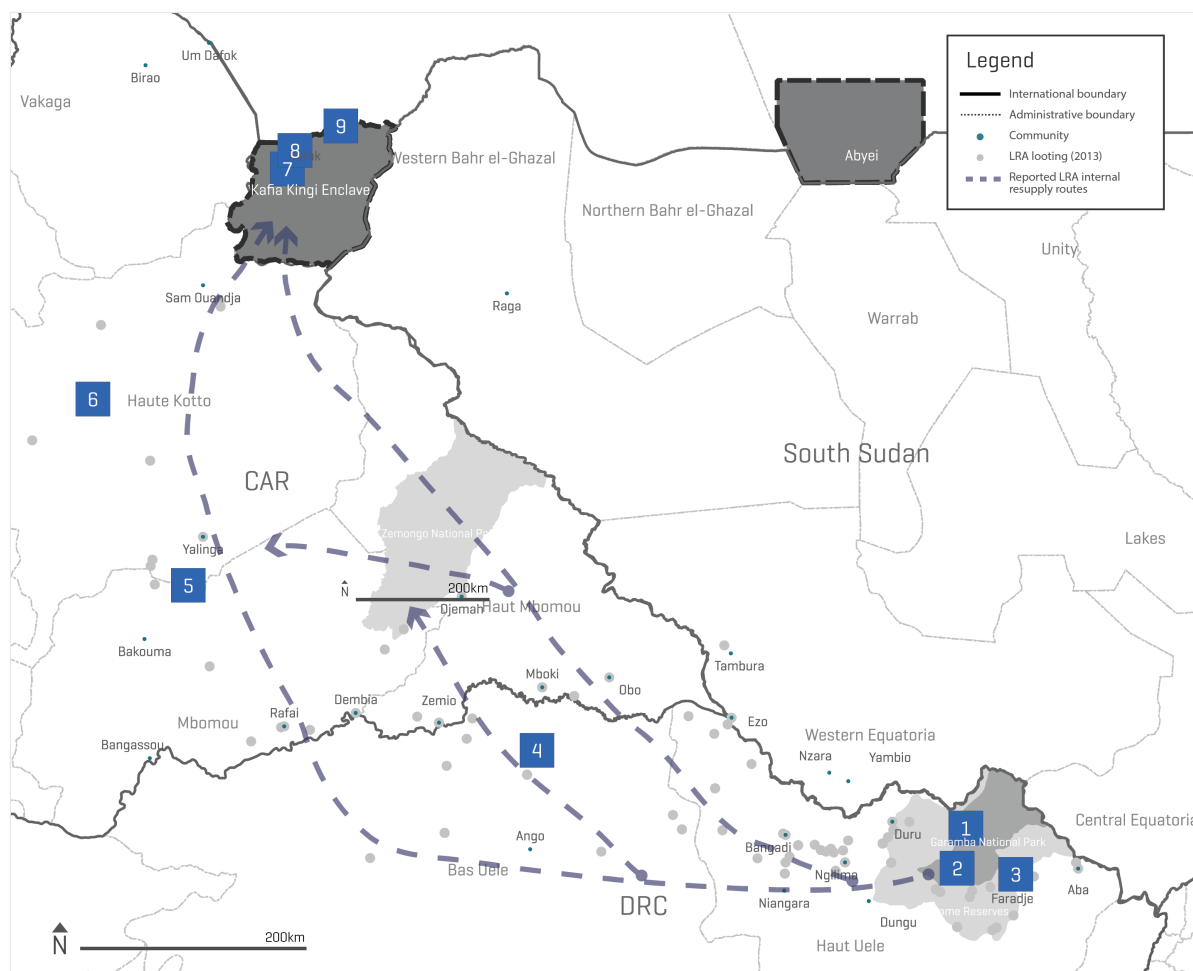

# of abudctions

Areas of CAR under the authority of Seleka fighters

All other LRA-affected areas of CAR, Congo, and South Sudan

2012   2013

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2

SUMMARY The LRA has utilized a range of survival strategies in recent years, including obtaining external assistance from regional government officials, farming, and trafficking ivory. However, most LRA groups rely primarily on looting small communities, with attack patterns suggesting most abductees are used as short-term porters.

I. LRA camps and resupply routes

LRA commanders have established a sophisticated network of camps, resupply routes, and even collaborators, enabling them to crisscross the porous borders and remote forests that restrict the movements of pursuing AU RTF troops. The map and narrative below provide more detail on how the LRA survived in 2012 and 2013, highlighting their adaptability to diverse political and ecological environments.

How the LRA survived | *2012–2013*

1 Garamba National Park, where the LRA poaches elelphants and other animals for ivory and meat	**6** Communities under Seleka authority, targeted by large-scale LRA lootings in 2013
2 LRA camp and fields in Garamba National Park, occupied until September 2013	**7** LRA camp and fields in Kafia Kingi territory, periodically occupied from 2010–2013
3 Communities around Garamba National Park, frequently targeted for looting	**8** Sudanese military garrison, periodically supplied the LRA from 2010–2013
4 LRA camp and fields in Congo's Bas Uele district, occupied until September 2013	**9** Songo market, where LRA members periodically bartered while in Kafia Kingi
5 Central African authorities provided an LRA group with food and rope in late 2013	

Sudanese safe haven: LRA forces have periodically established camps in the Sudanese-controlled Kafia Kingi territory since 2010, with <u>Kony himself staying in Kafia Kingi</u> in late 2012 and early 2013. Sudanese troops there provided LRA forces with safe haven from Ugandan RTF troops and small amounts of food, ammunition, and other supplies.

Exploiting negotiations: In August 2013, an LRA group led by Otto Ladeere set up a camp near the town of Nzako in CAR's Mbomou prefecture and established contact with local authorities and former Central African transitional leader Michel Djotodia. In an attempt to build trust with the group and encourage their defection, Djotodia authorized a trusted ally, General Damane, <u>to send food and rope to the LRA group</u>. Damane also authorized a national aid group to provide additional food and medical supplies. Despite promises to defect, contact was eventually lost with Ladeere and the LRA groups reportedly left their bases.

