NORTHERN UGANDA: UNDERSTANDING

AND SOLVING THE CONFLICT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For nearly eighteen years the insurgency of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, has produced great suffering in Northern Uganda, including some 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland recently termed the situation among the worst humanitarian disasters in the world. In February 2004, in one of the most horrific atrocities since the conflict began, the LRA massacred approximately 200 civilians, revealing serious deficiencies in the government's capacity to defend the population and defeat the insurgency. The conflict seriously blemishes the record of President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM), which has otherwise brought relative stability to the country. The international community has leverage and at least strong humanitarian reasons to urge a more politically oriented strategy to resolve the conflict.

The conflict has four main characteristics. First, it is a struggle between the government and the LRA. Secondly, it is between the predominantly Acholi LRA and the wider Acholi population, who bear the brunt of violence that includes indiscriminate killings and the abduction of children to become fighters, auxiliaries, and sex slaves. This violence is aimed at cowing the Acholi and discrediting the government. Thirdly, it is fuelled by animosity between Uganda and Sudan, who support rebellions on each other's territory. Finally, it continues the North-South conflict that has marked Ugandan politics and society since independence.

The LRA insurgency lacks any clear (and negotiable) political objective. Its claim to represent the grievances of the Acholi people is at odds with its methods. Because LRA actions are difficult to place within a coherent strategy aimed at achieving an identifiable political outcome, it is also difficult to develop an effective counter strategy. LRA targeting of the Acholi has created a self-perpetuating cycle of loss, resentment and hopelessness that feeds the conflict but also widens the gap between the government and local populations.

President Museveni pursues a military solution in part to justify the unreformed army that is a key pillar of his regime. Indeed, the war helps him justify and maintain the status quo in Ugandan politics, denying his opposition a power base and offering numerous opportunities for curtailing freedom of expression and association in the name of "the war against terrorism". As long as the situation in the North is dominated by security matters, the monopolisation of power and wealth by Southerners is not put into question.

Without the active support of the Acholi, however, the government is unlikely ever to defeat the LRA. While the political and security configurations of the conflict need to be changed, Museveni's response to international pressure and proposals for negotiation such as Washington's Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI) has been sceptical at best. Although the LRA's desire for genuine dialogue appears minimal, the government has rarely acted in good faith when a variety of actors have sought to promote a settlement. The small likelihood that the LRA will respond to a concerted effort to negotiate does not remove the onus from the government to make the attempt. That would signal to both its opponents and supporters – and to the people of Northern Uganda – that it is genuinely pursuing all options. The Khartoum government,

the LRA's only known external supporter, should also be drawn into a negotiating strategy.

Most discussion of how to end the conflict centres on the false dichotomy of a military versus a negotiated solution. Elements of both approaches will be required, along with recognition of the limitations of each. A purely military solution could conceivably deal with the immediate manifestation of Uganda's northern problem, the LRA, but would make solving the North-South divide and achieving national reconciliation even more unlikely. The army's operational deficiencies in any event make such a solution unlikely. Similarly, there are limitations to negotiations, which can be manipulated by the belligerents for battlefield advantage, leading to more violence.

A main vulnerability of the LRA is that Joseph Kony is central not only to its organisation and tactics but also to its very purpose. Reported leadership tensions, particularly in a deteriorating military and political environment, may provide an opportunity to split the insurgency by isolating or removing him.

Another major element of any successful strategy will have to be a genuine effort to address Northerners' grievances. The Acholi must be made to feel more a part of Ugandan society. The NRM simply has not unified the country after the turmoil created by colonial policies of ethnic division and decades of armed conflict. Rectifying this will require specific political, economic and social initiatives aimed at building the North's stake in the central government and enhancing local decision-making. It is in the interest of Acholi leaders to develop mechanisms for articulating the views of their people, and it is in the interest of Museveni and the NRM to promote the emergence of effective and credible Acholi leaders.

There is not yet enough pressure on the LRA to make a political opening possible. While Museveni's government should make an honest, unconditional attempt at negotiations, the nature of the LRA is such that creating an environment conducive to negotiations should not mean renunciation of military and political pressure on the insurgency, including by invoking the help of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Sudanese government.

The role of the international community has been central to the conflict and will be central to achieving a resolution. The government needs to be attentive to the advice of donors, from whom it receives approximately half its budget. It has a good record on a number of issues, such as AIDS prevention, which disposes the international community positively towards it, but the conflict in the North undoes much of this goodwill. Uganda's friends have an interest and a right to pressure it on the humanitarian disaster produced by the continuation of the LRA insurgency. The U.S. initiative, however, would have greater promise if Washington also worked more closely with would-be European partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Uganda:

1. Build confidence between the government and local populations in the North and Northeast by:

    (a) making greater efforts to develop the capacity of local agencies;

    (b) improving and increasing dialogue with Acholi and other community leaders; and

    (c) transferring unpopular and antagonistic officials out of the region.

2. Create a single authoritative team to represent the government in contacts and negotiations with the LRA, announce that a ceasefire is available as a first step towards comprehensive political negotiations if the LRA makes a clear gesture, and otherwise lay out objectives and expectations for such initiatives in coordinated public messages.

3. Exclude Joseph Kony from application of the Amnesty Act but continue to offer amnesty to all other LRA commanders in order to develop potential divisions within the leadership, and improve reintegration incentives and programs for amnestied LRA returnees.

4. Prioritise security sector reform by:

    (a) implementing fully the recommendations of the defence review;

    (b) expanding current investigations into army corruption and prosecuting publicly, independently and transparently all those with cases to answer; and

(c) creating an independent body to investigate human rights abuses by army personnel and cooperating fully with any investigation pursued by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

5. Provide greater protection to civilians and IDPs through better focused military operations, including improved coordination between regular and militia forces, and increase coordination between those forces and humanitarian agencies.

6. Return IDPs to their homes and villages when the security situation improves.

To the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA):

7. Declare a willingness to accept a ceasefire as a step towards negotiations, cease all operations against civilians, including attacks on IDP camps and abduction of children, cease using abductees as combatants and allow the return of abductees who do not wish to remain with the LRA.

To the Acholi Community:

8. Work to improve the relationship with the government by creating a single authoritative body to represent a unified Acholi view on the conflict, seeking partnerships to better the humanitarian and political environment, and publicly rejecting the LRA, including by ending any support it may obtain from Acholi within or outside Uganda.

