



LRA CRISIS TRACKER

MID-YEAR SECURITY BRIEF
JANUARY-JUNE 2013

PRINT VERSION

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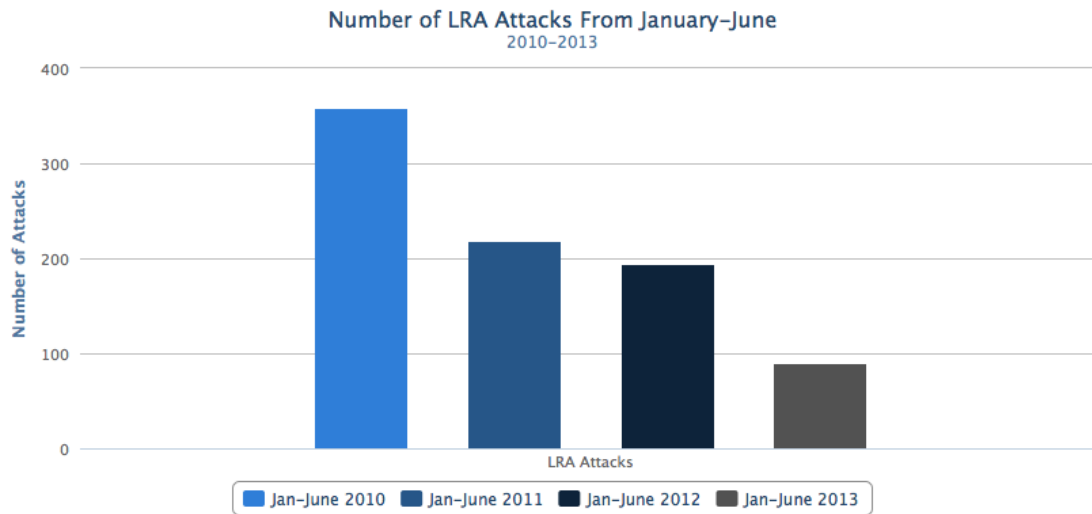
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Executive Summary: 4 Key Trends in LRA Activity

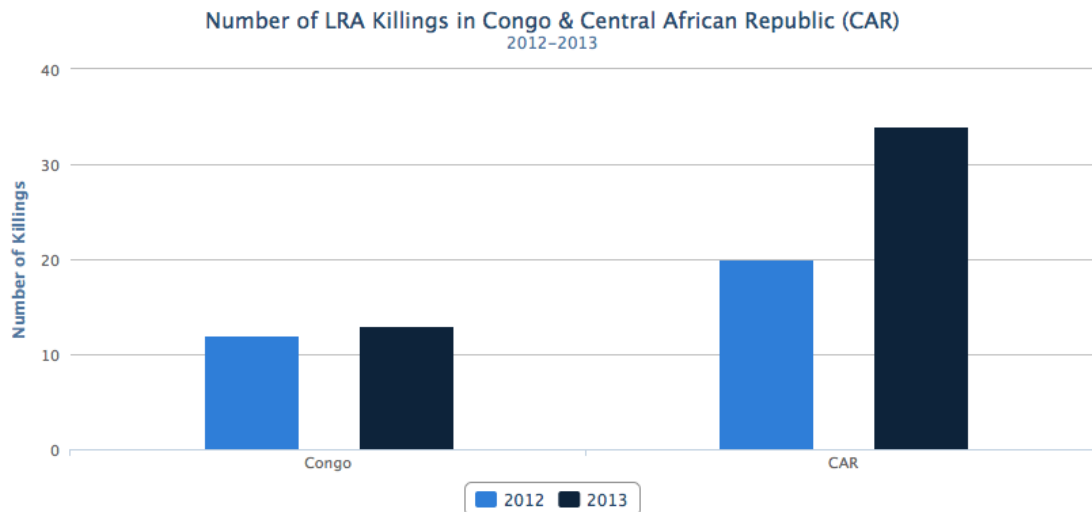
1. LRA attacks continue to decline, particularly in Congo

The LRA committed 90 attacks in the first half of 2013, a 54% drop from the 194 attacks it committed in the first half of 2012. In particular, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo) experienced a significant drop, from 158 LRA attacks in the first half of 2012 to 66 in the first half of 2013.



