LRA CRISIS TRACKER

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Executive Summary: 3 Key Trends in LRA Activity

1. Sharp decrease in LRA killings and abductions

July–September 2013 (Q3 2013) marked the lowest number of recorded LRA killings and abductions in the LRA Crisis Tracker dataset. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo), there were no LRA killings. In the Central African Republic (CAR), LRA forces killed two civilians in Q3 2013, a significant drop from the 29 LRA killings there in Q2 and 28 killings there in Q1. LRA forces also reduced civilian abductions by 50% between Q3 2013 (67 abductions) and Q2 (136 abductions).

LRA Killings and Abductions by Quarter
January 2011–September 2013

Legend: LRA Fatalities, LRA Abductions
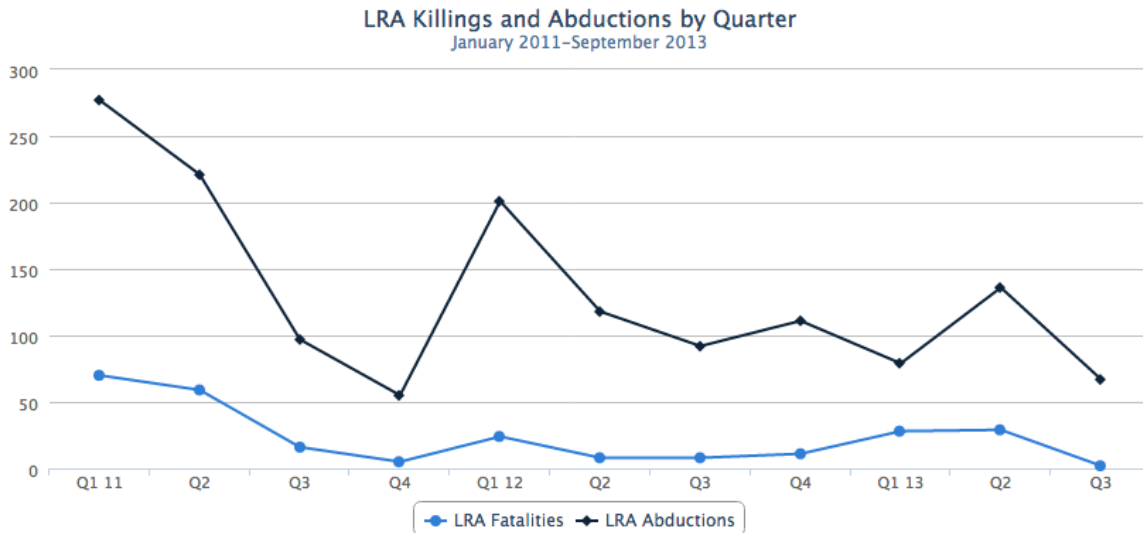
2. LRA attacks rise in Congo, fall in CAR

There were 37 LRA attacks in Q3 2013, nearly identical to the number of LRA attacks in Q2 (38). The number of attacks rose in Congo, from 21 in Q2 2013 to 32 in Q3, and fell in CAR, from 17 in Q2 to 5 in Q3. The LRA committed its most violent attack of Q3 2013 on July 14 in CAR's Haut Kotto prefecture, abducting 34 people and killing 2 others. The attack was consistent with LRA attack trends of the past two years, in which a majority of the most violent LRA attacks have occurred in areas of CAR outside of the Ugandan military's area of influence.