To the Sudan Government:

9. Cease all support for the LRA and persuade it to end military operations and enter into negotiations.

To the U.S. Government:

10. Exert pressure on Sudan to stop aiding the LRA and support a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

11. Refashion its Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI) to focus more directly on the political and security issues influencing the LRA and increase consultation on it with other countries engaged with and in Uganda.

To Donors:

12. Work with the Ugandan government to develop incentives for LRA commanders and fighters to drop out of the insurgency.

13. Condition all military assistance to Uganda on security sector reform, particularly with respect to corruption and human rights.

14. Create an international contact group to act as a conduit for communications between the parties to the conflict.

15. Increase humanitarian assistance to affected populations.

To Participants in the Sudan Peace Process:

16. Ensure that any planned observer/monitoring mission for Southern Sudan established as part of a comprehensive agreement between the government of Sudan and the SPLA takes into account the presence of the LRA and includes areas that the LRA operates from such as the Imatong Mountains.

To the International Criminal Court (ICC):

17. Investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by any party in the context of the conflict in Northern Uganda, with particular attention to building a dossier for possible prosecution of LRA leader Joseph Kony.

To the World Bank:

18. Focus the Social Action Fund on building the Ugandan government's capacity to deliver services in the North, rather than creating a separate parallel funding mechanism.

Nairobi/Brussels, 14 April 2004

NORTHERN UGANDA: UNDERSTANDING

AND SOLVING THE CONFLICT

I. INTRODUCTION

The war between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), now in its eighteenth year, has frustrated the country's aspirations to develop a pluralist political system and entrench the rule of law. It is tarnishing the record and international prestige of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), which came to power in 1986 with a comprehensive program to overcome the turmoil and bloodshed that had disfigured Ugandan politics since independence.[1] The corruption, maladministration and increasing intolerance of political opposition that have begun to shadow the NRM's many achievements are exacerbated by the war, or at least made more difficult to remedy.

The government has largely attempted to defeat the LRA militarily, while paying little regard to the effects of its strategy on the population or to the wider factors that underlie the conflict. Military action to impede LRA operations and better protect the population should be an important element of any strategy but it will not be more effective unless problems within the military (Ugandan People's

Defence Force, UPDF)[2] related to corruption, politicisation, logistics, structure, equipment and tactics are dealt with. Furthermore, to end the insurgency and promote conditions for national reconciliation and prosperity, the government's strategy must include political measures designed to improve the conditions of those affected by the conflict. The objectives should be to keep pressure on the LRA militarily, politically and diplomatically and to isolate the charismatic Joseph Kony, the leader upon whom the insurgency is dependent. This would maximise the opportunity for negotiations, particularly with those in the LRA leadership who may, in a deteriorating environment, seek a way out. The international community has an important contribution to make, politically and financially, in helping the government develop and implement a comprehensive strategy.

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[1] Uganda is considered by many in the development field to have made significant progress in several important areas. It implemented universal primary education in 1996 and tripled school enrolments between 1996 and 2000. It has shifted some budget priorities to target poverty reduction, resulting in a decrease in those living below the poverty line from 56 per cent in 1993 to 35 per cent in 2000. It has reversed the rate of HIV/AIDS transmission. As a result of such achievements, it is anticipated to be one of only two African states to receive U.S. funds from the Millennium Challenge Account to further good governance reforms. See UNESCO EFA 2000 Assessment, available at www.unesco.org.

[2] The Ugandan People's Defence Force is frequently referred to as the UPDF. To simplify reference in this report, which contains so many similar acronyms, however, this institution will be cited henceforth simply as "the army" or "the military".

II.   THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

A.   THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

The conflict in Northern Uganda is deeply rooted in inter-ethnic competition for power in both government and military. The conditions for this competition were largely set during colonial rule and then manipulated by post-independence governments. The pattern until the NRM came to power in 1986 was one of economic and political division between North and South, with further regional subdivisions, particularly in the North between the Acholi, Langi and West Nilers. The victory of the NRM, an organisation mostly of Southerners, produced new cleavages that have yet to be overcome and are manifested clearly in the armed struggle.

The North-South divide results from an economic imbalance that suited the objectives of the colonial administration. Before the Second World War, Ugandans, North and South, were recruited into the British colonial armed force, the King's African Rifles (KAR), but this changed radically after 1945. Those at the vanguard of the anti-colonial struggle came mainly from the South, which had the greatest concentration of the country's economic and educational elite. Fearing the consequences if that region also had large numbers of trained soldiers, the British began to recruit mainly in the North. Consequently, the Acholi and West Nile ethnic groups came to dominate the KAR. This also meant there was a balance of power between largely Southern civilian and largely Northern military elites. At the same time, the British deliberately reserved the introduction of industry and cash crop production to the South, for which the North became a reservoir of cheap labour.

These policies created an intractable challenge to building a unified nation-state when independence came on 9 October 1962. The Acholi in particular had been told by their colonial masters that they were born warriors, effectively transforming them into a military ethnocracy. The post-colonial governments of Milton Obote and Idi Amin found this formula politically expedient, which in turn further fuelled ethnic polarisation and the militarisation of politics.

The key role of the military in politics and of ethnic competition became evident under the first government of Milton Obote, who used the army to overthrow the constitution and the king of Buganda, a region from which the constitutional monarchy originated. Obote's use of the military opened a Pandora's box that led to his overthrow by Idi Amin, who was himself toppled by the Uganda National Liberation Front/Army (UNLF/A), assisted by the Tanzanian army, in 1978. The brief presidencies of Yusuf Lule and Godfrey Binaisa followed,[3] while a military commission held real power.[4]

After Obote rigged the 1980 elections, the political system that had existed since independence was challenged by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA), which began a protracted guerrilla war in the south and northwest. Massacres in the Luwero Triangle during Operation Bonanza, perpetrated by Obote's mainly Acholi and Langi troops, are estimated to have cost at least 300,000 lives,[5] mostly of Baganda people. They continue to cast a shadow over attempts to solve present day North-South problems.[6] For many, the NRA insurgency against Obote was merely a continuation of the ethnic competition that typified Ugandan politics – a case of Bantu-speaking Southerners wanting to remove from power Northerners speaking Nilotic languages.