Poaching and ivory trafficking: In mid-2011, Kony ordered LRA groups to <u>kill elephants and bring him ivory</u>. In late 2012, senior commander Binany Okumu travelled from Congo's Garamba National Park to Kony's camp in Kafia Kingi with as many as 38 tusks, though it is unclear if he delivered all of them. The ivory's final destination is unclear, though LRA defectors report some has been traded to Sudanese troops or Arab businessmen.

Trading: LRA forces in Kafia Kingi have periodically travelled to market towns such as Songo to barter and purchase goods, though they likely had stopped doing so by mid-2013. Recent defectors also report that LRA groups sometimes use local middlemen, often Mbororo herders, to obtain medical supplies and other goods.

Hunting, fishing, and farming: The LRA has utilized a network of camps in Congo since 2005, with clusters concentrated in Garamba National Park and in the remote Bas Uele district. LRA groups there fished and hunted elephants and hippos, drying the meat on racks. They also grew crops such as beans, sim sim, and maize. The camps contained huts, including separate buildings for storing food, and served as secure sites for women, children, and injured fighters. AU RTF forces <u>destroyed several of these camps</u> in September 2013, and it is unclear if the LRA groups currently occupy camps in Congo. LRA forces also cultivated crops in Kafia Kingi from 2011 through at least early 2013.
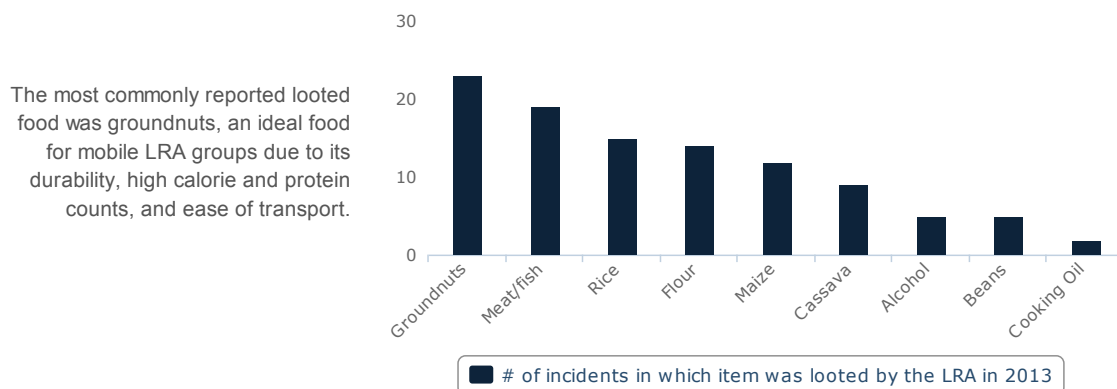
Internal resupply routes: The LRA's camps in Congo have served as rear supply bases from which food, ammunition, and other supplies obtained in Congo were sent to LRA commanders in CAR and Kafia Kingi. Kony specifically requested motorcycle batteries (used for charging electronics) and ivory be sent to senior LRA commanders surrounding him. LRA forces use a complex system of coded High Frequency (HF) radio communications, runners, and preset rendezvous points to coordinate the safe transfer of goods across the group's vast operational theater.

Looting: Most LRA groups continue to rely on small-scale looting raids to sustain their day-to-day needs. Throughout 2013, groups <u>committed their most violent and lucrative raids</u> in areas of CAR under the authority of Seleka forces, knowing they faced little chance of reprisal from AU RTF troops. In November 2013, LRA forces also committed their <u>first looting raids in South Sudan</u> since 2011.

II. LRA looting patterns

The expansion of civilian early warning networks in LRA-affected areas in recent years has shed greater light on patterns in LRA attacks, including what they loot and what happens to the people they abduct. LRA attack patterns in CAR indicate the group is still capable of mounting massive attacks when needed, but no attacks in 2013 resembled historical LRA recruitment raids in which they abducted large numbers of children to be trained as long-term soldiers, wives, and camp labor.

The following visualizations of LRA looting patterns highlight the group's transformation from a powerful rebel force into a group whose modus operandi resembles that of common bandits, with the exception of periodic large-scale raids in CAR.

The most commonly reported looted food was groundnuts, an ideal food for mobile LRA groups due to its durability, high calorie and protein counts, and ease of transport.

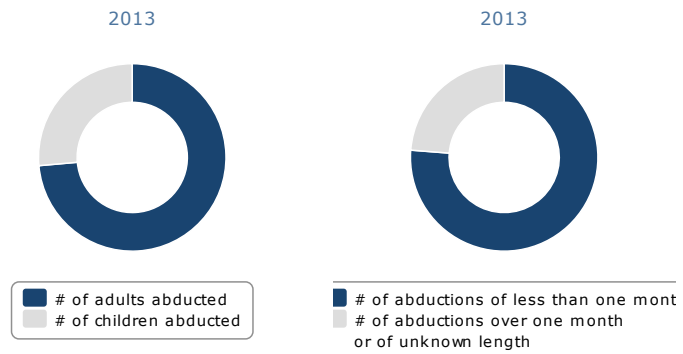# of incidents in which item was looted by the LRA in 2013

Clothing, soap, and cooking utensils were among the most commonly reported looted non-food items, highlighting the LRA's focus on acquiring basic necessities.

# of incidents in which item was looted by the LRA in 2013
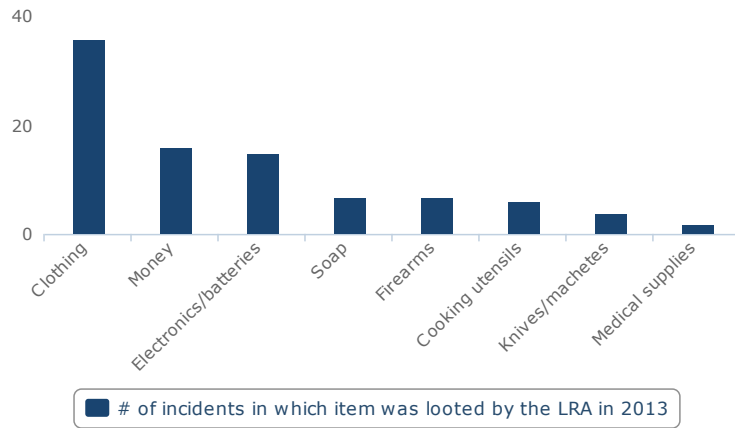
The LRA abducted four or fewer people in a vast majority of its 2013 attacks, indicating they are not rebuilding their fighting capacity but are using abductees primarily as porters for looted goods after small-scale raids. Ten of the 13 attacks in which the LRA abducted ten or more people occurred in areas of CAR under the authority of Seleka fighters, which comprise just a small fraction of the LRA's total area of operation.