LRA Attacks in CAR and Congo
January 2010–September 2013

Legend: LRA Attacks in CAR, LRA Attacks in Congo
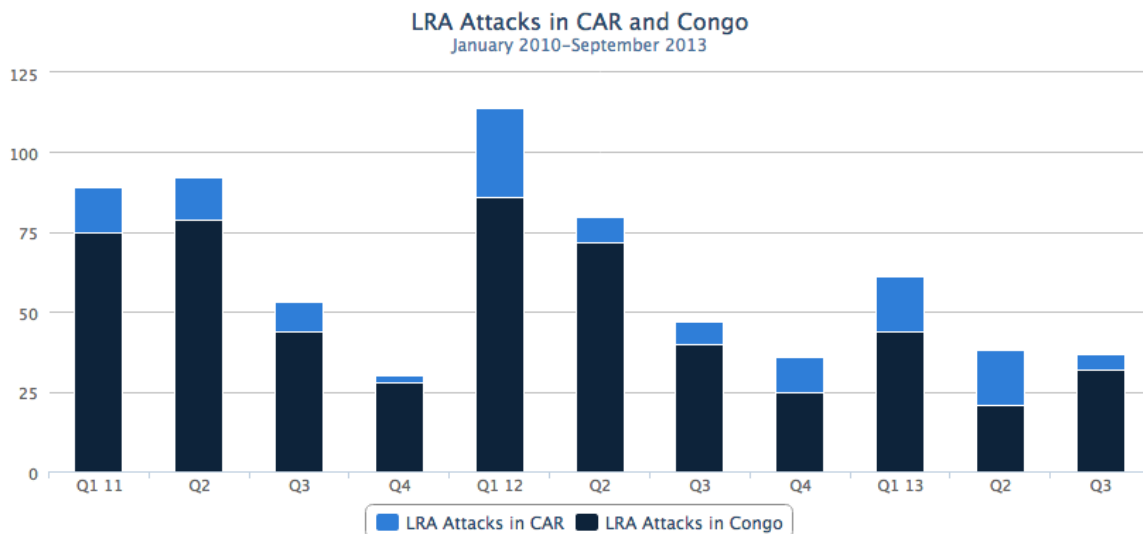
3. Destruction of LRA camps in Congo

Forces from the African Union Regional Task Force (AU RTF) destroyed two LRA camps in Congo in September 2013, one in Garamba National Park and another further west in Bas Uele district. Both camps contained huts and evidence of food cultivation and storage, as did an LRA camp destroyed in March 2013 by AU RTF forces in Sudanese-controlled areas of the disputed Kafia Kingi enclave.
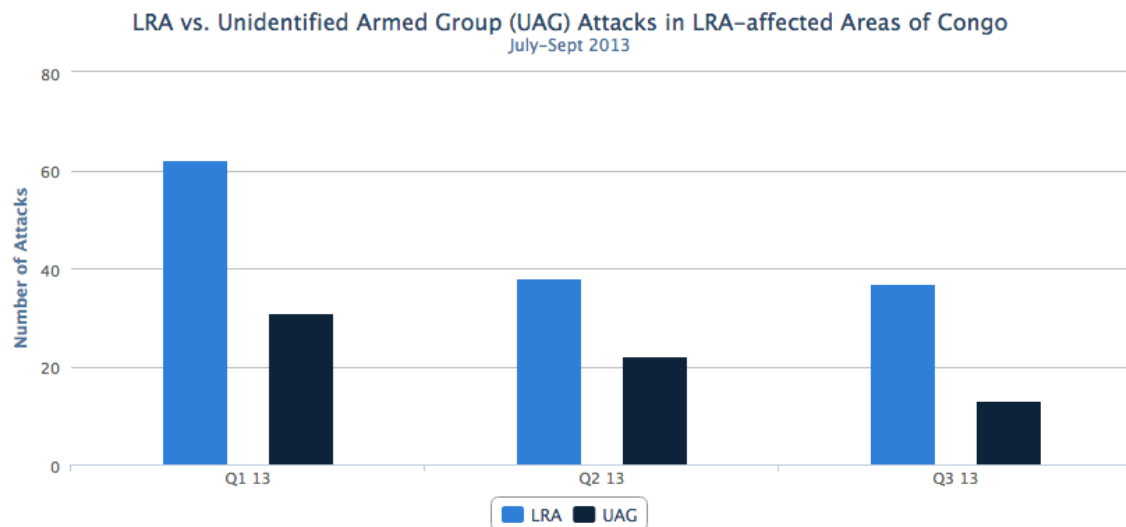
Map of LRA Attacks, July–September 2013