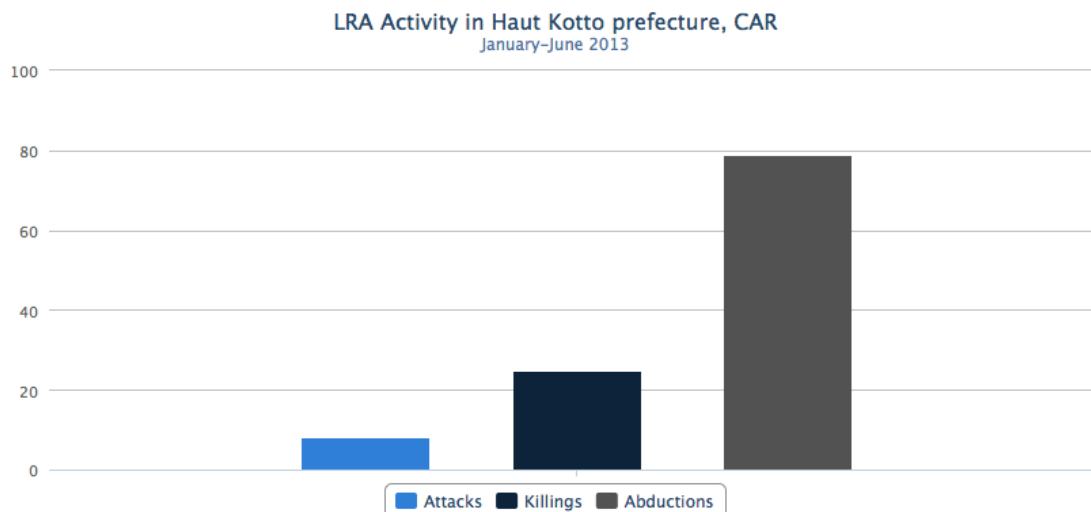
2. Despite decrease in attacks, LRA killings on the rise

Despite the dramatic drop in attacks, LRA forces killed more civilians in the first half of 2013 (47) than they did in the first half of 2012 (32), a 47% increase.



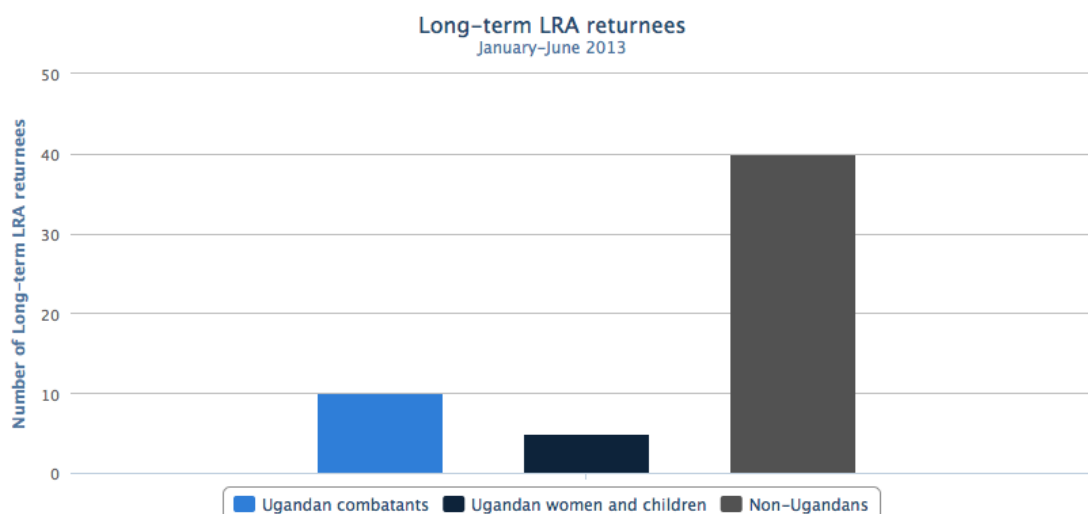
3. LRA groups exploiting security vacuum in eastern CAR

The LRA committed its most notable attacks in the first half of 2013 in eastern CAR's Haut Kotto prefecture. Seleka troop deployments there have limited the access of humanitarian and protection actors, as well as US and Ugandan troops, since the March 2013 coup in Bangui. In June alone, the LRA killed 30 civilians and abducted 68 more in Haut Kotto. In addition, LRA Crisis Tracker records include 16 additional reported LRA attacks from January–June 2013 in eastern CAR that are not included in the statistics used in this brief because humanitarian and protection actors were unable to investigate and confirm the reports.



4. Nearly 5% of Ugandan combatants defect from the LRA

There remains approximately 180–200 Ugandan combatants within the LRA, comprising the core of its fighting force. In the first half of 2013, 8 of these Ugandan combatants defected in CAR and another defected in Congo, representing a loss of nearly 5% of the LRA's Ugandan combatant capacity. Another Ugandan LRA combatant was captured in Congo's Garamba National Park following a clash with park rangers. In addition, 44 other people who had been with the LRA for six months or longer returned from the LRA between January and June 2013, including 28 women and children released by LRA combatants in Bas Uele district in March.



Note: Long-term LRA returnees consist of returnees from the LRA who spent six months or more with the rebel group

Notable Political Context



Inauguration for Michael Djotodia, self-appointed president of CAR (Reuters)

Seleka fails to stabilize CAR

Seleka, a coalition of four rebel groups primarily from northern Central African Republic (CAR), overthrew the government of President François Bozizé in March 2013. However, the new authorities, led by self-proclaimed President Michael Djotodia, have failed to establish security within Bangui and surrounding towns since the coup, and the coalition is increasingly fragmented. Seleka troops continue to kill, rape, and loot civilians with impunity, causing widespread discontent and periodic unrest.

AU launches peacekeeping force in CAR

On July 19, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council authorized the African-led International Support Mission in the CAR (AFISM-CAR), which will incorporate elements from the existing Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the CAR (MICOPAX). The mission was given several mandates, including protection of civilians and restoring the authority of the central government. It will operate alongside the AU-authorized counter-LRA mission (AU RTF), though no mechanism to coordinate activities and share information has yet been established.