Obote was deposed for a second time in June 1985, by the top UNLA commanders led by Lt. General Bazilio Olara Okello and General Tito Okello Lutwa, both Acholi. There had been growing resistance among some in the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) to Obote's refusal to negotiate with the NRA, as well as a feeling that the killing had reached an unacceptable level. Many Acholi in the army felt they were bearing the brunt of the fighting. However, the principal reason for the coup was the higher status Obote had bestowed upon key UNLA officers from his Langi tribe. For the first time in Uganda's history, the Acholi had broken the

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[3] Lule became president in April 1979 but was removed by the Military Commission and replaced by Binaisa in June 1979. After Binaisa was removed in May 1980, the Military Commission ruled directly until December 1980 elections brought Obote to power a second time.

[4] See P. Mutibwa, *Uganda since Independence* (Kampala, 1992), pp. 138-145.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The effects of massacres on the psyche of all protagonists are central to the failure to overcome the cycle of ethnic retaliation after the NRA came to power.

Northern Acholi-Langi alliance and taken control of the country.

Ongoing random killings by UNLA soldiers in Kampala and elsewhere as well as objections by various armed groups allied to the two Okellos over the agreement they had reached with the NRA[7] confirmed for the NRA that only a complete removal of the whole system would give Uganda a chance to overcome its divisions. The defeat of the Okellos by the NRA marked the first time socio-economic, political and military power had shifted to the South, to the great discontent of the Acholi.

B. ACHOLI INSURRECTION AND GRIEVANCES

Their military dominance, before and after independence, reduced the need for the Acholi to interact politically with tribes from other parts of the country. Young Acholi men had few job prospects other than the army. The period from 1971 to 1986, however, was tumultuous for the Acholi elite and peasant alike. In 1971, Amin took power and ordered all Acholi and Langi officers to barracks, where he massacred them. When the NRA came to power and similarly ordered officers to return to barracks, this was refused, out of fear there would be a repeat of the killings.

The NRA victory produced a great deal of resentment against Museveni for having displaced a Northerner – Tito Okello from power. "Northerners felt cheated by the British and Baganda during colonial rule", said a senior government official. "This second cheat made us feel even more bitter."[8] By August of 1986, there was a counter-reaction. Violence was perpetrated by both civilians and ousted UNLA soldiers on Southern victims. The historical fault lines of ethnic retaliation had re-emerged.

The fundamental changes that the NRM launched in other parts of Uganda also marked the beginning of Acholi grievances against the new order in the country. The Acholi felt the government failed to apply its own stated objectives to the North,

intentionally some argued. Even today, this old suspicion persists. The disempowerment felt by the Acholi was exacerbated by the failure of the NRA leadership to bring security to the North. Indeed, it was accused of perpetrating atrocities there.

In August 1986, a Buganda militia operating with the NRA, the Federalist Democratic Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU),[9] massacred 40 civilians in Tito Okello's village of Namokora in Kitgum,[10] partly in retaliation for UNLA killings in Luwero. In July 1987, the NRA executed some 97 civilians at Kona Kilak in Gulu. In June 1988, 40 civilians were massacred at Koch Goma. It is also reported that the NRA buried a number of people alive during its Operation North and that its 'Gunga' Battalion[11] raped both men and women in the presence of their families for the explicit purpose of collective community humiliation and degradation. Many Acholi and others believe that the NRA chose not to use its disciplined forces in the North, sending instead the most brutal and unruly elements from the 35th Battalion, composed of FEDEMU fighters, in a deliberate strategy of revenge and subjugation.[12] The events in the North in the immediate aftermath of the NRA victory reinforced prejudices and created perceptions that justified on both sides the next phase of conflict.

NRA/FEDEMU atrocities fed suspicions that a Southern war of revenge was being undertaken

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[7] Beginning in August 1985, Tito Okello Lutwa and the NRA held peace talks in Nairobi. An agreement was signed in December 1985 but not everyone in the NRA was committed to it.
[8] ICG interview, Kampala, December 2003.

[9] The FEDEMU was not part of the original NRA, but a fighting group that forged an alliance with it when the latter was about to take power.
[10] C. Lamwaka, "The Peace Process in Northern Uganda", ACCORD, 2002.
[11] The rape of men later became known as 'tek gunga' in Acholi. See Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death: Children abducted by the LRA in Uganda*, September 1997; also F. Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: the New Order No One Ordered", IPDM - UA discussion paper 2003-6, 6 October 2003, p. 13, at http://www.ua.ac.be/main.asp?c=*IOBE&n=4267&ct=001595&e=o17562.
[12] A report by the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) in association with others goes much further, stating that, "the war in Acholiland was not the result of the atrocities committed in the Luwero Triangle, but rather the atrocities committed in the Luwero Triangle were the consequence of an ethnic-oriented war that was initiated by the NRM/A in Luwero Triangle against the northerners. This also suggests that until that objective was achieved, the war in the north had to continue". HURIPEC, "The Hidden War: Forgotten People – War in Acholiland and its Ramifications for Peace and Security in Uganda", Kampala, October 2003, pp. 24-29.

against the Acholi. Another factor that seemed to reinforce fear among the Acholi was the NRA's failure to integrate ex-UNLA fighters into its new army, as it had done with other armed groups. Deposed Acholi officers started their first armed rebellion, as the Uganda People's Defence Army (UPDA), from Southern Sudan to where they had fled. The UPDA's emergence in 1986 was generally accepted across the Acholi region as a means to recapture power, although it lacked a coherent program, and its political wing, the Uganda People's Defence Movement (UPDM), was far away in London. It was formed for revenge, in order to reverse a humiliating defeat, and was composed mainly of thousands of former UNLA soldiers.[13]

After an unsuccessful military campaign, the UPDA held negotiations with the NRM that led to a peace agreement in 1988.[14] These agreements were followed by NRA military operations to finish off recalcitrants, during which a number of renowned UPDA leaders were killed. Suspicion re-emerged, leading to new groups that had broad support as a collective effort to preserve the Acholi from the threat of extinction they believed the NRA posed. The 1988 NRA counter-insurgency was brutal, including deliberate destruction of civilian food stocks and domestic animals. Acholi are still bitter with the army and government over the loss of cattle, which destroyed much of the prosperity and economic life in the North. The situation was aggravated by frequent raids by Karamojong cattle rustlers from neighbouring Kotido district, who stole the remaining stock, especially in Kitgum.

