

Finishing the Fight Against the LRA

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Operation Lightning Thunder did not end the threat of the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, and it sparked harsh reprisals by the LRA against civilians in Congo. Yet, it would be an even greater tragedy for civilians if key states in the region and the international community lost their collective will to end the threat of the LRA once and for all. What is needed now is a second Ugandan-led operation against the LRA. This new operation must place civilian protection front and center. In addition, it will require stronger and more effective support from the United States and the international community, and the full commitment from the Congolese government and army to complete the job in a reasonable timeframe and operate in all LRA-affected areas of northeastern Congo. If the United States takes the lead in supporting a new Ugandan military operation, as Enough believes it should, it must provide solid planning, intelligence, coordination, and logistical support—and take greater responsibility for the execution and outcomes of the operation.

The hard lessons of “Lightning Thunder”

In the months since the armies of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and southern Sudan launched Operation Lightning Thunder, a joint military offensive against the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, the threat to civilians in the region has dramatically intensified. Efforts to negotiate a political solution with the LRA ran aground in late 2008, and prospects for a peaceful end to the conflict are nonexistent as long as LRA leader Joseph Kony refuses to sign the deal that remains on the table.² Unless Joseph Kony and the LRA's other top commanders are apprehended or otherwise removed, the group's campaign of terror will continue.

Cooperation between Uganda, Congo, and southern Sudan in addressing the LRA as a shared regional threat is a major breakthrough, and should be welcomed by the international community. However, due primarily to domestic political pressures and concerns about the lengthy presence of a foreign military on his soil, Congolese President Joseph Kabila recently requested the withdrawal of the Ugandan army from northeastern Congo—the primary locus of the LRA's current predations and regional efforts to end them. Many Ugandan troops, however, have stayed in Congo and continue to conduct “intelligence operations” against the LRA. Some low-scale fighting between the remaining Ugandan troops and the LRA has been reported, but these largely below-the-radar efforts are likely insufficient to corner the LRA leadership.³ Moreover, the Ugandan military, the Congolese army, and the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo, or MONUC, have not demon-



A Congolese army, or FARDC, procession at the Ugandan army, or UPDF, withdrawal ceremony in Dungu, Orientale province, March 2009.

strated the capacity to effectively protect civilians or pursue the LRA in these remote forests. Genuine military pressure on the LRA will require the involvement of external actors. Given the United States' support for the poorly executed "Lightning Thunder" and that U.S. leadership and investment is critical to planning and executing an operation with a greater chance of success, the Obama administration now has a responsibility and opportunity to help finish the job.

This will not be easy. While the LRA is on the run, it is dispersed in small groups over a vast expanse of challenging, intermittently populated terrain.⁴ Although scattered, the LRA continues to conduct highly coordinated and ruthless attacks against civilians. Since mid-December 2008, the LRA has brutally murdered more than 1,000 people in northeastern Congo and southern Sudan and abducted nearly 250 children. In at least one case in northeastern Congo's Orientale province an entire village was pillaged and burned to the ground.⁵ More than 180,000 Congolese have been forced from their homes, while in southern Sudan, a further 60,000 have been displaced.⁶ Because of poor planning, insufficient logistical support, and far too few U.N. peacekeepers and Congolese soldiers (those forces tasked with civilian protection in "Lightning Thunder"), local communities and the masses of internally displaced people are highly vulnerable. Humanitarian access in these remote areas is limited; the displaced are living hand to mouth in and around towns and villages, and scarce supplies of food and medicine are quickly being exhausted.⁷

Absent any genuine opportunity for a political settlement, the international community has few attractive options to end this conflict, yet the need for action is urgent. Doing nothing will result in more death and destruction, and the LRA is already using the current space to reorganize and rebuild its military strength. The longer the international community waits, the more time the LRA will have to regroup and further wreak havoc—erasing the relative gains made by the three-month operation. The Congolese army is incapable of either protecting civilians or defeating the LRA, and Congolese forces themselves are regularly responsible for appalling human rights abuses, although they have been somewhat more disciplined in the northeast to date. MONUC is stretched near to its breaking point and principally preoccupied with the fragile situation in North and South Kivu provinces. The United Nations is unlikely to contribute much more than limited tactical support to Congolese forces operating in the area.