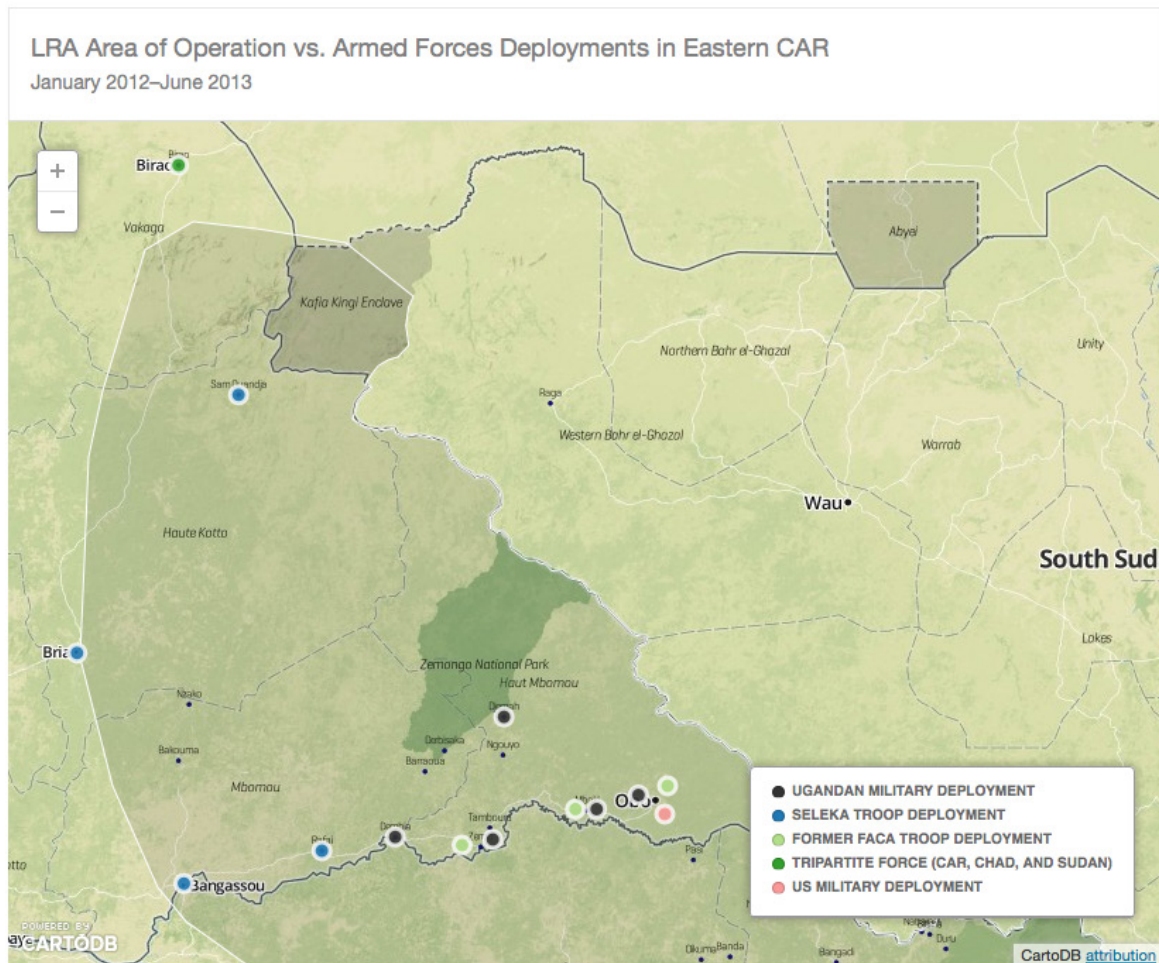
AU diplomacy paves the way for resumption of Ugandan operations

Ugandan troops operating in southeast CAR under the authority of the AU RTF officially suspended counter-LRA operations following the March 2013 coup. Tensions between the new Central African authorities and Ugandan troops spiked after Djotodia threatened to send Seleka troops to Ugandan-controlled territory following an unsuccessful attack on the town of Obo by a new armed group. However, in June 2013, Djotodia signed a statement reaffirming his support of the AU RTF and permitting Ugandan troops to resume operations against the LRA. Both the AU Peace and Security Council and UN Security Council have also encouraged the Ugandan military to resume operations. The Ugandan government has yet to officially announce it has resumed operations, but is reportedly planning to do so.

Kony likely remains in eastern CAR

Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA, has moved frequently between eastern CAR and the Sudanese-controlled Kafia Kingi enclave, a disputed area on the border of South Sudan and Sudan, since 2010. He resided in Kafia Kingi, where Ugandan and other RTF troops do not have permission to operate, throughout late 2012 and into early 2013. He then reportedly crossed the border to return to CAR, though he may be operating in areas in which Ugandan troops have limited logistical capacity to operate.