Even as the UPDF was disappearing, a new movement emerged. This was the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), formed in 1987. It marked a new millenarian manifestation of the war.[15] Led by Alice Auma "Lakwena", a spiritual medium, it posed a considerable threat to the government until its defeat near Jinja that same year. Alice Auma proclaimed that a spirit called Lakwena (messenger) had ordered her in August 1986 to end her work as a healer and mobilise a force to wage war against the evil that had invaded Acholiland.[16] On its face, the HSMF was a peasant cult, but it was able to attract broader support than the UPDA, extending beyond the Acholi to most tribes in northern and eastern Uganda. Although it disregarded essential elements of military tactics, it was successful for a short period, even coming within 100 kilometres of Kampala before its final defeat.

The main legacy of this tumultuous period was a fusion of UPDA conventional military tactics and objectives – Acholi restoration and defeat of the NRM – with HSMF spiritualism. To this, Joseph Kony added his own dimensions of terror and coercion to make the LRA the unique force it is today

C.   THE LRA INSURGENCY

Kony is said to be a relative of Alice Lakwena. He claims similar prophetic powers, operates in her old region and recruited some of the same Acholi army veterans into his core force. His movement is a direct continuation of the UPDA and HSMF insurgencies. After eighteen years, however, he remains a mystery. His spiritualism is not just an effective control mechanism over his fighters,[17]

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[13] Some of the UNLA's new officer cadets had been recently trained by the British Military Training Team (BMTT) but most of its troops were largely unskilled, unable to cope with civilian life, and had extremely poor discipline. By alienating much of the population, their excesses greatly contributed to the downfall of the Obote and Okello regimes.

[14] The London-based political wing led by Otema Alimadi, a prime minister in the second Obote regime, was not included in the peace agreement. It concluded a separate agreement with the government in Addis Ababa in 1990.

[15] The millenarian element of the HSMF was built on the interaction of Christianity, including strict biblical conduct, with traditional Acholi beliefs in the power of protective charms and traditional anointment. It was used as justification for social rebellion against an established order, nationalist revival and restoration of ethnic identity.

[16] For more on the HSM see H. Behrend, *Alice Lakwena & the Holy Spirits*, (Oxford, 1999).

[17] A speech reported to be by Kony to his fighters in March 2003 includes the key ingredients of spiritualism and coercion: "All of us will keep on praying and when you are praying concentrate on the Rosary, Holy Spirit, Holy Mary, so that they can help us win this war. Now as I talk, the commanders of UPDF are in the Arab defences in Sudan here. Commanders, if you don't follow what I have told you, God will kill you. If not, I will kill you myself. When we start fighting the enemies, we will get a lot of equipment from them. You should therefore not leave anything behind because they will help us in the operations. I want to tell you that our power in fighting is the same as that of the government. Now that the government (UPDF) has arranged to destroy us, we should show them who we are. I want to tell you that I have so many miracles to show out to these people and I will use all means in order to show out all these

mostly abductees. It also influences many Acholi. "The spiritualism captivates the people", said a Ugandan official.[18] The attribution of superhuman powers to Kony explains for many the army's failure to defeat him. Some of this belief in Kony's invincibility is shared by army troops, many of whom are fellow Acholi.

D. LRA OPERATIONS

1. Leadership and structure[19]

Kony stands at the apex of the LRA structure, politically, militarily and spiritually. He is central not only to the its organisation and actions but to its very purpose. In his physical and spiritual self he manifests the new society he and the LRA are supposed to be striving for. The degree that Kony directs operations is difficult to establish. There is no doubt that while he has a significant influence upon the insurgency's overall strategy, its implementation is very much the responsibility of those who came to the LRA from the UNLA and UPDA and who along with Kony make up the high command. They have included: "Brigadier" Vincent Otti (LRA second-in-command), "Brigadier" Okello Matata (third-in-command) and "Brigadier" Tolbert Nyeko (army commander, reported killed in January 2004).

The LRA appears to be organised in four brigades: Control Alter (sometimes referred to as "Trinkle"), which includes the leadership, Sinia, Stockree and Giiva. Each brigade is estimated to have between 300 and 800 members and three battalions. These latter vary in size but are estimated to have been around 250 each when Operation Iron Fist (OIF) was launched by the army in April 2002 as an attempted knock-out blow. Total LRA size is estimated to be about 3,000, but this may vary greatly depending on attrition and reinforcement (i.e. abductions). It is not clear how many of this total are fighters and have received a degree of military training and how many are auxiliaries/porters or wives and families.

2. Tactics

The LRA is not motivated by any identifiable political agenda, and its military strategy and tactics reflect this. Although it does occasionally evoke Acholi nationalism and emancipation, these are irreconcilable with its violence against the Acholi. It is a self-sustaining war machine, with strong and flexible internal organisation. Its logic is focused on discrediting the rule of President Museveni and on the survival of the organisation and its key personnel. The latter is achieved by economic extortion, terrorising civilians, abducting children as porters (which increases LRA mobility and helps it move looted goods to market[20]) and sex slaves. The leadership turns most abductees into soldiers and wives. Logistically, it is tightly managed with good record keeping. Long years of stockpiling weapons[21] give it the potential to sustain operations regardless of short-term setbacks. For example, the LRA began stockpiling weapons in Imatong well before Operation Iron Fist began and has been able to sustain and expand its operations in response. The key to its survival is, as one Ugandan official put it, "survival by the gun".[22]

The LRA has never established bases inside Northern Uganda, thus reducing its vulnerability to attack. However this creates logistical constraints that usually can only be met by exploiting the local population. Supply needs are minimal; it uses little ammunition and can get food and everything else locally through purchase and looting. The consistent method of operation is the maintenance of an extremely mobile foot network. With good knowledge of the northern terrain, it operates in a highly decentralised fashion. It infiltrates into assigned area in units of 100 to 160, breaks into smaller groups of approximately twenty, and again into yet smaller groups to undertake ambushes and other operations. It only needs observation units as support while the main units hit defenceless targets. The ferocity of the attacks is designed to traumatise people into fleeing to towns, a strategy aimed at denying the army human intelligence and allowing the LRA to loot abandoned homes and properties.

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miracles, but I want you". Obtained from the Ugandan Ministry of Defence de-classified library.