# of civilians abudcted per attack in 2013
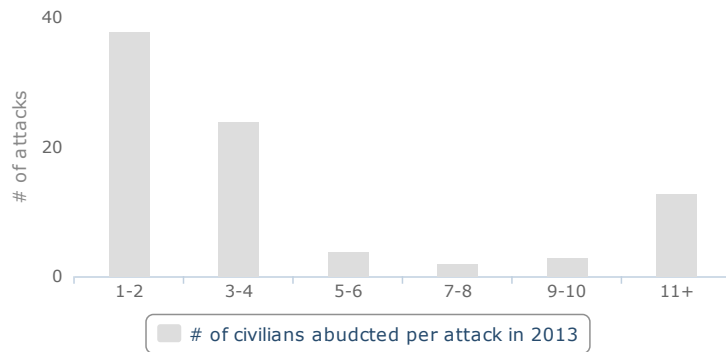
Most LRA abductees for whom relevant data was available were adults and most spent fewer than 30 days with the LRA. This trend is an indication they were used primarily as porters before they escaped or were released.

2013

2013

# of adults abducted
# of children abducted

# of abductions of less than one mont
# of abductions over one month
or of unknown length

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5

SUMMARY AU RTF forces succeeded in destroying several LRA camps and killing key commanders in 2013, while 16 Ugandan LRA combatants and 62 long-term women and children captives defected or escaped. Despite this, Kony retains firm control over the group's command structure and estimated 220 total fighters.

I. The LRA loses safe havens and key commanders

In January 2013, Ugandan RTF troops in CAR killed Binany Okumu, a Kony loyalist entrusted with ivory deliveries from Congo. In March, Ugandan RTF troops circumvented a Sudanese military garrison to destroy an LRA base in Kafia Kingi, missing Kony just days after he left for CAR. The Seleka coup in CAR then forced the AU RTF to put operations on hold, giving Kony new respite.

In September, operations gained new momentum as South Sudanese and Congolese RTF forces conducted their first offensive action against the LRA, utilizing substantial US military logistical and intelligence support. South Sudanese troops destroyed several LRA bases and fields in Congo's Garamba National Park, while Congolese troops destroyed an LRA base in Bas Uele district, including several acres of fields. In November, Ugandan troops killed LRA commander Samuel Kangul and recovered supplies his group had attained from Central African authorities near Nzako. However, the outbreak of civil war in South Sudan and deteriorating security in CAR have once again put future AU RTF operations in jeopardy.

Sixteen Ugandan LRA combatants defected in 2013. Most notably, senior LRA commander Lt. Col. Okello Okutti surrendered in December in CAR with five other Ugandan combatants and 12 others. Nine of the Ugandan combatants who defected in 2013 reported being influenced by Come Home defection messaging, including Okutti's group. They cited Acholi-language programs run on the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) station as particularly influential in encouraging them to defect.

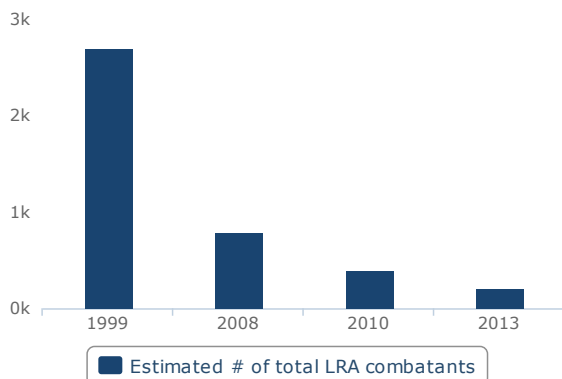## Where the LRA suffered key losses | *2013*
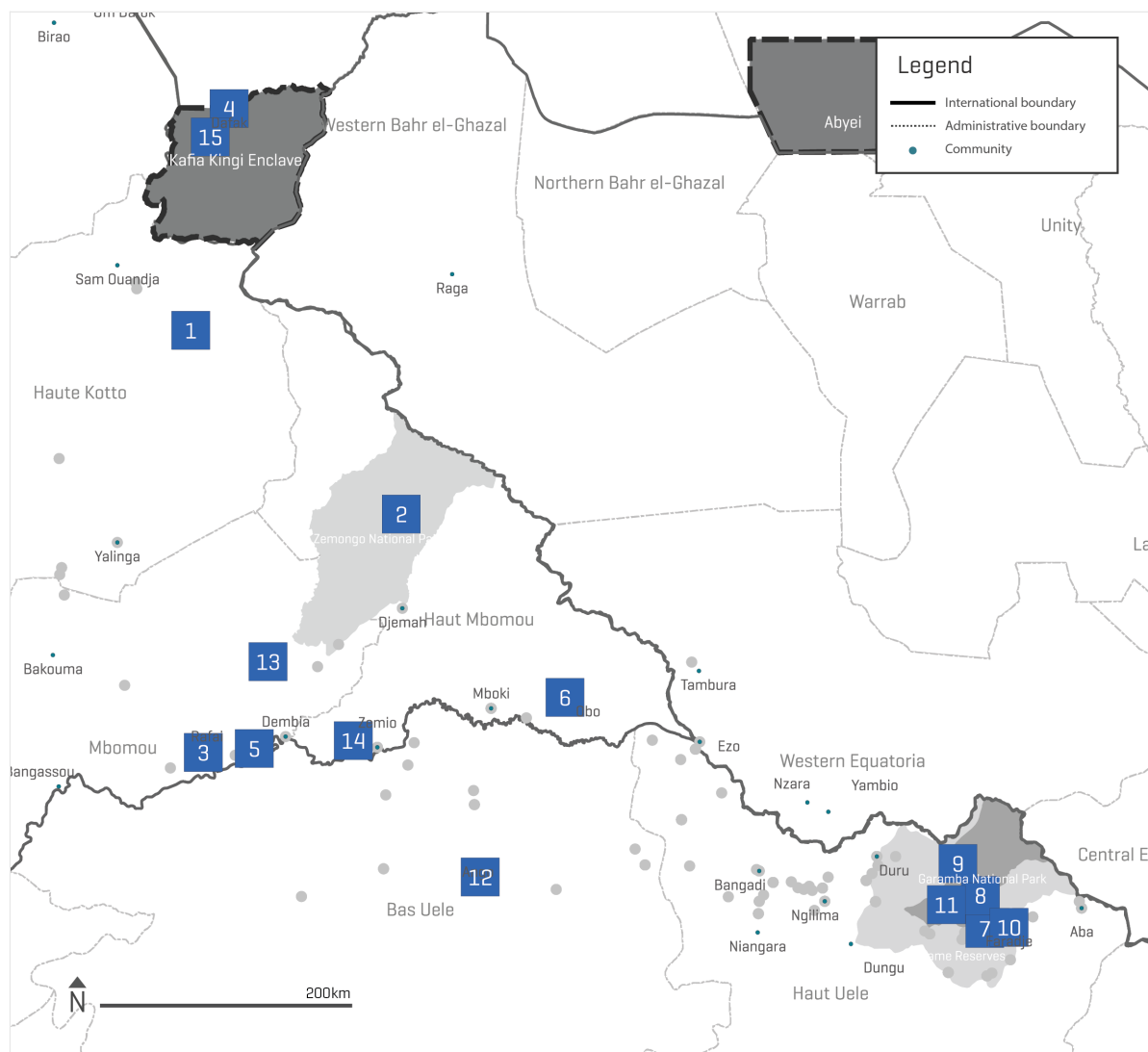
1   January: Ugandan troops kill LRA officer
     Binany Okumu after he reportedly delivers

