

LRA attacks on the rise in central Africa



Briefing Notes, 30 March 2012

This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Melissa Fleming – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at the press briefing, on 30 March 2012, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

UNHCR has received reports of more violence by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in central Africa in recent weeks.

Since our last update on 6 March, there have been 13 new LRA attacks in north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Most occurred in Dungu territory between 6 and 25 March. Two people were killed and 13 abducted, including a child in the town of Aba. The violence has also displaced more than 1,230 people in the Dungu area.

This brings to 33 the total number of LRA attacks in north-eastern DRC so far this year, with more than 4,000 displaced. There have also been reports of attacks by the Ugandan rebel group in Bondo, close to the border with the Central African Republic (CAR).

In CAR itself, attacks attributed to the LRA resumed in January after a lull since April 2011. Eleven LRA attacks have been recorded in the south-eastern part of the country this year. Eight of those took place near the towns of Zemio and Mboki, where UNHCR assists refugees and internally displaced populations.

Four people were killed during the attacks and 31 abducted, according to the CAR defence and security forces.

The security situation in south-eastern CAR remains extremely fragile. One exception is in the city of Obo, where the situation has improved with the presence of U.S. troops deployed last October to bolster efforts by the joint CAR-Ugandan armed forces hunting the LRA and its leadership.

Our staff on the ground say that patrols around Obo by the two national armies supported by the U.S. military advisers have enabled local authorities to ensure security within a 25-km radius from Obo, compared to 5 km before the patrols were instituted. The extended security perimeter is allowing residents to tend their farms.

The LRA also conducts hit-and-run attacks in South Sudan. According to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in 2011 such attacks killed 18 people, wounded nine, and resulted in 49 abductions and 7,382 people being internally displaced.

No known LRA attacks have occurred in South Sudan this year, however UNHCR regularly receives new groups of refugees fleeing LRA attacks in the DRC and CAR. South Sudan's Western and Central Equatoria states together now host more than 22,000 refugees from these two neighbouring countries, including more than 700 new arrivals this year.

South Sudan is preparing to host African Union forces to coordinate a regional effort to eliminate LRA threats.

UNHCR welcomes the unprecedented regional and international initiatives aimed at ending the LRA atrocities in CAR, DRC and South Sudan and urges all actors to respect human rights and minimize risk to civilian populations.

Indiscriminate LRA assaults on civilians in these three countries have left an estimated 440,000 people internally displaced or living as refugees. Some 335,000 of them are found in DRC alone.

UNHCR works with the local authorities, other UN agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations to assist people who escape or are rescued from the LRA. Some survivors told UNHCR staff that during their captivity, they were tortured before being used as porters. Some also witnessed the killing of their relatives.

WATCH: UNHCR YouTube video: "[Surviving the LRA](#)"

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