Q3 LRA Attacks

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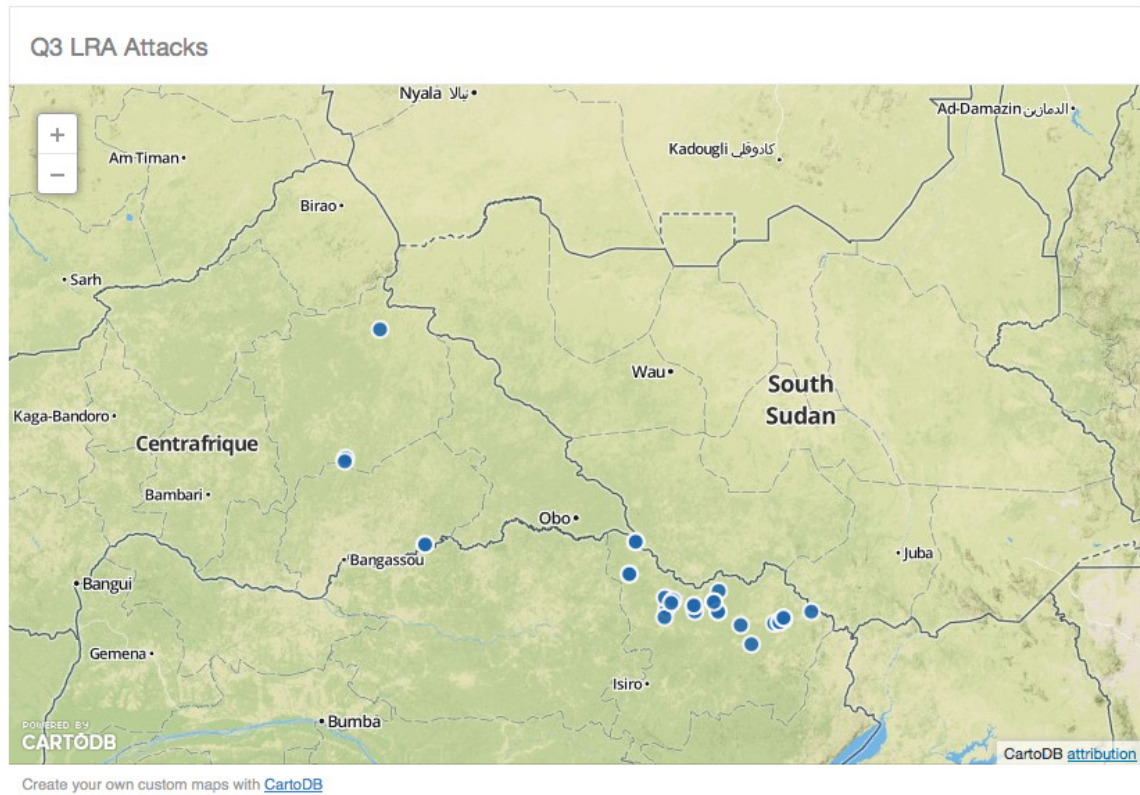
Attacks by LRA vs Unidentified Armed Groups

A history of recent LRA activity in Congo demonstrates a shift away from major abductions and killings towards small-scale lootings. This shift has made it increasingly difficult for protection actors to determine the perpetrators of the attack -- LRA, bandits, poachers, rogue Congolese soldiers, or other unidentified armed groups.

In Q3 2013, the ratio of LRA attacks in LRA-affected areas of Congo to those in which armed groups were unidentified (indicating the perpetrator could include the LRA, bandits, poachers, rogue Congolese soldiers, or other armed groups) was 37 to 13 (3:1), compared to 38 to 22 (2:1) in Q2 and 62 to 31 (2:1) in Q1.

LRA vs. Unidentified Armed Group (UAG) Attacks in LRA–affected Areas of Congo
July–Sept 2013

Surge in AU RTF Counter-LRA Operations

Armed Forces Operating in LRA-Affected Areas

Legend:
- AU RTF (UGANDA) DEPLOYMENT
- EX-SELEKA / CENTRAL AFRICAN NATIONAL MILITARY TROOP DEPLOYMENT
- US MILITARY DEPLOYMENT
- TRIPARTITE FORCE (CAR, CHAD, AND SUDAN)
- AU RTF (SOUTH SUDAN)
- MICOPAX/MISCA
- AU RTF HEADQUARTERS
- AU RTF (CONGO)