7   September: South Sudanese troops destroy
     an LRA camp in Garamba National Park

ivory to Kony

2	February: Ugandan troops discover an LRA ivory cache north of Djemah, CAR
3	Early 2013: LRA officer Otto Agweng executed on Kony's orders
4	April: Four Ugandan LRA combatants defect in Obo, CAR
5	July: South Sudanese hunters kill senior LRA officer Thomas Odano
6	August: A Ugandan LRA combatant defects near Garamba National Park

8	September: Congolese troops destroy an LRA camp in Congo's Bas Uele district
9	November: Ugandan troops kill LRA officer Samuel Kangul and at least four fighters
10	December: LRA officer Okello Okutti and five other LRA combatants defect
11	Ugandan troops raided LRA camps in Kafia Kingi in 2013, killing at least six LRA fighters

Estimated # of total LRA combatants

In total, the LRA lost at least 32 Ugandan male combatants in 2013, with unconfirmed reports indicating Ugandan RTF troops killed or captured approximately eight more. Using baseline estimates from its 2013 report *Loosening Kony's Grip*, The Resolve estimates that by the end of 2013 the LRA contained approximately 220 combatants, including an estimated 160-168 Ugandan officers and fighters and 50 non-Ugandan low-level fighters.

II. Kony's grip on the LRA command structure

LRA founder Joseph Kony remains the group's undisputed leader, but below him the command hierarchy is in constant flux. Kony frequently promotes or demotes officers, often disregarding their conventional military rank, to ensure no commander attains enough influence to threaten his iron grip on the LRA. In recent years, Kony has tended to promote younger commanders. Many of them were abducted as young boys from northern Uganda and then served as his bodyguards and remain fiercely loyal to him. Kony has also reportedly empowered several of his sons, including Salim, an ambitious young officer raised in the bush. Meanwhile, Kony has demoted many older commanders who had military experience before joining the LRA, though his loyal second-in-command, Okot Odhiambo, retains a position of great influence.

Defected or captured [17]
Killed by the Ugandan military [12]
Killed on Kony's orders [4]
Deceased by other causes [2]

Currently operational with LRA [66]

[Total: 101]

Kony's attempts to maintain his hold on power have come at significant risk and cost. He has authorized greater use of HF radios to maintain communications with far-flung LRA commanders, despite the danger that Ugandan military forces will use signal intercepts to track down LRA groups. Kony also reportedly ordered the execution of at least four LRA officers for disobedience in late 2012 and early 2013. The most notable execution was of Otto Agweng, once one of Kony's most trusted and feared enforcers, after he raped a female captive against Kony's orders.

Kony's disciplinary actions, like his decisions on the command hierarchy, can be unpredictable. In 2012, Kony's half-brother David Olanya also incurred Kony's wrath for sleeping with a female captive without permission. However, Kony only demoted him, perhaps in deference to his family ties. Dominic Ongwen has also escaped the full force of Kony's justice, likely due to his family ties to Kony and bravery in battle.

Mapping the LRA's command structure is extremely difficult, given lack of access to the group and Kony's constant reshuffling of responsibilities. This graphic tracks the fates of 101 identified Ugandan officers who were confirmed members of the LRA as of 2009, providing a snapshot of how the command structure has fared since then.
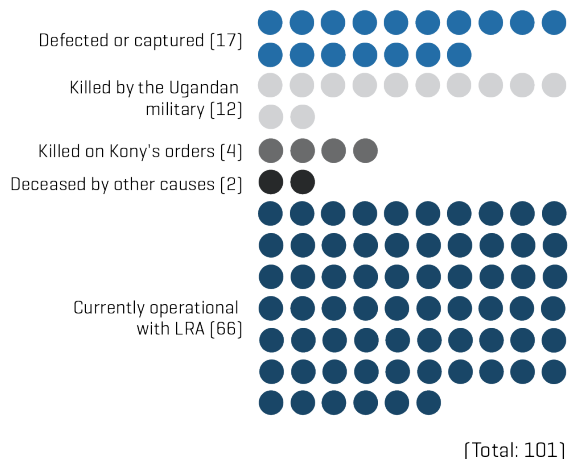
III. Long-term women and children captives return home

While male Ugandan officers monopolize power within the LRA, they depend on women and children held in long-term captivity to survive on a day-to-day basis. Women and children set up and take down camps, transport camp essentials when groups move, cook, and perform other essential duties. Many women and girls are forced into sexual relationships with male officers and fighters. Occasionally women participate in looting raids, and a few have become officers.