Armed Forces Operating in Eastern CAR

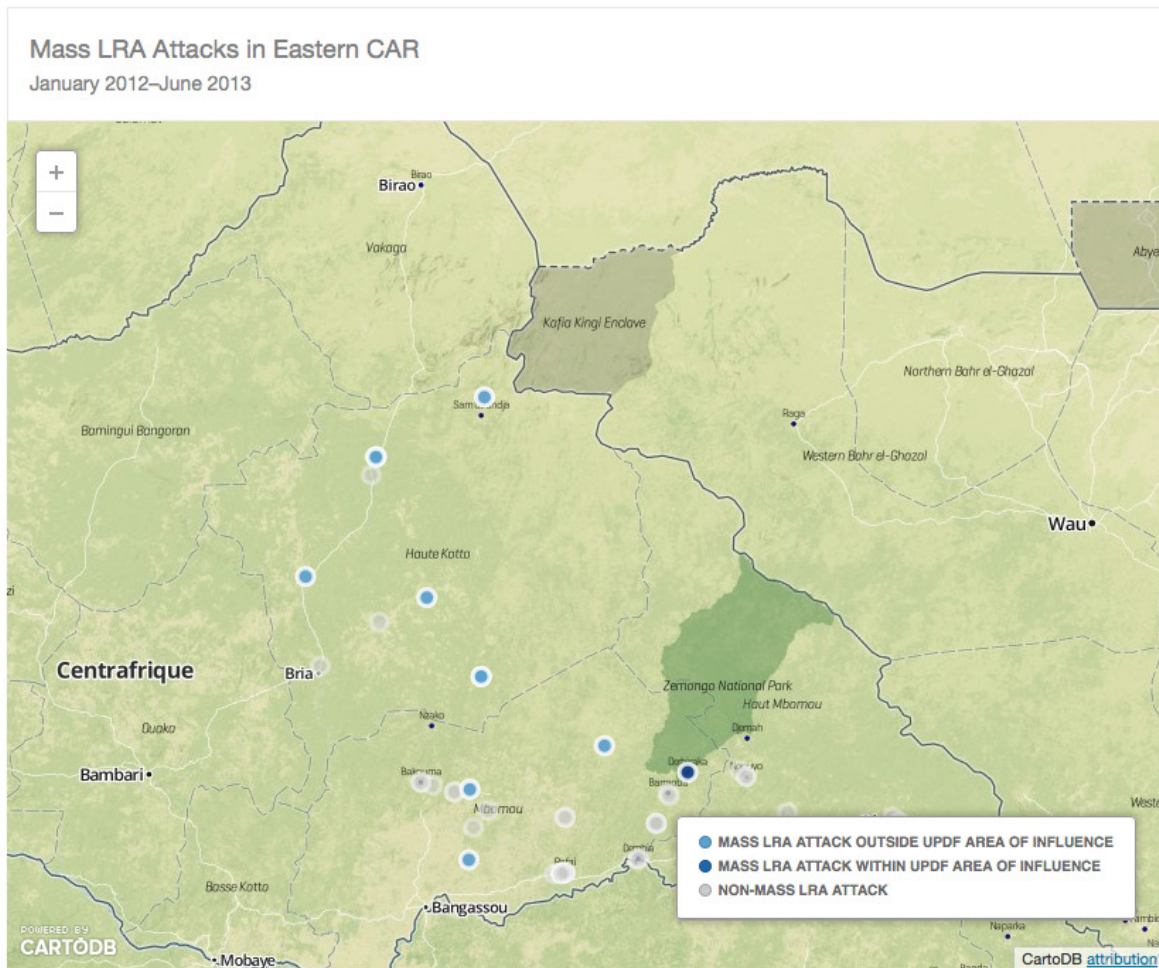


Note: This map does not display all locations where UPDF, Seleka, and former FACA soldiers are deployed. The LRA's approximate area of operation (January 2012–June 2013) is represented by the shaded area.

A patchwork of military forces and other armed groups currently operate in LRA-affected areas of eastern CAR. In Haut Mbomou prefecture, Ugandan military (UPDF) troops remain in control of major towns, though they faced a temporary threat from a poorly-equipped armed group that approached the town of Obo in April 2013. The group reportedly consisted primarily of farmers from neighboring South Sudan misled into thinking they would be attacking the LRA. A small contingent of troops from the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), the national military force under the deposed Bozizé government, also remains in Obo. In Vakaga prefecture, the Tripartite Force — which bring together troops from Chad, CAR, and Sudan — remains deployed in the regional capital of Birao.

In Mbomou prefecture, Seleka rebels occupied and looted communities in LRA-affected areas following the March coup, displacing hundreds of people along the Bangassou-Rafai and Bangassou-Bakouma roads. In mid-July, a UFDR faction of Seleka attempted to wrest control of Bangassou from the CPSK faction, leading to clashes that left several dead. Seleka also remains in control of Haut Kotto, with troops deployed in towns such as Bria and Sam Ouandja. Humanitarian and protection actors have very limited access to both Mbomou and Haut Kotto, making it very difficult for them to investigate and confirm reports of armed group activity. LRA Crisis Tracker records include 16 reported LRA attacks in these two prefectures in the first six months of 2013 that were not officially tallied in this report's attack, abduction, and killing totals because protection actors were unable to investigate the incidents and confirm the reported details.