Create your own custom maps with CartoDB
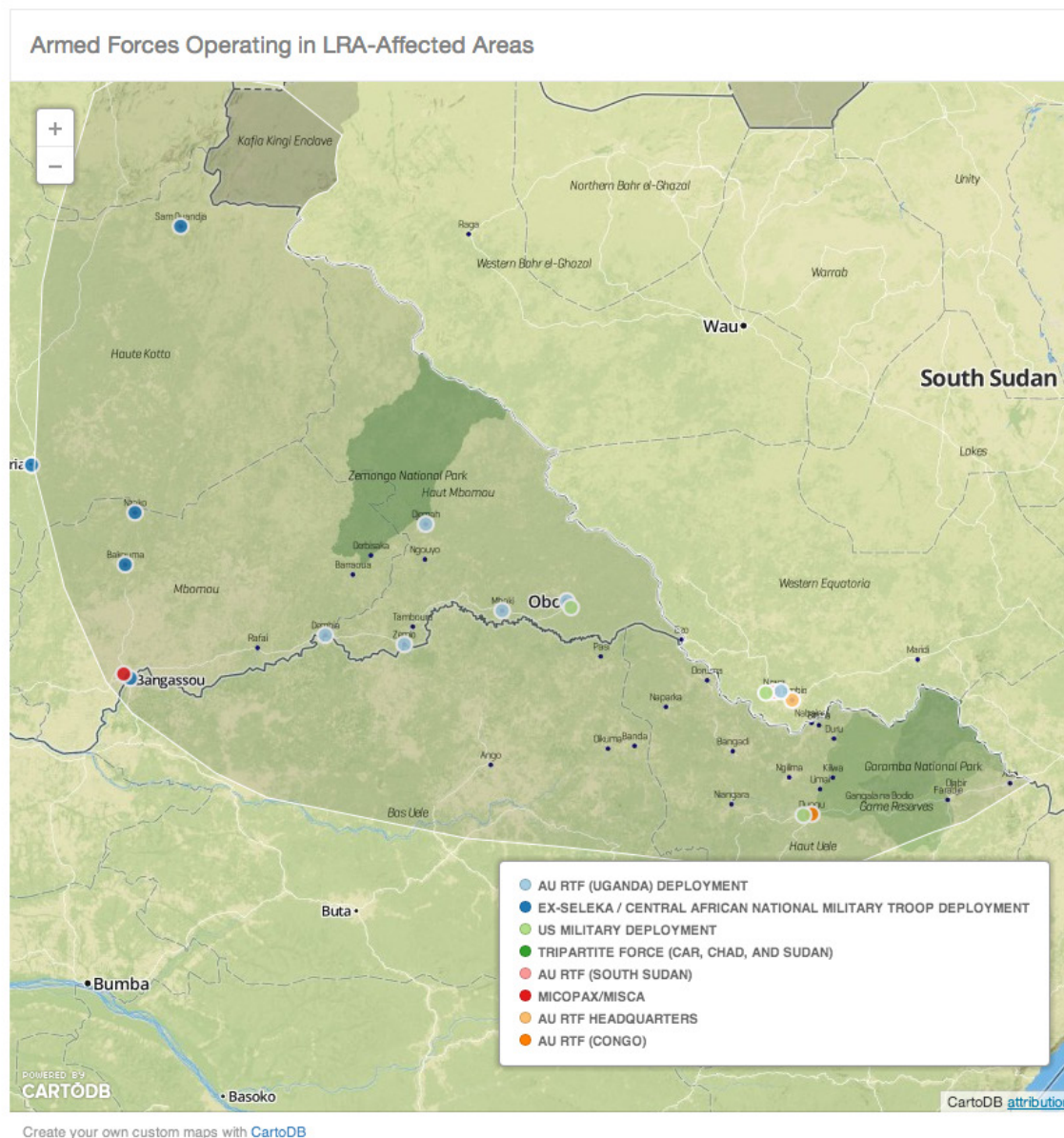
Note: This map does not display all locations where selected military forces are deployed. The LRA's approximate area of operation (January 2012–September 2013) is represented by the shaded area.