At the beginning of 2013, the LRA had approximately 250 women and children within its ranks, including both long-term captives who had been with the LRA for over six months and short-term abductees. Sixty-two women and children held in long-term captivity escaped the LRA in 2013, a majority of which (32) were children originally abducted from CAR, Congo, or South Sudan. Ten Ugandan women and children long-term captives escaped the LRA in 2013, a slight reduction from the 13 who escaped in 2012. Nearly 75% of the 62 returnees were intentionally released by the LRA or escaped with an LRA combatant, indicating that the LRA may have trouble feeding women and children and may have less utility for them as the number of combatants dwindles. Only seven of the 62 returnees escaped on their own, suggesting women and children have inadequate information, opportunities, and incentives to escape.

Where women and children escaped long-term LRA captivity | *2013*

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**SUMMARY** The frequency of LRA attacks in northeastern Congo has slowly declined in recent years, though they continue to target communities west and south of Garamba National Park. LRA abductions and killings have dropped at a far faster rate than attacks, making it more difficult to distinguish LRA activity from attacks by other armed groups in the area.

I. Steady decline of LRA violence in Congo
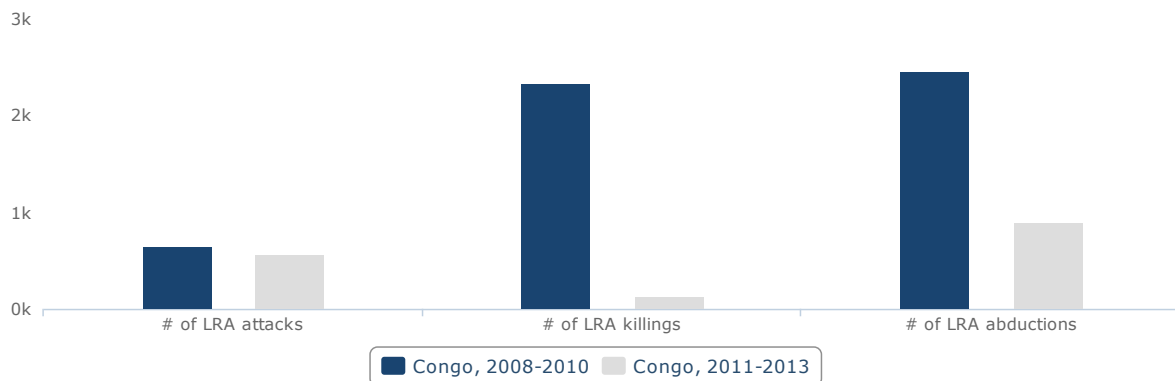
From 2008–2010, the LRA was one of the most violent groups in Congo, killing over 2,300 civilians and abducting nearly 2,500 others. LRA abductions in Congo decreased by 64% and killings by 94% over the next three years, a dramatic drop that reflects the group's shrinking capacity. However, LRA attacks decreased by only 12% over the same time period, indicating that the drop in abductions and killings was in part the result of a strategic decision by LRA leaders to reduce extremely violent attacks that attract international attention.

II. Making a living in the LRA's shadow
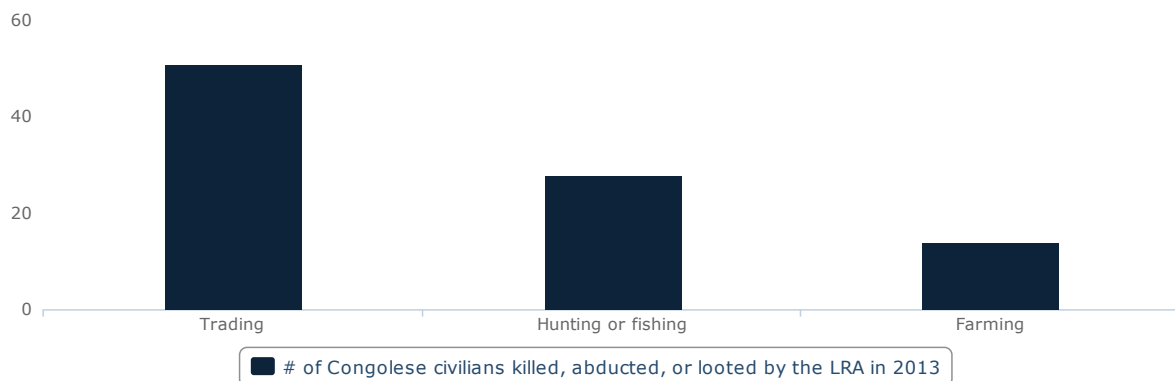
This graph provides a snapshot of how LRA attacks threatened Congolese civilians engaging in livelihood activities in 2013, though it likely underestimates each category due to lack of detailed information available for many attacks.

A vast majority of civilians in LRA-affected areas of Congo rely on access to fields, forests, and rivers to sustain or supplement their livelihoods. Many civilians also travel to local markets to sell their bounty or participate in petty trading. LRA attacks make engaging in these essential livelihoods very dangerous, but many people have little choice but to take the risk.

Troops from the Congolese army and the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Congo (MONUSCO) are deployed throughout the region, but do little but deter LRA raids on major towns and along primary roads. Many civilians utilize self protection techniques, such as traveling in groups along roads and to fields, to reduce their vulnerability to LRA attacks.

III. Armed group tactics converge in northeastern Congo

High rates of LRA violence in northeastern Congo have further destabilized an area already plagued by poor governance and lawlessness, contributing to an environment that encourages a variety of armed actors to prey on civilians. In particular, Garamba National Park's dense forests and lucrative wild game attract LRA fighters, rogue Congolese soldiers, local poachers, and heavily armed Sudanese and South Sudanese poachers. Using the forest for refuge, these armed groups attack travelers and villages on roads running west and south of the park.

These armed groups often use tactics similar to the LRA's, sometimes intentionally, making it difficult for protection actors to identify perpetrators. This dynamic has been exacerbated by the LRA's decision to reduce its signature large-scale abduction raids and massacres. In LRA-affected areas of Congo in 2013, the ratio of LRA attacks to those in which the armed group was unidentified (indicating the perpetrator could be the LRA, bandits, poachers, rogue Congolese soldiers, or other armed

groups) was 125 to 44, similar to the 223 to 86 ratio in 2012.

