

President Obama's LRA Strategy Report Card

Issue #2 - May 2011

This month marks the one-year anniversary of President Obama signing into law the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act. As mandated by the legislation, he released a comprehensive strategy to stop atrocities perpetrated by the LRA and help affected communities rebuild in November 2010. In Issue #1 of our report card, we raised concerns about whether President Obama would dedicate the funding, senior leadership, and political will needed to put the strategy into action. In Issue #2 we report that incremental progress in the strategy's first six months of implementation is not living up to the reality of rising LRA violence on the ground—and give President Obama some "homework" to improve his grades.

THE GRADING RUBRIC FOR PRESIDENT OBAMA'S LRA STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

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

Expand U.S. engagement

- Dedicate significant new staff and resources
- Keep the VIPs involved
- Work with regional and international partners

Grade: D (Issue #1 grade: D)

President Obama and his senior officials have barely mentioned rising LRA violence or the new LRA strategy, and have yet to appoint a Great Lakes special envoy to help improve coordination on the LRA internationally and within the U.S. government. Encouragingly, the State Department has extended a staff-level position of LRA coordinator, and the President's budget mentioned the LRA for the first time ever in the Fiscal Year 2012 request. However, the budget did not set aside enough funds to make clear to Congress that implementing the strategy is a priority – increasing the danger that Congressional pressure to cut foreign aid will further underfund the strategy.

Obama's homework:

Ensure the appointment of a Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region who reports directly to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and whose mandate includes the LRA. The US should also begin planning to include a much higher funding request to implement the strategy in the 2013 budget.

Protect civilians

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

Grade: C (Issue #1 grade: C)

The U.S. is beginning to expand mobile phone and HF radio coverage for thousands of Congolese civilians, a step toward protecting isolated communities from LRA raids. But hundreds of thousands of people across the region in danger of LRA attacks still lack coverage. U.S.-trained Congolese troops recently deployed to LRA-affected areas of northern Congo, but it remains to be seen whether they do a better job of protecting civilians than abusive units previously deployed there. The U.N. has yet to reinforce its relatively small deployment of 1,000 troops to LRA-affected areas of northern Congo.

Obama's homework:

Prioritize the deployment of more effective U.N. peacekeepers to northern Congo at the U.N. Security Council and closely monitor U.S.-trained Congolese troops there. In addition, the U.S. should dedicate resources to expanding telecommunications and road networks in northern Congo and eastern CAR.

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RESOLVE



INVISIBLE CHILDREN

Stop senior LRA commanders

- *Apprehend Joseph Kony and top LRA commanders*
- *Encourage LRA commanders to defect*
- *Cut off external support to the LRA*

Grade: D (Issue #1 grade: C)

U.S. efforts to apprehend senior LRA commanders have been focused on enhancing the Ugandan-led military offensive in Congo and CAR, including diplomacy focused on keeping the regional coalition together and a proposal to deploy U.S. military advisors to Congo. But a lack of resources and personnel has made this process painfully slow. The Ugandans are removing troops from the fight against the LRA, and worsening tensions between Ugandan and Congolese commanders are further inhibiting the chances of apprehending Joseph Kony and the senior commanders wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Obama's homework:

Work with international allies to develop a better strategy to catch senior LRA commanders while preventing reprisal attacks on civilians. This will require forces with intelligence about LRA activity and the mobility and capacity to effectively act on that intelligence. The United States should provide advisors to aid and evaluate existing efforts, but also lead a diplomatic push to secure an international coalition capable of taking on this critical task. Additionally, President Obama should encourage African Union efforts to better coordinate and consider giving a mandate to regional operations. The U.S. should also expand radio programming and other initiatives to encourage LRA commanders to defect.

Facilitate escape

- *Help people escape from the LRA*
- *Ensure those who escape can return home*

Grade: C (Issue #1 grade: B)

The U.S. has increased pressure on the UN to make sure children who escape the LRA get home safely and quickly. But there remain numerous cases in which children spend less time in LRA captivity than they do trying to return home after escaping. Once home, many LRA escapees still have little access to assistance to overcome injuries, trauma and missed schooling sustained in captivity.

Obama's homework:

Dedicate more funds to help fill the gap in assistance for children and adults escaping or defecting from the LRA. The U.S. should also pressure the Ugandan government to abide by laws granting amnesty to escapees and ensure they are not pressured into joining the Ugandan military.

Help communities survive and rebuild

- *Find a way to reach people in need of emergency aid*
- *Increase aid to disrupted communities*
- *Address the conflict's root causes*

Grade: B (Issue #1 grade: B)

The U.S. has begun to fill the humanitarian gap in isolated eastern CAR, increasing emergency aid and expanding humanitarian access flights to assist people displaced by the LRA. However, in Congo - where LRA attacks have displaced 38,000 people so far this year - and southern Sudan many communities don't get adequate food and medical aid due to insecurity and funding shortages. In Uganda, including in the North, violence by Ugandan soldiers against civilians in response to opposition demonstrations is undermining progress on recovery and reconciliation for war-affected communities.

Obama's homework:

Expand humanitarian assistance in LRA-affected areas, especially to remote areas in northern Congo and eastern CAR, in coordination with better civilian protection initiatives. Also, the U.S. should pressure the Ugandan government to stop its crackdown on peaceful demonstrators and prioritize recovery and reconciliation in northern Uganda.