The African Union Regional Task Force, established in November 2011 to protect civilians from the LRA and capture senior LRA leaders, launched a series of operations in Q3 2013 following a prolonged period of disengagement. In the first months of their deployment, the Congolese military (FARDC) and South Sudanese (SPLA) contingents were poorly equipped and did not conduct significant operations. The Central African military (FACA) was essentially dissolved following the March 2013 coup in CAR, and the new transitional authorities and military forces there are not officially recognized by the AU. The Ugandan military (UPDF) contingent was conducting active counter-LRA operations in CAR, but officially suspended them following the March 2013 coup.

In Q3 2013, however, the AU RTF re-launched active operations. In September, the FARDC destroyed an LRA camp in northern Bas Uele district of Congo, while the SPLA destroyed an LRA camp in Congo's Garamba National Park and investigated dozens of other sites of suspected LRA activity in the park. The operations were the first substantive offensive counter-LRA operations in Congo since September 2011, when Congolese authorities revoked the UPDF's permission to operate there. Both LRA camps destroyed by the RTF forces in Congo contained small huts and cultivated fields with vegetables and groundnuts. LRA defectors confirmed these locations were staging points to send supplies and ivory to senior LRA commanders in CAR. In CAR, the UPDF announced the official resumption of counter-LRA operations in October, though reports indicated operations had already resumed in the previous weeks and months.

External support was critical to the AU RTF forces recent surge in operations. US military advisers provided critical training, intelligence, and logistical support to the FARDC and SPLA units that conducted the operations in Congo, even embedding with them. US advisers also continue to collaborate with UPDF troops tracking the LRA in CAR, and the US provides substantial intelligence and mobility support to UPDF forces there. Meanwhile, diplomatic engagement by AU LRA envoy Amb. Francisco Madeira and Abou Moussa, the lead UN official on LRA issues, with the Congolese government and transitional authorities in CAR proved critical to attaining their support for RTF operations.

Notable LRA Incidents

Notable LRA Attacks and Returnee Incidents
Q3 2013

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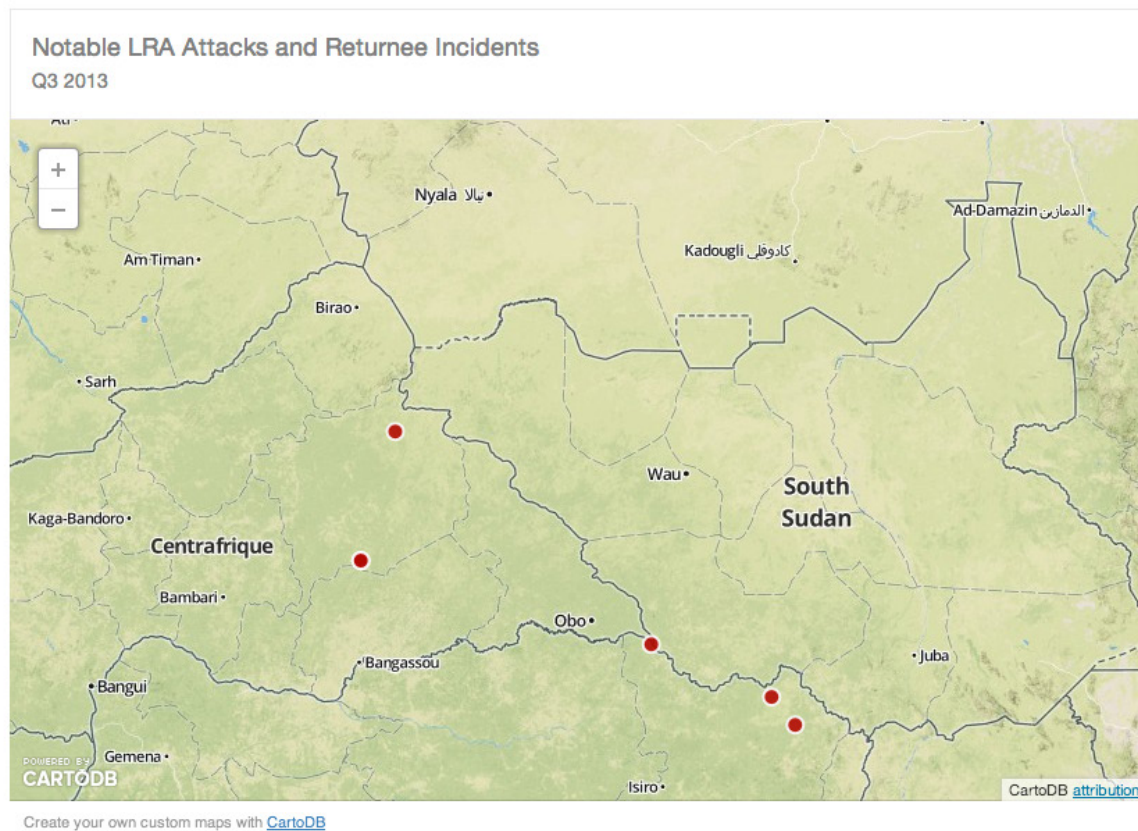
July 05, 2013 | Sobhe, Haut Uele, DRC