Launching a new military operation without closely examining what went wrong with "Lightning Thunder" and applying lessons learned will only result in greater civilian casualties and displacement while squandering valuable resources and political will. *However, a revitalized and revamped military operation focused on apprehending the senior LRA leadership while simultaneously protecting civilians is the best way to defeat the insurgency and allow displaced civilians to return to their homes.* The most likely practical option for success is more robust Western support for a second Ugandan-led operation. Shifting political winds in Kinshasa in recent weeks have opened the door for the Ugandan army to return in full force and with proper consultation and planning by the Congolese government. For a second Ugandan-led military operation to have a chance at success, however, it must have strong support from the United States and the international community, and the full commitment from the Congolese government and army to complete the job in a reasonable timeframe and operate in all LRA-affected areas of Congo—including Faradje.

Uganda also must provide credible assurances that Congolese fears about ulterior Ugandan motives (such as illegal extraction of Congolese resources) will not become reality. Regional armies and MONUC must make civilian protection an indisputable priority—from careful plan-

ning to acquiring necessary resources to executing regular patrols. The Congolese army should deploy proactively with MONUC support in civilian areas that have so far evaded attacks by the LRA, and the Congolese army and MONUC must also deploy to the main civilian centers to protect civilians and the large groupings of displaced people around these towns while the Ugandan army carries out operations to track and fight the LRA.

If the United States takes the lead in supporting a new Ugandan military operation, as Enough believes it should, it must provide solid planning, intelligence, coordination, and logistical support—and take greater responsibility for the execution and outcomes of the operation. (While it would be ideal for the United States or a European-led operation to apprehend Kony—given his status as an indicted war criminal—unfortunately there seems to be very little appetite in Western capitals for fully owning such an operation at this time.)

Operation Lightning Thunder

A few positives

The joint operation demonstrated a level of communication and cooperation between the governments of Congo, Uganda, and southern Sudan that is unprecedented in recent history, particularly in addressing regional security threats. This is a significant and welcome step toward regional peace and cooperation that should be further encouraged by the United States and others concerned about peace and stability in the region. The regional armies destroyed some of Kony's main camps; rounded up various stores of food, ammunition, and communication equipment; rescued several dozen abductees; and killed some rank-and-file fighters.⁸ These gains are



The Congolese Minister for Defense Charles Mwando (left) and his Ugandan counterpart, the Ugandan Minister of State for Defense Lieutenant General Jeje Odongo, at the Ugandan army withdrawal ceremony in Dungu, Orientale province.

not sufficient to bring an end to the LRA—especially since its leadership is still at large and on the attack—but they did impose short-term costs on the rebels, while making their day-to-day operations more precarious. It is also possible that dislodging the LRA from its existing camps has opened up some leadership tensions within the LRA.

And finally, the Ugandan army's presence in northeastern Congo temporarily improved security in some areas. And although the Ugandan army's primary mission in Congo was to capture or kill

LRA leader Joseph Kony and his top commanders, the mere presence of Ugandan forces proved a strong deterrent against LRA attacks and thus provided civilians with a modicum of security in some areas where the Ugandans were present. Obviously, in areas where the Ugandans were absent, the LRA felt free to exact reprisals on civilians. Every person interviewed by Enough in and around the Doruma and Dungu areas of Haut-Uele district in Orientale Province said that the Ugandan army should not withdraw until they have successfully captured or killed Joseph

Kony and the senior leadership of the LRA.⁹ As one man in Doruma said ominously the day before the Ugandans began withdrawing, “if the UPDF leaves now, we are done.” Indeed, the impact of the Ugandan army’s absence in the Faradje region has been clear, where the Congolese blocked Ugandans forces from deploying since early January and the bulk of LRA attacks in the past several months have occurred.¹⁰

What went wrong?

Although “Lightning Thunder” did achieve some relative gains, several major shortcomings seriously hindered the operation’s effectiveness.

POOR OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Key Ugandan military personnel involved in the development and execution of the offensive openly admit that they thought “Lightning Thunder” would only take one month, but that due to “unpredictable” factors such as weather, the lack of roads in the area, wide rivers, and other largely foreseeable logistical difficulties, it took over a month just to move all of the forces into place.¹¹ Contingency plans and strategies to deal with various logistical factors and possible scenarios should have been mapped out prior to the operation’s launch.¹² This oversight resulted in repeated delays in troop deployments and slow responses to LRA attacks on main civilian centers in Haut-Uele, and contributed to the failure of the operation to capture or kill any of the LRA’s key leaders.