[18] ICG interview, Kampala, December 2003.

[19] The sources for this section are government military personnel and journalists interviewed between November 2003 and January 2004.

[20] A number of interviewees told ICG that looted goods are sold in shops in the North, some operated by relatives and associates of senior LRA operatives. This is said to generate major income for the families of these LRA leaders.

[21] ICG interview with government official, Kampala, December 2003.

[22] ICG interview, Kampala, December 2003.

Its ability to move in small groups, using Global Positioning Systems (GPS), radios and telephones and armed with light weapons,[23] has shown that the LRA can exercise efficient tactical command and control over a considerable territory. It prioritises survival by avoiding direct confrontation with the army, and focuses on ambushes and soft targets. The policy of self-preservation for the commanders is the key to maintaining the organisation. Abductees provide disposable fighters, who can easily be replaced and are often sacrificed to ensure the escape of commanders. The army has recognised this tactic; its recent successes in killing LRA commanders may have resulted from moving its focus in battle from the frontline combatants to the likely locations of commanders to the rear.

The LRA's conduct of operations makes it resistant to conventional military defeat, but not invincible as many assume. Its tactics do not require much sophistication as they do not seek to minimise their own casualties as a normal military organisation would and are not concerned to any degree with the negative effects of their operations on the local population. They need only avoid contact with the army, locate soft targets and attack them with indoctrinated and/or coerced fighters.[24] This is effective in terms of an intention to terrorise and sustain the organisation. The key to defeating the LRA is not to be found solely in military operations, but also in changing the environment that makes its tactics effective through political, economic and social means.

3.   Abductions

Since the Acholi started questioning LRA motives in 1996, a year marked by intense fighting, the insurgency has resorted to abductions and the massacre of suspected government allies to terrorise the civilian population. Today, the LRA does not accept voluntary recruits. Captured ex-combatants show a fear of accountability or revenge.[25] Behind the abductions is a carefully crafted element of the war. Children and young girls are meant to provide labour and sex, as well as serve as weapons of terror against their own parents and community, creating in the process a sense of hopelessness, despair and hatred for the government. When children are killed, their parents mourn their death and condemn the army for killing those who are the victims of the war, adding to the resentment for failing to protect them from being abducted in the first place.[26]

When the abductees kill their own parents or kin, it causes bitterness and condemnation of both the LRA and the army, the former for committing the violence, the latter for failing to protect both the abductees and the community. This phenomenon also produces ambiguities in the conduct of army operations. LRA methods make the killing of its (abducted) fighters, who are easily replaced, a poor measurement of success.[27] More importantly, each death potentially alienates the Acholi population further from the agency that is supposed to be protecting them. This dynamic represents a lose-lose situation for army and government. The army faces difficulties in conducting even the most rudimentary security operations while attempting to minimise casualties to fighters/abductees, when the only distinction made is probably whether they are armed and/or under the control of their commanders. The answer to this dilemma lies at the operational level, in better protecting the population (children in particular) from abduction, while concentrating on targeting the LRA leadership instead of merely killing as many of the fighters as possible.

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[23] The LRA inventory includes mortars, machine guns, anti-tank and anti-vehicle mines, explosives, and recoilless (anti-vehicle) guns.

[24] Much of the literature assumes that LRA tactics are sound. For example the recent report by the Refugee Law Project, "Behind the Violence", Working Paper No. 11, Kampala, February 2004, p. 22, implied that the avoidance of attack helicopters is a sign of sound tactics. However, such assessments seem to be based primarily upon the mere fact that the LRA has maintained the conflict over such a long period. This is more a consequence of army inadequacies and other factors, however, than the LRA's tactical skill. When faced with a well-coordinated attack, the LRA has suffered many casualties, recently also among its commanders.

[25] Part of the initial indoctrination is said usually to involve a requirement that the abductees commit an act of brutality (often coerced), frequently against a relative, thereby incriminating and traumatising him so that he thereafter is reluctant or unable to return to his village for fear of retribution. ICG interviews, Ugandan officials, October and December 2003.

[26] ICG interview, George Omona, ACCORD, Gulu, October 2003.

[27] The Ugandan media almost daily includes reports from the Army spokesman that a number of LRA fighters have been killed and abductees rescued. It also reports civilians killed by the LRA. Army casualties are seldom reported.

4. The Sudan factor

Since 1994, the LRA's only known supporter has been the Sudanese government, which has provided safe havens and arms. The link between the LRA and Khartoum is a necessary but not sufficient explanation for continuation of the conflict. In many respects undue emphasis has been placed upon it. However this support has been a significant factor in increasing the deadliness and sustainability of LRA operations.

Sudanese support is reportedly in retaliation for the Ugandan government's support of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) insurgency. Both sides deny that they are providing material aid to the other's rebels. After the LRA was declared a terrorist organisation by the U.S. Department of State in late 2001, however, Sudan quietly claimed it had cut off supplies to the LRA in an effort to improve relations with Washington. This purported cut-off was short-lived. After the LRA helped the Sudanese government recapture the Sudanese garrison town of Torit from the SPLM/A in October 2002, the flow of arms and ammunition, including anti-tank landmines, resumed.

The LRA's fighting ability has made it valuable for the Sudanese government's efforts to counter the SPLA and the latter's main supporter in Kampala. Military supply was reduced in 1999-2000, however, due to the Ethiopia-Eritrea war. An agreement between Uganda and Sudan that was brokered by the Carter Center led to improved cooperation, and the effects of its international isolation has motivated Khartoum to seek to improve its status with the West.[28] Nevertheless, Khartoum probably cannot completely cut its links to Kony until the Sudanese civil war is settled.

Sudan has been central to the LRA's survival. When it is under serious pressure, it has been able to retreat safely to Southern Sudanese rear bases to recuperate and rearm. The LRA has stockpiled weapons it has received from Sudan against the contingency of a cut-off. Sudan has also provided medicine and food. Despite the agreement with Uganda, Sudan continues to support the LRA from bases near Torit and Juba, which it claims are

refugee camps.[29] Kony's new base is in the Imatong Mountains in Southern Sudan, an excellent hideout that affords easy defence and difficult detection due to the rugged terrain. There is some conjecture that the LRA's recent arms acquisitions were a farewell package from a government that feels it may no longer be able to afford to harbour a terrorist group but wishes to increase its capacity to sustain operations in Northern Uganda for a long time. How true this is may become evident as the Sudan peace process plays out over the next months.