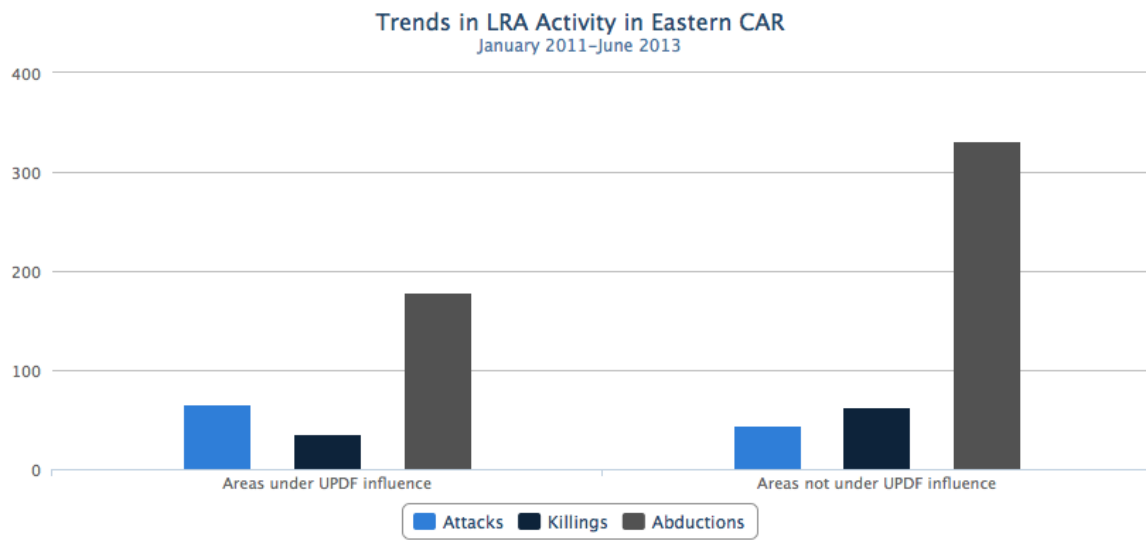
Patterns of Mass LRA Attacks in Eastern CAR



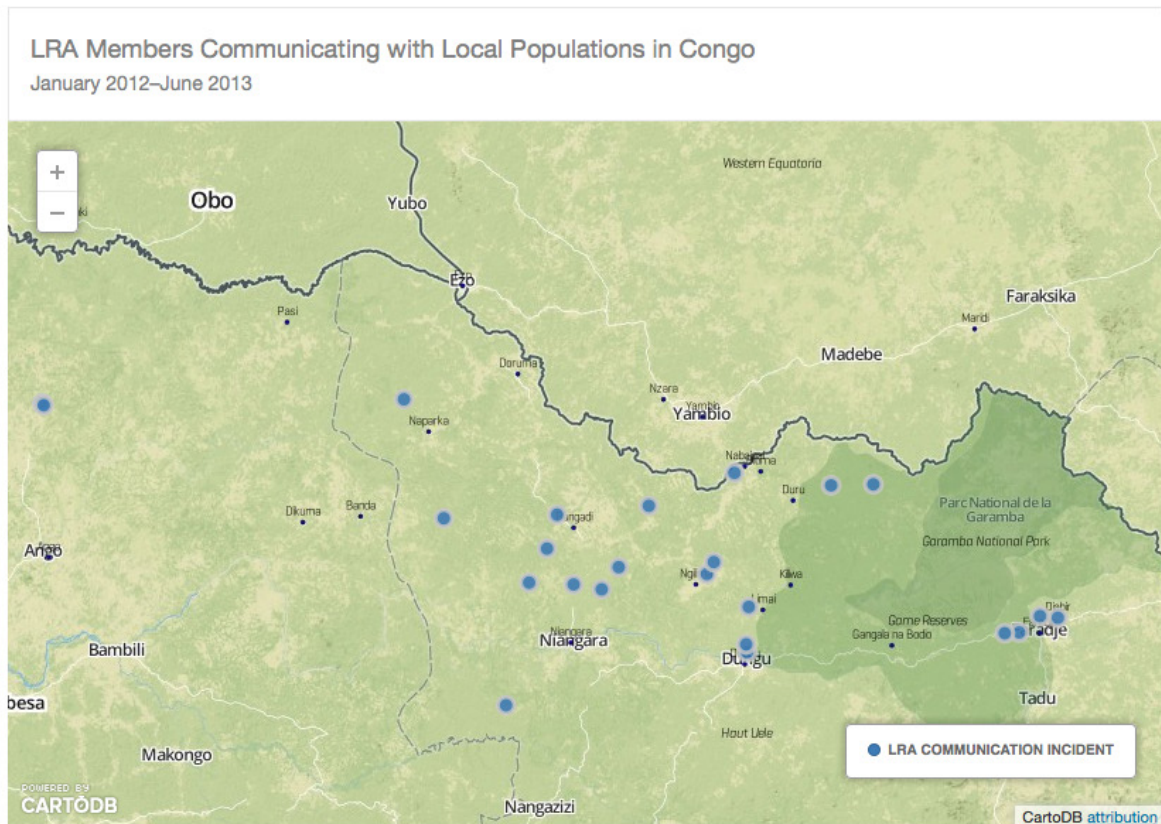
Note: A mass LRA attack is defined as one in which the LRA kills 5 or more people and/or abduct 10 or more people. The UPDF's "Area of Influence" is roughly defined as the area in eastern CAR stretching east from the Dembia-Djemah road towards CAR's border with South Sudan, in which permanent UPDF bases are located.