Attacks by the LRA vs. unidentified armed groups | *2013*

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SUMMARY LRA rebels have advanced further west and north into CAR in recent years to escape pressure from Ugandan RTF troops based in the far southeast of the country. In 2013, LRA forces particularly targeted communities in Haut Kotto prefecture, committing large-scale abduction raids that exploited the inability of Seleka fighters to protect civilians.

I. The LRA responds to military pressure in CAR

# of abductions

— Mbomou — Haut Mbomou — Vakaga — Haut Kotto
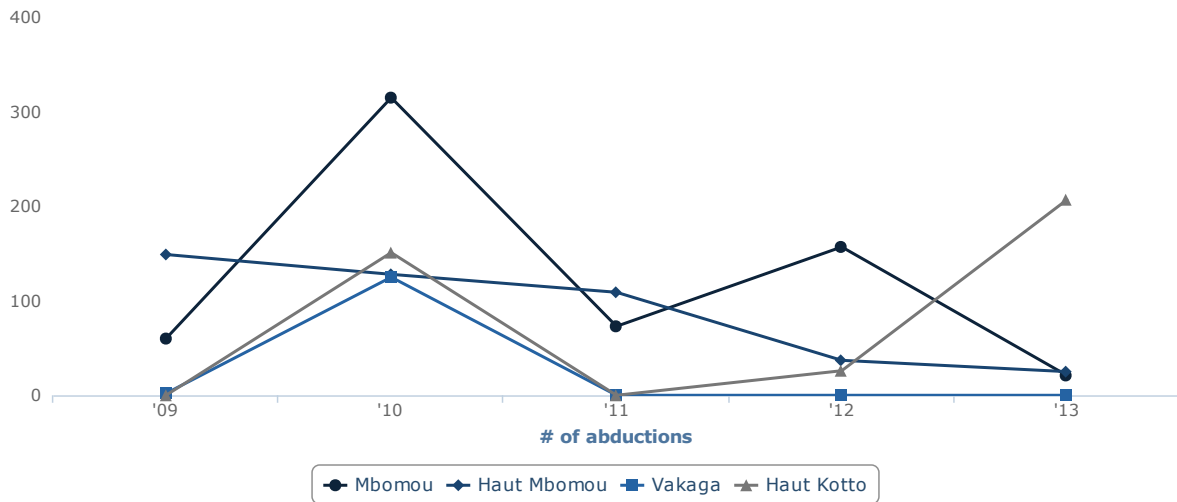
The LRA's first major foray into CAR was in March 2008, when it abducted dozens of people in a series of brazen raids near Obo, the capital of the far southeastern prefecture of Haut Mbomou. Ugandan troops established a base in Obo in early 2009, and conducted several successful operations against the LRA in nearby Djemah that year. In response, LRA troops pushed further west and north in 2010, committing massive attacks in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haut Kotto, and Vakaga. After a drop in LRA attacks in 2011, LRA forces conducted a series of prominent raids in Mbomou in 2012, including the looting of a French uranium mining camp.

II. Surge in LRA attacks near Seleka troops

In 2013, LRA troops shifted further north into Haut Kotto, conducting large-scale attacks in areas under the nominal authority of Seleka fighters, most of whom are loyal to General Damane of the former *Union des forces democratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR)*. Ugandan RTF troops remain primarily based further southeast in Haut Mbomou and have limited access in outlying areas, primarily due to logistical constraints.

Note: A mass LRA attack is defined as one in which the LRA kills five or more people and/or abducts ten or more people

III. LRA hotspots in Haut Mbomou
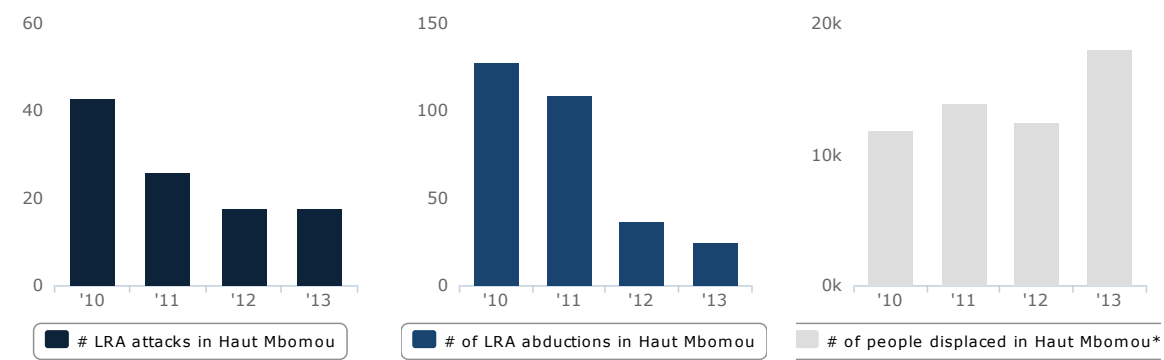
The presence of Ugandan RTF troops in Haut Mbomou prefecture has deterred large-scale LRA attacks on communities there. However, rebel forces continue to conduct periodic small-scale looting raids that make travelling along roads or to remote fields risky and have forced thousands of civilians into long-term displacement. In early 2013, LRA rebels committed six attacks near the town of Zemio in Haut Mbomou, home to a small Ugandan RTF detachment. They then abducted 36 people just across the border from Zemio in Congo in October. LRA forces also committed a series of attacks on roads leading to the Ugandan RTF base in Djemah, most notably the abduction of 13 hunters near Derbissaka in April 2013.

*All displacement data in this report is taken from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) statistics. The rise in displacement in 2013 in Haut Mbomou prefecture may be due in part to other armed actors, such as Seleka fighters, in addition to LRA activity.

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SUMMARY In 2013, escalating crises in both CAR and South Sudan threatened the fragile coalition of African governments collaborating in the AU RTF and provided the LRA with opportunities to exploit regional instability for their survival. However, President Obama demonstrated renewed committment to counter-LRA efforts, including by extending the deployment of US military advisers for a full year. Other pages in this section explore the LRA's historical background and provide greater detail about the LRA Crisis Tracker and its methodology.

