

Testimony for House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
“The Deployment of U.S. Forces in Central Africa and Implementation of the Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act”

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Madam Chairwoman, Congressman Berman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to brief the committee on implementation of the ongoing U.S. strategy to help our regional partners mitigate and eliminate the threat posed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) both to innocent civilians and to regional stability. The United States has a strong interest in supporting our partners in Africa to develop their capacity to address threats to peace and security such as the LRA.

We appreciate Congress’ longstanding concern about the LRA, as demonstrated by the widespread bipartisan support for the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act that was signed into law last year. This legislation sent a strong message of bipartisan Congressional support for a comprehensive effort to help protect civilians and bring an end to the LRA threat. We are committed to engaging with Congress and keeping you informed about the progress of our strategy as we move forward.

We also appreciate the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have mobilized and showed their concern for the communities under siege by the LRA. To respond to critical gaps, American non-governmental organizations have launched innovative initiatives to enhance community protection networks, track LRA attacks, and improve information-sharing. We will continue to work with these groups as we move forward.

For over two decades, the Lord’s Resistance Army has terrorized innocent people across central Africa. The LRA has filled its ranks by abducting tens of thousands of children and forcing them to become child soldiers and sex slaves. In 2005 and 2006, the LRA moved from Uganda into the remote border region of the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and what is now the Republic of South Sudan. In that region, the LRA has continued to commit atrocities. The United Nations (UN) estimates that over 385,000 people are currently displaced across the region as a result of LRA activity. According to the UN, there have been over 250 attacks attributed to the LRA in this year alone.

Over recent years, regional militaries have worked together to pursue the LRA across a vast area of densely forested and difficult jungle terrain. They have had some success in reducing the LRA's numbers and keeping them from regrouping. Abductees and low-level fighters have continued to escape from the LRA and reintegrate into their communities. However, as long as the LRA's leader Joseph Kony and other top commanders remain at large, the LRA will continue to pose a serious regional threat which undermines stability and development.

As reported to Congress in November 2010, our comprehensive strategy outlines four strategic objectives for ongoing U.S. support: (1) the increased protection of civilians, (2) the apprehension or removal of Joseph Kony and senior LRA commanders from the battlefield, (3) the promotion of defections from the LRA and support of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of remaining LRA fighters, and (4) the provision of continued humanitarian relief to affected communities.

The United States has worked over the last year with our partners at the African Union and United Nations to build consensus and enhance coordination toward addressing the LRA threat. In June, the African Union convened ministers from the four LRA-affected countries to discuss an initiative to enhance the capacity of the military effort against the LRA. In July, the United Nations Security Council met and condemned the ongoing attacks carried out by the LRA. The Security Council commended the important efforts of regional militaries and emphasized the importance of sustained, coordinated action.

Over the last year, the United States has continued to work with regional governments to sustain and increase military pressure on the LRA. We have provided support to the Ugandan military's efforts to pursue the LRA, in the form of logistical support and limited, non-lethal equipment. We have also trained and equipped a battalion of the Congolese military, which has been deployed to the LRA-affected area of the DRC. We are working with the militaries of CAR and South Sudan and are looking at ways we can support them as they increase their efforts to counter the LRA. As such, we will provide a small amount of equipment to the CAR Armed Forces. Our engagement with these regional militaries to help counter the LRA threat is connected to our larger objective of promoting security sector reform in Africa.

As you know, the United States is deploying advisors to improve our support to the regional coalition to increase the likelihood of successful military operations. My colleague from the Department of Defense will describe the details of this operation and the War Powers notification sent recently. But let me stress that our embassies have been in regular communication with all of the governments in each of the countries as we have developed this operation. They have all publicly welcomed increased U.S. support to address this longstanding menace. We will continue to consult with them and ensure their consent before we deploy any of the advisors to field locations.

This is a short-term deployment with specific goals and objectives. We are deploying these advisors to enhance the capacity of regional forces so they can conduct effective operations to bring Joseph Kony and LRA top commanders to justice and better protect civilians from the threat posed by the LRA. We believe the U.S. advisors can help provide critical capabilities to help regional forces achieve these objectives. We will regularly review and assess whether the advisory effort is sufficiently enhancing the regional effort to justify continued deployment. Continued deployment is also conditional on sustained commitment and cooperation by regional governments to address the LRA threat.

Our ambassadors and embassy staff will work closely with the U.S. military advisors and make sure they are sensitive to civilian protection considerations and local and regional political dynamics. The State Department has also deployed an officer to the region to help coordinate all of our efforts in the field to counter the LRA and work with the advisors.

Let me stress again that this is one part of our larger, comprehensive strategy being implemented through interagency coordination, and in partnerships with the United Nations, African Union, and other bilateral partners. The protection of civilians continues to be central to that strategy. We strongly support the UN peacekeeping forces in the DRC and South Sudan, and we continue to work with the UN to help augment their efforts in the LRA-affected region. At the same time, we are working with governments in the region, the UN, and other partners to reduce the vulnerability of LRA-affected communities and increase the capacity of communities to make decisions related to their own safety.

In the DRC, Invisible Children and other non-governmental organizations have done impressive work to enhance a high frequency radio network managed by the Catholic Church to provide an early warning capacity for LRA-affected communities. The Administration is funding projects to help communities develop

protection plans and join that network. This includes setting up high frequency radios and cell phone towers. The same kind of early warning and basic telecommunications capacity does not yet exist across the border in CAR. We recognize this gap, and we hope to work with our partners over the coming year to help address it.

At the same time, we continue to call on LRA fighters to peacefully disarm, leave the organization's ranks, and come home. Over the course of this conflict, more than 12,000 have come out of the bush and been reintegrated and reunited with their families through Uganda's Amnesty Act. We are supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of former abducted youth. Over the coming months, we will continue to work with regional governments to ensure that rank and file fighters and abductees who escape from the LRA have the necessary support to be reunited with their families and reintegrated into normal society.

Finally, we continue to provide a significant amount of humanitarian assistance to LRA-affected populations in CAR, DRC and South Sudan. In Fiscal Year 2011, the United States provided more than \$18 million to support food security, humanitarian protection, health, and livelihoods initiatives for internally displaced persons, host community members, and other affected populations.

This humanitarian assistance is in addition to the assistance we provide to northern Uganda as it continues to recover from decades of the LRA conflict. Consistent with the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, the United States remains committed to supporting efforts to promote comprehensive reconstruction, transitional justice, and reconciliation in northern Uganda.

Madam Chairwoman, again, we appreciate Congress' strong bipartisan interest in countering the LRA. We look forward to working with you in the months ahead as this effort continues. As the President said upon signing the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act last year, "We mourn those killed. We pray for those abducted to be freed, and for those wounded to heal. We call on the ranks of the LRA to disarm and surrender. We believe that the leadership of the LRA should be brought to justice."