The insecurity caused by the proliferation of armed groups in eastern CAR has allowed LRA groups to exploit vast stretches of ungoverned territory. The LRA committed 25 attacks in CAR in the first six months of 2013, killing 35 people and abducting 112 others, though attack patterns varied significantly in different prefectures. The LRA committed 11 of these 25 attacks in Haut Mbomou prefecture and the eastern edge of Mbomou prefecture, where Ugandan troops are deployed in several locations and have prevented the advance of Seleka factions. Aside from one attack in which LRA forces abducted 13 hunters, these attacks were primarily small scale looting raids on isolated farmers or travelers. This trend is largely consistent with the pattern of LRA attacks in areas of CAR under UPDF influence in 2012, suggesting that the presence of Ugandan (and US) troops is a deterrent to mass LRA attacks.

In areas of Haut Kotto prefecture and western Mbomou prefecture where US and Ugandan troops have far more limited access, Seleka factions are deployed in several towns but provide little security to the civilian population. In Haut Kotto, the LRA committed several highly violent attacks in the first half of 2013 in which they killed 25 people and abducted 79 others. LRA activity followed a similar pattern in 2012, during which LRA forces committed several brazen attacks on large villages in Haut Kotto and western Mbomou outside of Ugandan military influence, abducting over 110 people and looting large amounts of food and supplies. Overall, 85% of mass LRA attacks in CAR between January 2012 and June 2013 occurred in areas not under UPDF influence, and the LRA abducted nearly triple the amount of people per attack in areas outside of UPDF influence (6.0) as they did in areas under UPDF influence (2.2).



LRA Members Communicating with Local Populations in Congo

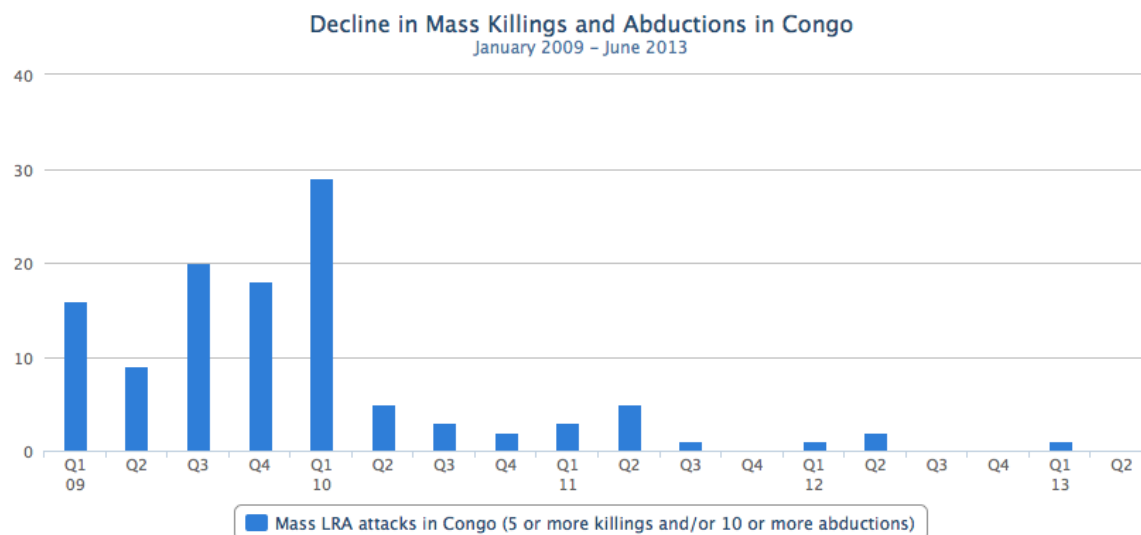


Though the LRA is widely perceived to be an isolated and insular group, LRA forces often try to send messages to local communities, often via people they encounter during attacks or abductees they release. A Crisis Tracker analysis of interactions between LRA groups in Congo and local civilians between January 2012 and June 2013 found at least 24 such messages, including 9 in which LRA members wrote letters. In 6 communications, LRA forces requested that civilians inform local communities to refrain from interfering with the LRA or cooperating with military forces. However, in several other communications, LRA forces sought to reassure civilians that they no longer wanted to kill people.