I. 2013 political context

After forcefully taking power in CAR in a March 2013 coup with the help of Seleka rebel forces, Central African transitional leader Michel Djotodia lost control of the country in late 2013. November and December 2013 witnessed a surge of what was often sectarian violence in CAR, primarily perpetrated by Seleka fighters and opposing anti-balaka militias. France deployed 1,600 troops to help stabilize the country in early December, while African peacekeepers were formally transferred to the African-led International Support Mission for CAR (MISCA) on December 19. However, by the end of 2013 it was unclear how MISCA forces planned to protect civilians in CAR from LRA attacks or cooperate with AU RTF forces, especially where their areas of operation may overlap. Djotodia resigned on January 10 under pressure from regional and international leaders, and Bangui mayor Catherine Samba-Panza was soon after installed as interim president.

Diplomacy paves the way for the AU RTF to resume counter-LRA operations

Following the March 2013 coup in Bangui, Ugandan troops operating in southeastern CAR under the AU RTF's authority officially suspended counter-LRA operations. The Congolese and South Sudanese contingents to the AU RTF were inactive in the first half of 2013, meaning the Ugandan suspension brought counter-LRA operations to a standstill. However, diplomatic efforts by AU special envoy Amb. Francisco Madeira and UN SRSG Abou Moussa encouraged Djotodia to permit Ugandan troops to resume operations against the LRA, which they officially did in October 2013. In addition, AU and US diplomats helped secure permission from the Congolese government to allow the South Sudanese and Congolese contingents to launch counter-LRA operations in northeastern Congo in September 2013.

US government increases support to counter-LRA operations

In October 2013, President Barack Obama extended the deployment of US military advisers assisting AU RTF forces for a full year, in contrast to previous six-month renewals. The US military also expanded its material support to AU RTF forces, deploying additional airlift and intelligence-gathering assets to the region. Moreover, the US expanded 'Come Home' messaging campaigns designed to promote LRA defections by funding the construction of several FM radios in CAR, deploying helicopter speaker missions, increasing leaflet drops, and operationalizing additional Safe Reporting Sites in CAR and South Sudan.

Civil war erupts in South Sudan

In December 2013 fighting broke out between members of South Sudanese President Salva Kiir's presidential guard. The fighting quickly spread throughout Juba and the Greater Upper Nile region, with military forces splitting between those loyal to Kiir and those loyal to his former Vice President Riek Machar. Kiir had sacked Machar and his entire cabinet in July 2013, exacerbating divisions among the ruling elite in the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM). Forces loyal to both sides have been responsible for grievous human rights abuses and fighting has displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians. Mediation efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) have been complicated in part by Uganda's role in the conflict, particularly its decision to send troops to support forces loyal to Kiir. This has been criticized by the Machar faction, who have asked Uganda to take a neutral position in the conflict. Ugandan troops sent to fight Machar's forces reportedly include some troops redeployed from counter-LRA operations. In addition, South Sudanese RTF troops have halted all plans for counter-LRA operations.

M23 rebellion collapses in eastern Congo

Under pressure from a combined offensive by the Congolese military and MONUSCO peacekeepers, the M23 rebellion in eastern Congo collapsed in late 2013. Critical to the collapse was intensified international pressure on Rwanda to halt its support for the M23. However, deep-rooted communal tensions, regional discord, political marginalization, and violence by other armed groups in the region continue to threaten the prospects for long-term stability in eastern Congo.

II. LRA background

From local conflict to regional crisis

The LRA's origins are rooted in Uganda's post-independence history of deep divisions between the North and South of the country. The most recent chapter of this conflict has centered on Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, a native of western Uganda who violently seized power in 1986 after decades of misrule by dictators from the North. Since then more than twenty

groups, including the LRA, have taken up arms against the government, many in response to its marginalization of Northern communities.

However, the LRA failed to capture widespread support among northern Ugandans, many of whom did not see the LRA as representing their legitimate grievances. In the early 1990s, faced with dwindling support, the LRA began to rely more heavily on abducting civilians, shifting to bases in South Sudan, and receiving support from the Sudanese government.

By 2005 the Ugandan military had significantly improved security in northern Uganda, while a gradual end to the civil war in South Sudan also threatened the LRA's supply lines and most secure bases. In 2005 the International Criminal Court (ICC) also issued arrest warrants for five LRA commanders, including Kony, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The LRA adapted slowly, leaving South Sudan and establishing a sanctuary in Congo's remote Garamba National Park. In 2006, the LRA began peace negotiations with the Ugandan government mediated by South Sudanese officials. A formal ceasefire was signed in August 2006, enabling hundreds of LRA combatants remaining in South Sudan to shift towards the group's newly established bases in Congo.

The Juba peace talks and Operation Lightning Thunder

However, the peace talks faltered, in part due to Kony's refusal to directly participate and to the Ugandan government's erratic commitment. The two sides reached a Final Peace Agreement in April 2008, but Kony refused to sign. Instead, he ordered abduction raids aimed at rebuilding the LRA's fighting capacity. LRA rebels kidnapped dozens of people in southeastern CAR in March 2008 and abducted hundreds of Congolese children from school classrooms in September.

In December 2008, the Ugandan military, with significant diplomatic and financial support from the US government, launched an assault on LRA bases in Congo's Garamba National Park. Dubbed 'Operation Lightning Thunder,' the Ugandan offensive failed to apprehend top LRA leaders or protect civilians from predictable reprisal attacks, including the massacre of hundreds of Congolese civilians celebrating Christmas.

Civilian suffering in Congo, CAR, and South Sudan

Since the failure of Operation Lightning Thunder, Ugandan forces have continued to pursue the LRA across an ever-expanding region that includes parts of Congo, South Sudan, and CAR. The sheer scale of LRA violence is staggering: since September 2008, the LRA has abducted more than 5,600 people and killed nearly 3,100 more. These attacks have torn at the very fabric of community life by targeting schools, churches, and marketplaces.

III. About the LRA Crisis Tracker

Data reflected in this brief was collected as part of the Invisible Children + The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative LRA Crisis Tracker, a geospatial database and reporting project which aims to track incidents of violent conflict in areas of Central Africa affected by the Lord's Resistance Army. Through publication of regular reports and open-source sharing of collected data, the LRA Crisis Tracker aims to help overcome the current deficit of relevant and timely information related to the LRA crisis and to support improved policy and humanitarian responses.

In the interest of continually strengthening the LRA Crisis Tracker dataset, The Resolve and Invisible Children welcome new sources of current or historical reports of LRA activity. To contribute information to the LRA Crisis Tracker project, please contact The Resolve at paul@theresolve.org.