A DISJOINTED, SOMETIMES DYSFUNCTIONAL, COLLABORATION

Another major shortcoming was the fact that “Lightning Thunder” was not particularly “joint” in nature. Although the collaboration between Congo, southern Sudan, and Uganda to address a shared security threat is encouraging, in reality the offensive was run and executed by the Ugandan army. And where responsibilities were divided or shared, capability shortfalls, coordination gaps, territorial restrictions, and information-sharing snags undermined the operation’s overall effectiveness.

First, Congolese and southern Sudanese forces did not have the manpower, resources, or logistics to fulfill their basic roles in the operation. The Congolese army’s primary responsibility was to protect civilians in Dungu and Faradje territories, with support from MONUC. But as noted above, this effort was generally reactive and ineffective. Sources within the Government of Southern Sudan acknowledged that Sudan’s border with Congo is simply too large and too unpopulated, and that their force numbers were too few to actually be able to monitor and seal the border—the key piece of the operation they had agreed to fulfill.¹³ The LRA has been able to exploit this operational weakness by moving back and forth across the Congo-Sudan border, evading capture and targeting civilians.

Second, the Congolese army’s lack of a clear command structure, inadequate logistical support, and its poor division of responsibilities have greatly weakened its effectiveness on the ground. Three different Congolese units are deployed in the area, and it is unclear who controls what or who answers to whom. Also, reports of Congolese army abuses against civilians are on the rise. Congolese soldiers frequently prey on civilians when they are not paid or provided with sufficient food and shelter. The FARDC in Haut-Uele has been better behaved than it has often been in the past, but the conditions are ripe for army abuses.

Third, none of the joint forces established a focal point for registering and reintegrating LRA abductees who had been captured or rescued by one of the regional armies.¹⁴ This is a serious operational oversight that may have had severe consequences for those LRA captives who did return and did not receive proper psychosocial, medical, and other forms of basic support following their rescue from rebel captivity.

Fourth, territorial restrictions imposed by the Congolese government and enforced by Congolese forces seriously limited the Ugandan army's ability to track the LRA. In early January, the Congolese army forced two Ugandan companies to leave Faradje—the epicenter of LRA activity—because Congolese officials did not trust Ugandan forces to deploy beyond MONUC's base in Dungen. Thereafter, Faradje was off limits to the Ugandan army.¹⁵ Facing only the weak Congolese army, the LRA stepped up attacks in Faradje territory throughout January, February, March, and April.¹⁶

Finally, lack of trust and confidence between the various armies involved in “Lightning Thunder” remains persistent. Ugandan, Congolese, and U.N. officials all told Enough that critical intelligence was not shared amongst the joint forces and this reluctance to fully disclose information limited the extent to which the regional armies worked together in a variety of areas.

INSUFFICIENT AND REACTIVE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

The protection offered by Ugandan, Congolese, and U.N. forces was limited, and “Lightning Thunder” provoked devastating reprisal attacks against civilians—the LRA's well-documented *modus operandi* in the immediate aftermath of a military offensive. As stated above more than 1,000 people in Congo and southern Sudan have been killed and nearly 250 children abducted since the launch of “Lightning Thunder.”¹⁷ And these numbers keep rising. The response to many of these LRA attacks by the Congolese army—with some support from MONUC—has been slow. The Ugandan military has only provided de facto civilian protection in areas where it is present in significant numbers. After the Doruma-area massacres on December 24 and 25, the Congolese army did not arrive in the area until at least two days after the attacks had occurred, at which point the LRA had already moved elsewhere. Congolese officials attributed the delay to poor communication networks and difficulty in transporting troops to the area, as the Congolese rely heavily on the United Nations for logistical support. Initially, part of the problem appeared to be due to MONUC's limited forewarning about the offensive, which led to delays in providing the requisite lift to Congolese forces to deploy effectively. But the prevailing problem thereafter was simply insufficient MONUC personnel and logistics to move and support the Congolese army in a way that would maximize protection and deterrence in main civilian areas.¹⁸

Now that many Ugandan troops have left Congo, MONUC is facing tremendous local and international pressure to provide even more support to fill the security gap. Yet despite MONUC's calls for reinforcements in late 2008 to address the deteriorating situation across eastern Congo, the European Union rejected a deployment and the 3,000 additional U.N. peacekeepers authorized by the Security Council have yet to arrive. Absent additional support, MONUC officials acknowledge that the mission lacks the personnel, resources, intelligence, and logistics to alter the status quo. Not only are civilians increasingly at risk of LRA attacks, but due in large part to insufficient security provisions (such as the capacity to provide MONUC escorts in areas such as Doruma and Faradje), international aid agencies cannot access those civilians most in need of assistance. Since the Ugandan withdrawal, MONUC has stationed an additional 120 soldiers in Dungen, and it is planning to set up a base in Duru, but these expansion plans are not likely to effectively materialize for months and still would be too little, too late.¹⁹



Congolese army, or FARDC, soldiers in Dungen, Orientale province.