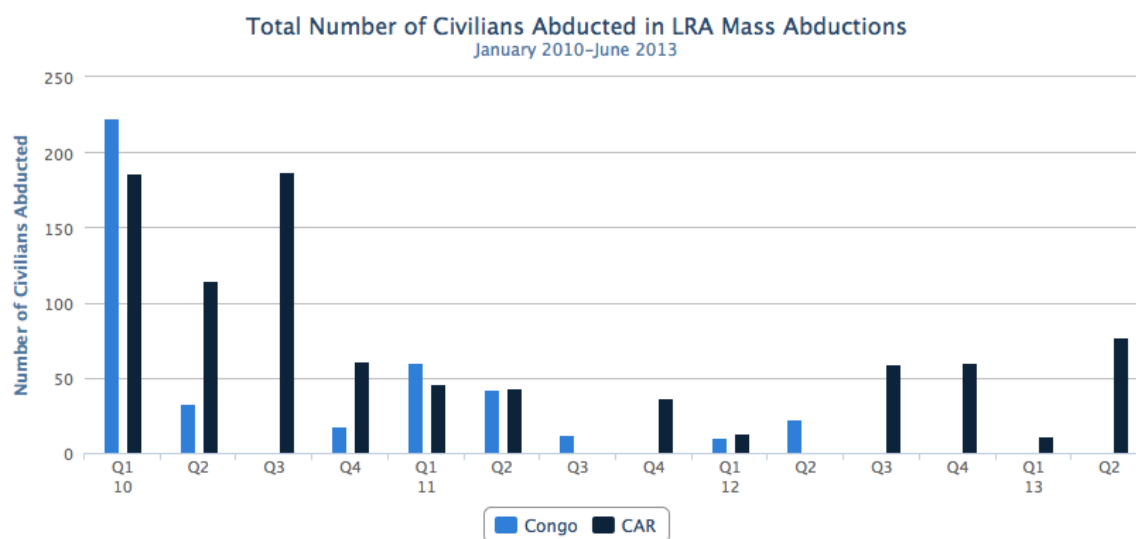
In 9 incidents, LRA members expressed a desire to defect from the rebel group, sometimes asking civilians for assistance in doing so. In several cases, such as a series of incidents near Faradje in April and May 2013, LRA communications were clustered in a particular area in a short period of time, indicating that LRA combatants were making repeated attempts to surrender.

These attempts at communication likely reflect a high degree of disillusionment within LRA groups in Congo. Recent evidence suggests LRA groups in Congo are increasingly isolated from LRA senior commanders operating in CAR and the Kafia Kingi enclave, and operate in significantly weaker and smaller groups. However, only one Ugandan LRA combatant defected from the LRA in the first six months of 2013, indicating that LRA members still face significant barriers to successful defection.