Further resources

For a real-time, geospatial look at LRA activity, or to download the data found within this brief please visit the LRA Crisis Tracker Map at: LRACrisisTracker.com.

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative is a Washington D.C.-based advocacy organization seeking to move US and international political leaders to take the actions needed to see a permanent end to the violence of the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa and justice to LRA-affected communities.

Invisible Children

Invisible Children is an international NGO working to help permanently end LRA violence and assist affected communities in East and Central Africa by expanding community-based early warning systems, engaging potential LRA defectors and affected communities through FM radio, and supporting the rehabilitation of formerly-abducted persons.

IV. LRA Crisis Tracker Methodology

1. Data Collection

Report sourcing:

- HF radio operators in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic
- Civilians report activity to HF radio tower operators
- Over 70 HF radio operators call the Dungu and Obo hubs twice daily to report armed group activity
- Activity is entered into a spreadsheet and then sent to data coders
- UN and NGO reports
- News and media outlets
- Civil society contacts in local communities
- Government sources
- Field research conducted by Resolve and Invisible Children staff

Sourcing coverage: LRA Crisis Tracker Database team members make every effort to obtain data from all LRA-affected regions. Due to the remote nature of LRA-affected areas, the sourcing infrastructure available to project administrators is uneven across the geographic area of concern, and data included in the Database is often of better quality in areas with higher NGO and news agency traffic. The LRA Crisis Tracker Database does not claim to be a comprehensive record of all LRA or related incidents in the region, but team members make every effort to fill in areas where the data may not be easily accessible.

Note: The majority of the information gathering systems are located in Congo, leading to a disproportional amount of LRA reports from DRC. In upcoming months both Invisible Children and CRS, funded by USAID, will expand information gathering systems in CAR, hoping to improve access to information in the region.

1. Data Entry

Database entry: Reports are divided between a team of coders from both Invisible Children and Resolve. Coders determine if the source is reliable or unreliable (See section 4.2.B of the Codebook, Determining the Reliability of a Source). Before an incident is reported, the coder reads through other incidents in the same time range and checks for duplicates.

Verification rating: After an incident is categorized, each incident is given a Verification Rating, which rates the team's confidence in the details of the reported data. Each incident is given a rating of "1" through "5," with "1" being the most unreliable and "5" being very reliable. The rating is based on the trustworthiness of the source, confidence in the identity of the actors involved in the incident, and the degree of detail given in the source report. A verification rating of "2" through "5" is considered adequately verified to be reported publicly, and therefore is included in statistics and analysis (Codebook section 4.2A).

LRA Actor Verification rating: To distinguish between LRA and other armed group attacks, the Crisis Tracker Codebook has a list of LRA Indicators and Non-LRA Indicators. If after reviewing the indicators and other available evidence the data coder determines that the perpetrator of an attack was likely the LRA, the incident is given an LRA Actor Verification rating, 'Low,' 'Medium,' or 'High,' to measure the likelihood of the perpetrator being LRA. (Codebook section 4.2C.) If after reviewing an incident the coder determines that the LRA was not the perpetrator and the perpetrator is unknown, Actor 1 is marked as 'Armed Group' and the incident is not mapped.

3. Data Review

Initial review: Each report is reviewed by a second data coder to catch human errors and duplicate reports. Coders look for incidents that are alike in detail, and have a relatively close time frame and location. These incidents are then investigated to ensure that they are not duplicate reports.

Expert review: IC and Resolve staff with field experience review sensitive incidents immediately and review all incidents every three months. Should this staff member feel an incident was misreported, the incident is corrected and potentially unmapped. External LRA and regional experts are consulted as necessary.

4. Data Mapping & Sharing

Data mapping: After an incident is entered and approved to be mapped, it appears on the LRA Crisis Tracker website. Only incidents involving the LRA or persons formerly abducted by the LRA and given a Verification rating of '2' or higher are mapped.

Data sensitivity: Sensitive information such as specific sources, names, information on security forces, and personal information about minors is not shared publicly.

Data sharing: Data is regularly sent to UN agencies and humanitarian practitioners for comparison and collaboration.

5. Data Revamp

As the database grows and policies are updated to reflect best practices, data coders revisit and "revamp" the data when needed.

With the establishment of the HF Radio Network and expanded reporting mechanisms in the region, incident reporting has become more detailed and the database has been adapted to reflect this. Fields including information on age and gender of victims, and goods looted have been added since the beginning of the database. Coders periodically revisit all incidents and reports to include the new details and fields.

6. Data Analysis & Reporting

Crisis Tracker staff analyze data for trends and patterns in LRA activity. For instance, coders look for trends in the age and gender of abducted persons, net recruitment (total abductions- total returnees), and increases in a certain type of attack. Coders also look for new traits and patterns in LRA activity.

Specific areas and provinces are also analyzed for increases or decreases in number and type of attack.

After analysis has been completed and reviewed, it is reported in various Crisis Tracker reports.

Definitions

Attack:

An incident is considered an "attack" in the Brief if LRA activity results in one of the following human rights violations: violence resulting in death or injury, sexual or gender based violence, abduction, looting, or displacement. For detailed definitions of these human rights abuses, please refer to section 4.5 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

Killing:

An incident is regarded as a "killing" if there is a violent act that results in the death of an individual who is not known to be associated with an armed group or security force. Civilian deaths resulting from injuries sustained from an attack are considered a "killing." Also, if a civilian is killed while in LRA captivity, it is considered a "killing" if it occurs within one week of the initial abduction. For a detailed explanation of incidents that are categorized as a "killing," please refer to section 4.5.1 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

Abduction:

An incident is regarded as an "abduction" if it involves one or more persons taken hostage against their will by the LRA for any period of time, including civilians who are abducted and released or escape in the same day. A short-term abduction is considered any abduction that is 72 hours or less in duration. This does not necessarily mean that abductions that are not short-term are long-term as there may not be a report of the abducted person's return. For a detailed explanation of incidents categorized as "abductions" or "short-term abductions," please refer to section 4.5.2 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

Returnees:

A "returnee" is considered anyone who escapes, is released, is rescued, or defects from LRA captivity. It also includes all LRA members who are captured. For a detailed explanation of data relating to returnees, please refer to section 4.5.2 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

V. Contributors

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