Because MONUC and Congolese forces have failed to protect civilians, populations throughout northeastern Congo and southern Sudan are now exposed to yet another risk: local self-defense units. These groups of armed civilians—often equipped with old hunting rifles, machetes, or bows and arrows—have formed to try to fill the security void. In some instances, such as in the town of Bangadi, they have effectively pushed back the LRA. These local militias have even taken control over some of the localities they are protecting after local officials and police fled from the scene.²⁰ None of these informal forces, however, have received any training. They do not operate according to any codes of conduct, and they do not have to answer to any higher authority. While they have played a role in protecting civilians and providing intelligence on the LRA to the Congolese and Ugandan armies, there is a significant risk that they will organize and fashion themselves into new predatory groups in the future, as has happened repeatedly in Congo—unless the government finally fulfills its responsibility to protect its citizens.

Congolese politics and Ugandan intervention

Over the last few months, Congolese politics has been dominated by disputes over the involvement of Ugandan and Rwandan forces in military operations on Congolese soil. Based on Enough interviews with officials in Kinshasa, President Joseph Kabila's refusal to extend the offensives against the LRA and FDLR—a Rwandan rebel group based in North and South Kivu—is driven more by his own domestic political considerations than fears of a repeat of the predations that Ugandan and Rwandan forces inflicted on Congo during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Kabila is foremost afraid of losing political support in eastern Congo, where he won a majority in the 2006 election. Members of parliament from the east, who hold the majority in the assembly, opposed Uganda's involvement in "Lightning Thunder" because of the Ugandan army's history of violence and exploitation in eastern Congo. Faced with the possibility that his political base will further abandon him, Kabila is clamping down on internal dissent. He recently forced the resignation of the president of the National Assembly, Vital Kamerhe. Kamerhe is from South Kivu and a popular politician in eastern Congo (and elsewhere in the country) with plans to challenge Kabila for the presidency in 2011.

Equally problematic for Kabila, "Lightning Thunder" was seen by many in Kinshasa as testing the political waters in advance of Rwanda's much more controversial military operation earlier this year. With both the Ugandan and Rwandan forces *officially* withdrawn from eastern Congo, many Congolese officials believe that if Kabila decides to allow the Ugandan army to fully return, the Rwandans will be next. Despite a warming of relations between Kabila and Rwandan President Paul Kagame, and the Rwandan forces' relatively good behavior during recent operations in eastern Congo, Congolese mistrust of Rwanda is acute and a second joint operation would likely come at some political cost for Kabila—making it all the more essential that any subsequent operation be successfully conducted.

It is understandable that President Kabila is considering his political position and does not want to lose points in the East. Yet as unpopular as a second Ugandan-led operation may be right now, ending the LRA's predation on Congolese civilians almost certainly carries greater political benefits in the long term. Moreover, the more civilians who die at the hands of the LRA, and the more that are displaced and abandoned, the more the spotlight will shine on Kabila and his moribund

army. In the wake of Kamerhe's dismissal and with Kabila threatening to dissolve the National Assembly, an increasing number of Congolese members of parliament—including many who are strongly opposed to Ugandan and Rwandan intervention—have begun calling more openly for President Kabila to consult with them on a plan for future joint operations.

The United States' strategic role and responsibility

The Bush administration had a major role in encouraging and supporting regional military operations against the LRA, and the U.S. military was directly involved in "Lightning Thunder."

- **Political pressure:** Support for a Ugandan-led operation inside Congo has been near the top of bilateral discussions between the United States and the Congolese government for over a year, and U.S. pressure influenced Kabila's decision to move forward with the joint offensive.
- **Operational support:** For years, the U.S. army has been training Ugandan special forces for operations such as "Lightning Thunder." The United States has provided the Ugandans with the equipment to listen in on the LRA's satellite phones and triangulate their positions. U.S. military advisors provided the Ugandans with satellite imagery and maps to plan out "Lightning Thunder." U.S. Africa Command, or AFRICOM, reviewed the operational plans, provided advice on its execution, and some U.S. advisors voiced concern about the initial military plans. However, after providing inputs, various U.S. officials claimed that the Ugandans moved forward as they saw fit.²¹ There

have also been allegations that AFRICOM did not make available the planning capacity to offer substantive support and advice during the planning and execution phases of the operation. And when the operation encountered significant difficulties, U.S. officials disassociated themselves from the operation rather than trying to salvage what they themselves had helped to initiate.