Decline in LRA Mass Attacks in Congo

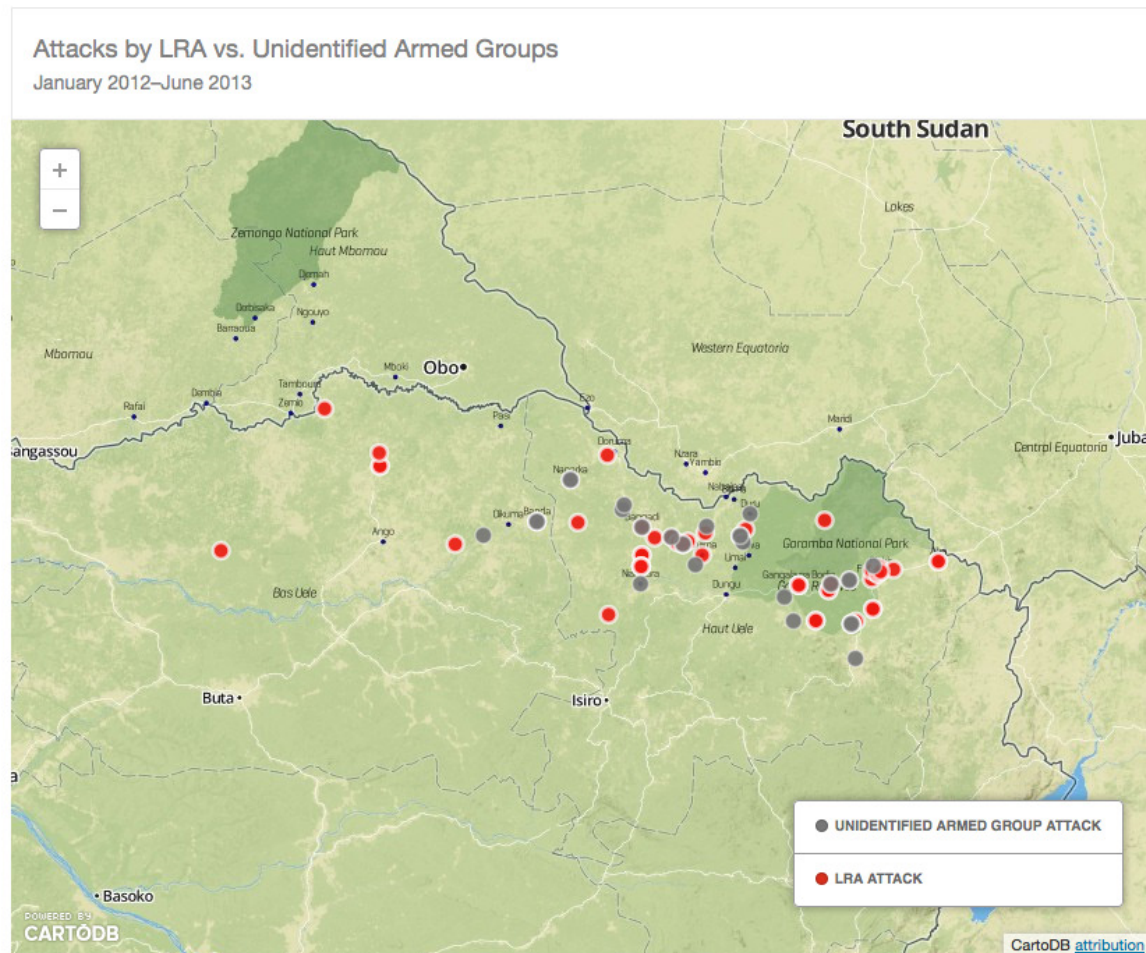


As LRA fighting capacity in Congo has diminished and they have become more averse to the risks of committing highly publicized mass killings or abductions, the number of mass LRA attacks in Congo has consistently dropped, ranging from 63 in 2009 to just one in the first six months of 2013 (see graph above). LRA attack patterns have shifted to include primarily small-scale looting raids in which few, if any, people are abducted or killed — LRA forces did not kill or abduct any civilians in nearly half of their 65 attacks in Congo from January 2012–June 2013. LRA mass attacks in Congo have declined faster than those in CAR, where mass abductions have persisted in recent years (see graph below).



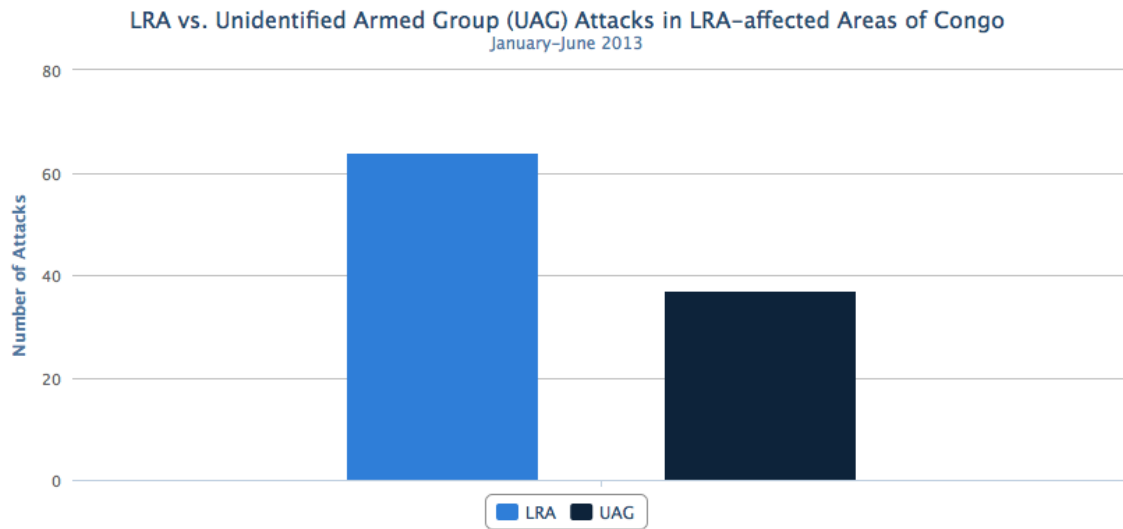
Note: A mass abduction is one in which LRA forces abduct 10 or more people in a single attack

Attacks by LRA vs Unidentified Armed Groups



The LRA's reduction in major abductions and killings in favor of small-scale lootings has made it increasingly difficult for protection actors to distinguish LRA raids from attacks committed by bandits, rogue Congolese soldiers, poachers, and other armed groups. Consequently, LRA activity contributes to a broader dynamic of insecurity in Haut Uele and Bas Uele districts that will likely persist in some form even if the LRA should end its attacks there. For example, Congolese soldiers committed a number of human rights abuses against civilians in the first six months of 2013, and even clashed with park rangers in Garamba National Park in one incident.

In LRA-affected areas of Congo in the first six months of 2013, the ratio of LRA attacks to those in which the armed group was unidentified (indicating the perpetrator could include the LRA, bandits, poachers, rogue Congolese soldiers, or other armed groups) was approximately 5:2 (64 to 26), similar to the 5:2 ratio (223 to 86) in 2012.



LRA Crisis Tracker Methodology

I. 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 30 HF radio operators call the Dungu hub 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.

2. Data Review

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.

About

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative, formerly Resolve, 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.

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Invisible Children

Invisible Children is an international NGO working to assist communities in LRA-affected areas of Central Africa by expanding community-based early warning systems, reaching out to potential LRA defectors and affected communities through FM radio, and rehabilitating formerly-abducted children.

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Further Resources

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

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 LRACrisisTracker@theResolve.org.