5. The spread of the insurgency outside Acholiland

In the face of progress in peace negotiations between Khartoum and the SPLA in 2003,[30] the LRA took a number of steps to reinforce its position. It reorganised its command structure, went on an arms acquisition spree, particularly for landmines, and most controversially, in mid-2003, it launched attacks further east into Iteso and Langi areas. In doing this, Kony may have wanted to shift the dynamic of the insurgency away from Acholiland in order to give it a more national dimension. The cooperation he may have hoped to receive from these areas, however, appears not to have materialised though the LRA initially had some success in killing and abducting unprotected civilians before the government and army responded. This produced a propaganda gain as it discredited the government and created a crisis. There may have been a hope to replicate the ambiguous attitudes toward the government that assist the insurgency and impede the army in Acholiland. The intention may also have been to

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[28] ICG interview with Foreign and Commonwealth Office official, London, 30 September 2003.

[29] ICG interview with Ugandan officials, Kampala, December 2003.

[30] A "Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements" was signed by the Sudan government and the SPLA in Naivasha, Kenya, on 25 September 2003. It has the potential to change the security dynamics in Southern Sudan fundamentally and affect the LRA directly, as it stipulates that all but 12,000 of Khartoum's soldiers will be re-deployed from the South within 30 months of the entry into force of a comprehensive peace agreement. The 12,000 troops that would remain would be placed in joint/integrated units alongside SPLA fighters. If implemented – and such a comprehensive peace agreement has not yet been signed – this could result eventually in the severance of the supply links between the Sudan government and the LRA. See ICG Africa Report N°73, *Sudan: Toward an Incomplete Peace*, 11 December 2003.

threaten the vital trade route to the east by moving towards Mbale, thereby threatening an economic crisis.

After the move east into Teso, however, the death of Brigadier Tabuleh[31] (then third in command) left the LRA structure there disorganised and on the run. The LRA moved some units out of Teso into Lira, and attempted to regroup. They intended to withdraw into their Gulu and Kitgum hideouts, but the bulk went back into Southern Sudan because of dry season exposure. Nevertheless, damage has been done, and the epicentre of the humanitarian emergency has now shifted eastward.

The move to the east may also have been prompted by a need to expand the LRA's logistics (supplies and abductees) within Uganda, possibly because of changing circumstances in Sudan and because much of the Acholi countryside had already been laid waste. However, the relatively rapid response of the UPDF, including the Local Defence Units (LDUs), and the animosity of the population will make it difficult for the LRA to copy its operations in Acholi and maintain a more permanent presence.

Even as the situation in Sudan changes, the LRA will need to maintain proximity to that border so it can retreat there when under heavy pressure. This also makes a long-term presence in the east unlikely. Should Khartoum and the SPLA conclude a peace agreement, an international observation mission could not likely monitor LRA bases in the Imatong Mountains in Southern Sudan effectively. The LRA would likely retain the capacity to hide there. It would also be able to launch further attacks into Uganda which, though the level of activities would probably be lower, would likely be of sufficient intensity that the humanitarian crisis would not be much relieved since it does not require a significant level of military by the LRA to sustain the current deplorable situation.

6. Operational vulnerabilities

The LRA is in many respects a unique and idiosyncratic organisation. However, a number of its characteristics and methods of operation create vulnerabilities that may be exploitable militarily

and politically. The key characteristic – and main vulnerability – is Kony himself. As noted, his control through spiritual and coercive means is central to sustaining the organisation. His removal is the key to undoing the LRA's cohesion and motivation and creating new opportunities for peace.

Kony's key lieutenants are probably motivated by a combination of factors. There is likely to be some residual Acholi nationalism, especially for those previously associated with the UNLA/UPDA. For them, however the LRA is mainly a means to their own empowerment and survival, which makes them vulnerable to coercion or cooption by a better deal, particularly if the LRA's fortunes decline or reports of increased friction between Kony and his immediate subordinates are true.[32] In 1997 Kony killed his then deputy Lagony and replaced him with Vincent Otti. There were reports in late 2003 that he had fallen out with Otti, and more recently that he had threatened to kill his senior commanders for betrayal and disobedience. These commanders could take matters into their own hands if enough felt threatened and saw a suitable alternative such as an amnesty and/or resettlement.

The motivation of LRA junior commanders and fighters varies greatly.[33] Some subscribe to Kony's spiritualist path to Acholi emancipation and might continue to fight for a similar cause even if the LRA were to be defeated. Many, however, remain with the LRA because they see this as better than returning to the largely impoverished North with no hope of economic betterment. The creation of effective, long-term government reintegration programs for these individuals, and for the North generally, might provide strong incentives for many LRA fighters to lay down their arms and return to families and communities.

LRA operations, while largely supportable locally, could suffer from changing regional circumstances. There is also some vulnerability to the attitude of local populations, as shown by the difficulties the LRA has experienced in the east because of both active and passive resistance to it in the Langi and

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[31] Taubleh, who was behind the move to the east, fought with the UPA, based in Iteso, until its defeat, and then joined the LRA. ICG interview with government officials, Kampala January 2004.

[32] *Sunday Vision*, 1 February 2004.

[33] ICG interviews in Northern Uganda, November 2003 to February 2004 and with EU official, March 2004. The junior commanders and fighters referred to here differ from recent abductees in that they exercise a degree of choice in remaining with the LRA and are part of the insurgency's hard core "professionals".

Iteso areas. Therefore, as discussed in more detail below, the relationship between the government and army and the Acholi population could be critical to defeating the LRA. Use of insecure communications (satellite and mobile phone) assists the LRA to coordinate operations but yields intelligence that the government (assisted by the U.S.) could exploit better.

E. THE LRA AND ACHOLI GRIEVANCES

Although few are willing to say that the LRA is fighting to rectify historical Acholi grievances, these grievances do exist, and many see the LRA, for all its faults, as the only group that is effectively confronting Museveni. This feeling is likely to be strongest amongst the Acholi diaspora, which is not directly affected by either the LRA's actions or by any positive deeds of the government.