4 LRA combatants reportedly cut off the ear of a 40-year-old mother in a field 5 km north of Sobhe, Congo, after she recognized one of the children with the combatants. The woman was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.
Verification Rating: 3 | LRA Verification Rating: Medium

July 14, 2013 | Yangoussi, Haute-Kotto, CAR

A group of 49 armed LRA attacked the communities of Yangoussi, Bamara, and Zouangadji in CAR. They abducted approximately 34 people and killed 2 others, while also burning buildings and looting goods. Security forces responded and reportedly killed 1 LRA member and wounded several others.
Verification Rating: 4 | LRA Verification Rating: High

July 17, 2013 | Yangoussi, Haute-Kotto, CAR

Three days after LRA forces abducted 24 civilians from Yangoussi, CAR, and other nearby communities, they released 14 civilians. However, the LRA retained 6 boys and 4 girls in captivity.
Verification Rating: 3 | LRA Verification Rating: High

July 31, 2013 | Garamba National Park, Haut Uele, DRC

South Sudanese hunters exchanged fire with an LRA group, killing 2 LRA fighters and rescuing 2 women and 2 children.The escapees and the local hunters identified one of the killed LRA combatants as Major Odano, reportedly the senior LRA officer in Garamba National Park.
Verification Rating: 5 | LRA Verification Rating: High

August 29, 2013 | Bangalu, Haut Uele, DRC

Suspected LRA forces ambushed a group of Mbororo near Bangalu, DRC. The Mbororo were traveling to Niangara, DRC, from the Central African Republic. The assailants abducted 2 people and 10 cows.
Verification Rating: 3 | LRA Verification Rating: Medium

September 19, 2013 | Kotto 2, Haute-Kotto, CAR

Suspected LRA forces attacked the town of Kotto 2 in CAR and abducted 4 people, including 3 children. They also burned 40 houses, looted food and money, destroyed the town's granaries, beat people and displaced the population.
Verification Rating: 3 | LRA Verification Rating: Medium

Nzako Mass Defection Reports

In August 2013, LRA forces near Banale, CAR made contact with local residents, delivering letters addressed to the local authorities in nearby Nzako and to Michel Djotodia, head of the transitional authorities in CAR. The letters, allegedly sent at the request of LRA leader Joseph Kony, indicated that a large group of LRA members were interested in defecting and possibly settling in Central African territory. They were delivered by a group of LRA representatives under the command of Major Otto "Sam" Ladeere, known as a trusted lieutenant of Kony's who has previously served as both his bodyguard and the LRA's Director of Intelligence. Ladeere's outreach is the first instance in which an active LRA commander has expressed a willingness to negotiate the defection of a large group of LRA members since the collapse of the Juba Peace Talks in November 2008. However, there is not yet concrete evidence that the LRA leader Joseph Kony is directly involved or even aware of the Ladeere's actions.

Djotodia responded to the letter with one of his own and designated General Damane, a close ally, as his primary interlocutor with the LRA group. In September and October contact between Central African authorities and Ladeere's group intensified, with Central African authorities reportedly sending 20 bags of manioc and other supplies to the LRA group and even offering LRA forces territory in which to settle.

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 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.

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.

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 this 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.

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