Given the U.S. role in "Lightning Thunder" and its appalling consequences for civilians, the Obama administration now has a responsibility to help finish the job. American involvement will also be critical to ensuring that the Ugandan army does not stray from its mission of dismantling the LRA from the top-down, and that coordination and information-sharing snares and poor planning do not hinder future military pursuits. International reassurances and engagement will be absolutely critical to keeping mutual Congolese-Ugandan suspicions in check and ensuring that any future operation is only targeted at ending the LRA threat. With the support of U.S. planning, intelligence, and logistical capabilities, this operation will also have the best chance of success at apprehending the LRA leadership while protecting civilians.

Finishing the fight

The Ugandan army is the only force in the region that can quickly mobilize to finish the fight against the LRA, though a second Ugandan-led operation must obviously avoid the mistakes of "Lightning Thunder."²² It is thus critical that the United States and other concerned actors work with the governments of Congo, Uganda, and southern Sudan, as well as the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to plan and execute a military operation aimed at apprehending the LRA leadership in northeastern Congo. The United States and others should provide much greater support for this operation, from planning to possibly including U.S. boots on the ground for direct action against the LRA. Real-time information on the whereabouts of Kony and his henchmen will be absolutely critical so that the Ugandan army, with strong logistical support (in particular air transport), can respond quickly and precisely. The United States and other operational allies must also use their diplomatic muscle to ensure that the Ugandan army is given access throughout Faradje as well as Dungu, and that the Congolese government will provide its full support and commitment throughout the offensive. Changing winds in Kinshasa will only hurt the operation and provide weaknesses for the LRA to exploit. The planners must consider the following when discussing and planning for renewed military action:

Focus on civilian protection first

The second time around, regional armies and MONUC must make civilian protection an indisputable priority on all fronts—from careful planning to obtaining sufficient resources to executing regular patrols. The Congolese army should deploy proactively with MONUC support in civilian areas that have so far evaded attacks by the LRA, such as Niangara territory and Ndedu locality just south of the town of Dungu. These areas encompass the only access road to Dungu. If the LRA attacked along this southern route, road access to Dungu would be entirely cut off and a humanitarian disaster would undoubtedly unfold.²³ Given that the LRA typically responds to military operations by lashing out against civilians, the Congolese army and MONUC must also deploy to the main civilian centers in Haut-Uele, such as Doruma, Bangadi, Duru, and Faradje, to protect civilians and the large groupings of displaced people around these towns while the Ugandan army carries out operations to track and fight the LRA. U.S. leadership at the U.N. Security Council will be absolutely critical to ensuring that MONUC receives the additional 3,000 troops it has been promised since November 2008; without a capacity boost, civilian protection will undoubtedly fall by the wayside again. Those European forces coming out of Chad, if

added to MONUC as an E.U. contribution, could be the most expedient response to MONUC's capacity gap. Additional attack and transport helicopters will also be critical.



A woman and her child displaced by the recent violence in northeastern Congo in Doruma, Orientale province.

MONUC must also increase its ability to provide escorts to humanitarian agencies trying to reach civilians in isolated areas since airlifting is too expensive: To fly food stores from Beni (just below Dungu) to Doruma, which is 150 km northwest of Dungu, it would cost the United Nations over \$1

per granule of food.²⁴ And no international donor is ready to foot that bill. Consequently, the World Food Program has had a large storage of food sitting in Dungu because they have been unable to reach remote areas.²⁵ Meanwhile, the needs of the local population and the degree of human suffering continue to mount. It is therefore imperative that MONUC beef up its ability to provide escorts—or support the Congolese army in providing escorts—to areas that are difficult to access, such as Duru, Doruma, Faradje, and Aba.