The LRA's Acholi nationalism is simplified to being anti-Museveni and against Southern tribes, manifested through religious rituals practiced by the LRA. The most extreme expressions of its anti-NRM campaign are the abductions, rape, and summary executions of non-combatants as a means not only to discredit the army for not protecting civilians, but also as punishment of the Acholi for their lack of open support to the rebellion, especially since 1996.

At the core of the LRA rebellion is a belief that Acholi pride and culture have been contaminated by "foreigners". To be seen to support the army, which represents these foreigners, is a betrayal of Acholi nationalism. But many Acholi see the risks of supporting or not supporting the LRA as equal because "abducted children are sent to kill their own parents and kin causing both anger and sympathy whenever when such abducted children are killed by either side".[34] The violence the LRA inflicts upon the Acholi negates any claims it or its supporters can make that it is a legitimate champion of Acholi grievances.

The LRA initially justified its attacks on Acholi as necessary to discipline traitors and enforce the anti-Museveni element of the insurgency. However, their scale and arbitrariness cannot be equated to any coherent measures, such as those, for example, by the Viet Cong or Irish Republican Army (IRA)

against their respective support bases. In fact, the abduction of children after 1994 became necessary to sustain the LRA's numbers, and the terror instilled in the population became a political and operational objective.

While the vast majority of Acholi reject the LRA as their representative, their animosity to the NRM and the army creates a dangerous ambiguity which robs both the government and the Acholi of the necessary environment in which the LRA can be defeated. This ambiguity provides opportunity for the LRA to continue to operate, even without direct support from the Acholi. It also is a significant impediment to a coordinated policy between the government and the Acholi for solving the conflict. The ambiguity is evident in differing opinions about the causes of the conflict, how to counter the LRA and how to find peace. For those in Kampala and Acholi who see the conflict in its simplest manifestation as a continuation of the North-South struggle, the situation is not only inevitable, but preferable to peace.

For the great majority of Ugandans, including Acholi, who want peace, this ambiguity must be resolved. The onus for creating an environment for peace is on the government, while Acholi leaders need to reject the LRA unequivocally and learn from the actions of the Langi and Iteso how to respond to its threat. The government must also acknowledge the wrongs that have been done the Acholi, many resulting from its own failures such as the early atrocities, economic loss, particularly of cattle, and ongoing abuses by UPDF personnel that are not adequately punished.

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[34] ICG Interview, Gulu, October 2003.

III. THE FAILURE TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT

President Museveni wants a military solution, not only because he sees the LRA as a military or even a criminal problem, but also because it would bring him and the NRM substantial political capital. The war has been a disaster for Uganda but it has allowed him to maintain an unreformed and corrupt army as a key pillar of the regime. It stands in the way of thorough security sector reform and gives him the arguments with which to resist mounting international pressure to reduce defence spending drastically. It also gives him pretexts to maintain the political status quo by denying the opposition a power base and curtailing freedom of expression and association in the name of "the war against terrorism".

Museveni's response to prodding by the U.S., in particular, and to consolidated proposals such as USAID's Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI), has been sceptical. Its actions suggest the LRA has little desire for genuine dialogue but the government has not always responded in good faith to past attempts by a variety of actors (Carter Centre, St. Egidio, Acholi religious leaders, Betty Bigombe) to promote such dialogue. Museveni's propensity for issuing unconditional ultimatums has frequently ensured that there was no possibility of progress. Nevertheless, the government has the responsibility to create the mechanisms that would allow it to pursue negotiations should the opportunity present itself.

A. POLITICAL USES OF THE CONFLICT

The continuation of the conflict in the North cannot be seen in isolation from the larger political situation in Uganda, especially central issues surrounding the consolidation and perpetuation of the NRM's power. The conflict has to be analysed in view of the competition between the NRM and opposition forces, and through the specific leverage that it gives the government to protect the army as a key power base.

1. Acholiland

Because of the war, and the NRM's nature as a broad movement of which all citizens are obliged by law to be members, the Acholi have become willing supporters of any alternative to Museveni. In many aspects, therefore, Acholiland politics is no longer driven by choices based on old groupings like the Democratic Party (DP) or Uganda People's Congress (UPC) but by massive protest against a government that forces the Acholi to move to camps where the LRA still kills and abducts them. Hopelessness causes the Acholi to reject both Museveni and Kony, the evidence of the former being documented by the 1996 and 2001 presidential and parliamentary elections. During both, the Acholi clearly expressed a desire for political change in the hope that a new government would address the war and their woes.

Because both the NRM and the LRA are unpopular, voices representing the interests of old political parties presented an alternative at the 1996 and 2001 elections. In 1996, Paul Semwogerere, the DP leader from Buganda, a region traditionally opposed to Northern domination, received strong Acholi support. In 2001, Kiiza Besigye of the western Banyankole/Bakiga groups, a former army officer once close to Museveni, won Acholi votes. Support for both men expressed a desperate yearning for change. Since then, opposition to the NRM has been intensified.

In the presidential elections of 1996, in Gulu alone, Museveni won only 8.5 per cent of the vote, while Paul Semwogerere, representing the opposition Inter-Party Political Forces Co-operation (IPFC), got 90.5 per cent. In Kitgum, Museveni got 10.5 per cent, Semwogerere 88.4 per cent. In 2001 Museveni did slightly better but the opposition still had a large margin: in Gulu, Museveni had 11.5 percent, Besigye 81.8 per cent. In Kitgum, Museveni won 21.3 per cent, Besigye 72.4 per cent.[35]

Significantly, the voting was not based on ethnic or religious politics. It was a remarkably widespread protest vote against the NRM, in an election conducted under tight army security in the IDP camps. That even army presence and monitoring, or intimidation as was reported in the west and central regions, did not influence voters to back Museveni,

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[35] "Comparative Statistical Analysis of the 2001 & 1996 Presidential Elections", the Directorate of Research, NRM secretariat, Kampala, 24 July 2001. The 2001 election attracted six candidates including Museveni and Besigye. The others were Agrey Awori, Francis Bwengye, Chapaa Karuhanga and Kibirige Mayanja.

confirms that Northerners wished to reject the NRM. The parliamentary elections followed the same pattern. Exact figures on the parliamentary voting in Acholi are not easy to come by but election officials say 90 per cent opposed the NRM.[36]

Acholi generally perceive the continuation of the war as punishment for their refusal to endorse Museveni's leadership. The LRA insurgency provides an ideal opportunity for the NRM to keep Northerners in general at the periphery and the topic of the North-South divide out of the national political debate. As long as the situation of the North is dominated by security matters, the sharing of national resources, the general cohesion of the social and political fabric and the monopolisation of power and wealth by Southerners are not questioned.

