

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S LRA STRATEGY REPORT CARD

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President Obama's first year of implementing his comprehensive strategy to address Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) violence in central Africa comes to a close this month. After a slow start, the Obama Administration made significant progress in recent weeks. The most notable development was the deployment of US military advisers to the region to assist in efforts to apprehend senior LRA commanders, protect civilians, and encourage defections from the rebel group. In Issue #3 of our LRA Strategy Report Cards we take stock of what has been accomplished so far and what President Obama will have to do in the coming months if hopes for an end to LRA violence in 2012 are to be realized.

Grading Rubric for President Obama's Strategy Implementation

- A:** Significant progress
- B:** Encouraging progress
- C:** Little or inadequate progress
- D:** Efforts at a standstill
- F:** Efforts backsliding

EXPAND U.S. ENGAGEMENT

1. Dedicate significant new staff and resources
2. Keep the VIPs involved
3. Work with regional and international partners

Grade: A-

(Issue #2: D, Issue #1: C)

The deployment of about 100 US military advisers to LRA-affected regions of central Africa is a major step forward in US efforts to stop LRA violence, and was accompanied by public statements from President Obama and Cabinet-level officials. The US State Department also appointed staff based in central Africa and Washington DC dedicated solely to coordinating LRA policy. However, strained relations between the regional governments have still not been adequately addressed. In particular, Congo's recent decision to halt Ugandan military operations in its territory could result in northern Congo being transformed into an enormous safe haven for LRA commanders.

Obama's to-do list: Work with his senior officials to improve collaboration between the Ugandan and Congolese governments on counter-LRA efforts; this includes ensuring the appointment of a capable Special Adviser for the Great Lakes region who reports directly to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The US should also pressure the African Union to appoint a competent and robust LRA special envoy to help keep the regional coalition together, a decision that has been delayed for months.

PROTECT CIVILIANS

1. Massively expand radio and mobile phone networks
2. Improve the effectiveness of national militaries and UN peacekeepers
3. Ensure local voices are heard

Grade: C+

(Issue #2: C, Issue #1: C)

Despite a drop in LRA attacks in recent months, civilians remain vulnerable to rebel raids across Central African Republic (CAR), Congo and South Sudan. In Congo, more UN peacekeepers are needed in LRA-affected communities. US-trained Congolese troops deployed there are more proactive than their counterparts, but have yet to make much improvement in protection efforts. US-funded pilot projects to expand mobile phone and HF radio early warning networks in northern Congo are important steps, but are limited in scope and fail to address the telecommunications void in southeast CAR.

Obama's to-do list: Speed up the rollout of pilot mobile phone and HF radio projects, and further expand community-driven early warning projects in LRA-affected areas of Congo and CAR. The US should also pressure the UN to dedicate more peacekeepers to LRA-affected areas of Congo and South Sudan, and improve cross-border information sharing. US military advisers deployed to the field should make integrating civilian protection strategies into regional military operations a priority.

RESOLVE



**INVISIBLE
CHILDREN**

STOP SENIOR LRA COMMANDERS

1. Apprehend Joseph Kony and top LRA commanders
2. Encourage LRA commanders to defect
3. Cut off external support to the LRA

FACILITATE ESCAPE

1. Help people escape from the LRA
2. Ensure those who escape can return home

HELP COMMUNITIES SURVIVE AND REBUILD

1. Find a way to reach people in need of emergency aid
2. Increase aid to disrupted communities
3. Address the conflict's root cause

Grade: B

(Issue #2: D, Issue 1: C)

Senior LRA commanders travel with near impunity throughout northern Congo and southeast CAR, and gathered with hundreds of fighters in recent months while military forces were largely unable and unwilling to respond. The deployment of US advisers can help bridge gaps in intelligence coordination and operational planning, but is not a silver bullet solution. Unless regional forces have better intelligence on LRA commander locations, transport capacity to react to that intelligence, and a greater willingness to collaborate, senior LRA commanders will continue to operate freely.

Obama's to-do list: Increase the US advisers' effectiveness by providing adequate intelligence, rapid reaction transport and training needed to apprehend senior LRA commanders. The President should task the advisers with coordinating a more targeted apprehension strategy and encouraging high-level defections from the LRA, and keep them in the field until the regional coalition has the necessary capabilities to achieve the mission. Senior US officials should also lead a diplomatic push to strengthen collaboration between Uganda and Congo and ensure more capable and committed troops are deployed in counter-LRA operations--including in northern Congo--from Uganda or other African countries.

Grade: D

(Issue #2: C, Issue #1: B)

In recent months hundreds of LRA fighters have gathered in southeast CAR, but the region has only one local FM radio station that broadcasts programs encouraging LRA fighters to escape, and it has a radius of only 12 miles. This radio silence reinforces LRA indoctrination that has been mostly successful in preventing defections, even though 30 women and children escaped the LRA in recent weeks. There is also inadequate aid for children who escape from the LRA and have experienced severe trauma and missed valuable time in school. The US and other donors have shown increased interest in this category, but progress remains limited.

Obama's to-do list: Break the stalemate by investing in local FM radio stations in CAR and Congo that can broadcast programs convincing LRA members to defect, including by funding existing efforts led by the UN mission in Congo. The US should expand on existing psychosocial support programs in CAR and Congo, and prepare for the possibility of future mass defections. In addition, the US should support UN-led community sensitization programs that encourage communities to accept LRA defectors and returnees peacefully. The US should also urge Uganda to publicly clarify the status of the critical Amnesty Act of 2000 for former and current LRA combatants and fully grant amnesties in line with the Act.

Grade: B

(Issue #2: B, Issue #1: B)

US humanitarian aid to LRA-affected communities in CAR, Congo, and South Sudan dropped significantly this year, though non-food aid increased from \$8.3 million to more than \$13 million. However, aid agencies are unable to reach many displaced persons in remote areas. In Uganda, harsh government crackdowns on opposition activists have created an ongoing human rights crisis and could disrupt years' worth of US investments in rebuilding the war-torn northern region.

Obama's to-do list: Improve humanitarian access by funding humanitarian flights, rehabilitating roads and airstrips, and expanding existing mobile phone and HF radio projects. The US should also balance its increased support to the Ugandan military for counter-LRA operations with a significant scaling-up of its diplomatic efforts to stop Uganda's repression of the political opposition.