Coordinate and streamline the rescue and return of former LRA abductees

To date, there has been nearly no coordination among the regional armies on facilitating the return of LRA captives who return from the bush.²⁶ The result has been an ad hoc and poorly coordinated effort to deal with returnees on a case-by-case basis. It is critical that the regional governments establish a central reception center, working with international agencies, to ensure that returnees are given the basic support and provisions needed to begin what is often a lengthy and difficult reintegration process. There also must be much more emphasis on protection for children who have recently been demobilized. Since neither the Congolese nor the Ugandan army is in any position to address these concerns, UNICEF ought to be playing a bigger role.

The joint forces should also set up additional reception centers throughout Dungu and Faradje to help facilitate the return of LRA members who are struggling to overcome the many logistical and security hurdles to escaping. Moving reception centers closer to high LRA activity areas would at least help to reduce some of those barriers, and help ensure that those in forced captivity do not get caught up in the battle to catch or kill LRA fighters and commanders.

Maintain a focus on accountability for crimes against humanity

The International Criminal Court, or ICC, should investigate ongoing LRA attacks in northeastern Congo and southern Sudan and continue to pressure signatory governments to help apprehend those LRA leaders already indicted by the court. Given the extreme nature and scale of the LRA's attacks over the last few months, the ICC should continue its investigation of LRA leaders responsible for these atrocities. Based on their findings, they should expand the charges against those LRA leaders with indictments already hanging over their heads and/or bring cases against other LRA members with command responsibility for these recent attacks.

Conclusion

Abandoning the mission to end the LRA now will have disastrous consequences for civilians throughout central Africa. An angry, hungry, and violent LRA is on the loose, preying on civilians with frightening efficiency. Although Operation Lightning Thunder has not dismantled the LRA leadership or seriously undermined the force's ability to inflict harm, stopping the hunt now will result in more lives lost and communities destroyed in the months and years to come. As a result of the LRA's recent predations, over 1,000 people have perished and nearly 200,000 people have been forced out of their homes and into squalor, with millions of dollars spent for limited return. The longer regional and international powers wait to figure out what to do next, the more time the LRA will gain to regroup and rebuild. Now is the time to redouble and reinvigorate international and regional efforts to finally bring an end to the LRA's devastating reign of death and destruction.



Near the air strip in Dungu, Orientale province.

Endnotes

- 1 The authors conducted field research for this report in northeastern Congo in March 2009.
- 2 Although the last 2.5 years of peace talks have failed to end the war, the United States should support any genuine, concrete steps by Kony to disarm and abide by the negotiated agreement.
- 3 Enough interviews, Ugandan military officials with firsthand knowledge of ongoing operations in Congo, Kampala, April 16-17, 2009.
- 4 Orientale Province is 89,000 square kilometers where as all of Uganda is 92,000, although the LRA is not operating throughout all of Orientale.
- 5 Enough interviews, Civil society members, local administration authorities, United Nations and international aid agencies, Dungu and Doruma, March 10-17, 2009.
- 6 Gap Analysis for LRA Response, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, March 4, 2009. In the few months prior to the operation, an additional 168 people in northeastern Congo were killed, and around 300 children abducted.
- 7 Enough interviews, International aid agencies, Dungu and Bunia, March 9 -18, 2009.
- 8 Enough interview, Ugandan army official, Dungu, March 12, 2009. Ugandan government and army sources vary on the exact numbers of LRA killed and rescued during Operation Lightning Thunder. In a press conference in Kampala on March 25, 2009, Uganda's Chief of Defense Forces Aronda Nyakairima stated that 98 LRA fighters and 14 rebel "commanders" had been killed, and that 195 abductees, mostly from Congo, had been rescued; "12 Soldiers Killed in Congo Operation," New Vision, March 25, 2009. In a previous statement by Ofwono Opondo, the deputy spokesman for Uganda's ruling National Resistance Movement, the government claimed that Ugandan ground forces had killed 197 rebels during the operation; "Was the UPDF's withdraw from the DRC premature?" Sunday Vision, March 22, 2009. Other government sources in interviews told Enough that the actual figures for LRA fighters and commanders killed are closer to two or three dozen.
- 9 Enough interviews, Religious, cultural, and civil society leaders, humanitarian organizations, U.N. staff, Dungu and Bunia, March 9-18, 2009.
- 10 After repeated LRA attacks on civilians in Faradje territory, Ugandan commanders did send troops to Faradje but Congolese army officials asked them to return to Dungu. Enough interviews, military officials involved in the operation, Dungu, March 12 and 14, 2009.
- 11 Enough interview, Ugandan army official, Dungu, March 12, 2009.
- 12 Problems working out deals with contractors for helicopter pilots and other logistical intermediaries also reportedly caused delays at the outset of the operation.
- 13 Enough interview, Government of Southern Sudan official, Kampala, February 3, 2009.
- 14 A Ugandan commander involved in the day-to-day operations of the offensive told Enough that in one instance Congolese abductees were recovered by the Ugandan army. When the Congolese army was asked about the status of these returnees—former captives who were from their own country—the Congolese commanders had to look in the local papers to find out. Enough interview, Dungu, March 13-14, 2009.
- 15 Enough interview, High-level Ugandan commander, Dungu, March 15, 2009. Ugandan and Congolese officials both confirmed this restriction of Ugandan operations in interviews with Enough.
- 16 Most recently, Enough received a report from a priest in Faradje who said the LRA attacked last week and looted the villages of Awago, Makoro, Babirigwa, and Kialo. They also kidnapped 26 children and forced them to wear military uniforms. Government forces simply didn't respond to the attack. Enough interview, April 9, 2009; As stated by a former LRA commander who helped lead the rebel group's first foray into Congo, "The LRA do not fear [the Congolese army]; they know they can do whatever they want because [Congolese forces are] more afraid of them than they are of it." Enough interview, Former LRA commander, March 2009.
- 17 Human Rights Watch reports that 865 civilians were killed and 160 children were abducted in northern Congo since the beginning of the joint offensive. "The Christmas Massacres: LRA attacks on Civilians in Northern Congo," Human Rights Watch, February 2009, p. 4. This report also does not include a number of small-scale attacks that have occurred on nearly a daily basis, particularly in the Faradje territory of Haut-Uele district, since the report was published; U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, or OCHA, in Sudan reports that 147 people in Central and Western Equatoria have been killed by the LRA, and 83 children have been abducted. Gap Analysis for OCHA Response, March 26, 2009.
- 18 Although both forces initially deployed in July 2008 to protect vulnerable communities and ensure the LRA didn't move deeper into civilian territory, they have been slow to intervene on the ground, largely because of a lack of basic logistics and troop numbers. When Dungu town was first attacked by the LRA in September 2008, MONUC forces based roughly 10 kilometers from town did not leave their barracks because they had not moved a large enough number of personnel and many of their weapons were still not on site, according to U.N. officials and military officers.
- 19 Enough interviews with Senior MONUC officials in Bunia, March 17, 2009. MONUC won't be able to establish its base in Duru or provide escorts to aid workers until the road from Dungu to Duru has been completed—and it has taken many months just to complete 10 kilometers of it. Once they have established themselves in Duru, they will try to move a few soldiers over to Faradje. This expansion plan, however, is clearly far too little, and won't materialize until much too late.
- 20 Associated Press, "Congo Town Mounts Own Defense Against Rebels," February 12, 2009; and Enough interviews in Dungu, mid-March, 2009. As one local leader told Enough, "The state does not exist, except in Dungu town, and local administrations don't have the means to play the role of the state. So now the SDUs are stepping in to fill that gap." In Bitima, for example, the police commander was chased away by the local population after the few police in the town ran away when the LRA appeared. In all of Dungu territory, there reportedly are only 50 policemen in total, and even they don't have the proper equipment numbers or training to provide security.
- 21 Enough interviews, December-February, 2008-2009.
- 22 Even John Holmes, the U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who recently lambasted regional militaries for failing to adequately protect civilians, argued that the armies that got themselves (and civilians) into this mess will have to find a constructive way out of it.
- 23 Enough interview, Dungu, March 13, 2009.
- 24 Enough interview, MONUC official, Bunia, March 18, 2009.
- 25 Enough interview, Dungu, March 13, 2009.
- 26 The LRA is now not only regional in threat but also regional in nature. While the high command remains mostly northern Ugandan, rank-and-file LRA members now hail from Congo, southern Sudan, and the Central African Republic. This makes reintegration all the more complicated, and a formal process for dealing with returnees all the more critical.

Enough is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on the crises in Sudan, Chad, eastern Congo, northern Uganda, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Enough's strategy papers and briefings provide sharp field analysis and targeted policy recommendations based on a "3P" crisis response strategy: promoting durable peace, providing civilian protection, and punishing perpetrators of atrocities. Enough works with concerned citizens, advocates, and policy makers to prevent, mitigate, and resolve these crises. To learn more about Enough and what you can do to help, go to www.enoughproject.org.