Limited efforts to reform the socio-economic environment have failed dismally. Although the war has cost the Acholi two generations of young people who know nothing but war and poverty, government programs continue to be viewed with suspicion. One such is the Security and Production Program (SPP), designed in May 2003 as a transitional socio-economic effort to create better conditions for those in the IDP camps of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts. Based on the experience of the Israeli Kibbutz and Moshav system, the SPP is meant to use communal and government land to create farms called Security and Production Units (SPUs). The main crops would be maize, beans, upland rice and sorghum. The project, though not yet implemented, already causes tension among IDPs, who view it as a government land grab. Indeed the program would be disastrous. Communal land ownership is sensitive in the North. Mass cultivation would destroy traditional boundaries, where ownership is not title based, but passes through traditional inheritance. Attempts in the 1990s to reconstruct the North through the Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program (NURP I and NURP II)[37]

produced little social transformation. Recently the prime minister's office launched the Northern Uganda Social fund, which also seems lacklustre.

2. The politics of security and opposition

Continuation of the conflict provides a crisis environment that enables the government to justify measures that would be unacceptable in different circumstances, such as the continued presence of many former and current army personnel within its ranks. The close nexus between political and military considerations impedes sound policy development and implementation as well as transparency and accountability. Much can be justified by citing the threat from Kony and terrorism.

The recent Anti-Terrorism Act defines terrorism broadly and is a potent tool to stifle criticism and intimidate opponents.[38] An example is the prosecution of journalists from *The Monitor* who incorrectly reported that a UPDF helicopter had been shot down. The army spokesman suggested this report might be subject to the Anti-terrorism Act, and prosecution has proceeded. Similarly, a number of journalists may be prosecuted because their phone number was found recently on the body of a dead LRA commander. The government targets not only journalists but also other critics of the army such as members of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), most recently Fr. Carlos Rodriguez, whom the army wanted to deport after he made a number of claims about one of its cordon-and-search operations at Pabbo IDP camp.[39] Some of these claims proved not to be accurate, although it is unlikely that he deliberately intended to misinform the public.

Regardless, the army's call for deportation is symptomatic of its heavy handedness and inability to accept criticism. This attitude also pervades the political leadership. Those who oppose the NRM line or suggest that its handling of the conflict is not effective are liable to be accused of

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[36] ICG telephone interview with Electoral Commission official, Kampala, 17 February 2004.
[37] The NURP, launched in July 1992, was divided into two components, NURP I and NURP II. It got initial funding of U.S.$93.6 million from the World Bank, donor countries and aid agencies and thereafter other sources. Findings based on a 1992/1999 households survey by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) show that one third of the chronically poor and a disproportionate number of

households moving into poverty are from Northern Uganda. See "Background to the Budget, Financial Year 2003/04", MOFED, Kampala, June, 2003.
[38] Anti-Terrorism Act, section 7 (1). A terrorist is defined as someone who "indiscriminately commits certain violent acts, with intent to cause injury or death, for purposes of influencing the government or intimidating the public or a section thereof and for political or other aim".
[39] *The Monitor*, 10 February 2004.

collaborating with the enemy or undermining the state.[40]

The government also uses allegations of links to the LRA to discredit the opposition. The LRA is the country's only insurgency but after the 2001 presidential elections, Kiiza Besigye's Reform Agenda (RA) was tied to it by the government. James Opoka, an Acholi and one of Besigye's strongest campaign managers, was said to be the link. He was killed by Kony in March 2003 together with ten LRA fighters. At the same time the RA was linked to an obscure rebel group, the People's Redemption Army (PRA), which allegedly received backing from Rwanda and operated in the eastern portion of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Although these charges must be treated with much scepticism, the anti-terrorism law can be used against any who challenge their authenticity. The threat of a death sentence for anyone found guilty of complicity with groups defined as terrorist clearly weakens opposition to the NRM's growing authoritarianism.

By maintaining a good international image through the global wars against AIDS and terrorism, Museveni hopes to have his own authoritarian tendencies overlooked or excused. He has sought in particular the patronage of U.S. President Bush.

3.   NRM politics and the military

The war in the North also makes it easy to reject calls to reduce defence spending. Museveni frequently criticises donor requirements to hold defence expenditure at the current UShs 300 billion (U.S.$166 million) or 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He argues that the army needs more money to purchase systems such as attack helicopters, troop transport helicopters and tanks.[41] In 2003 a 23 per cent cut had to be made in the non-priority budget items of most ministries in order to cover increased defence spending. Part of the justification was that a fifth army division had been created to deal a decisive blow to the LRA.

The adverse consequences of inter-sectoral allocations undermined confidence in the budget process among stake holders including donors, in much the same way as it impaired the capacity of ministries to deliver public services and maintain control systems.[42]

According to donor sources, the ministry of defence wants another increase that would be in the range of 28 to 30 per cent. If this happens, defence would consume over UShs 400 billion (U.S.$222 million), out of an estimated total government expenditure of UShs 2,741 billion (U.S.$1.52 billion) or some 2.6. per cent of GDP, according to provisional data based on the 2002/2003 financial year projections. Currently donor support accounts for over 50 per cent of the Uganda budget, although donors do not give exact figures.[43]

The war not only justifies a large army[44] but also allows Museveni to protect from scrutiny an institution that is central to the NRM political project and his own power. The current Defence Review Program is an attempt, under donor pressure, to create a procurement strategy that will enable it to function with less corruption and politics, as well as better commanded and ethnically balanced.[45] The army bill presented to parliament in 2003 is meant to create a legal framework for such a reform.

As long as the war goes on, however, national security arguments can be used to keep a cover on the political and economic activities of senior army officers and management. Already such arguments are being used to prevent audits of the army's so-called classified accounts, even by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament or the Auditor General. The on-going investigations into "ghost soldiers" by serving army officers under Lt. General David Tinyefuza raises questions of credibility and impartiality as well as the criteria used to identify those who are being court-martialed on charges of financial impropriety and professional misconduct. Although the army has admitted that ghost soldiers are as old as the

[40] In a July 2003 speech, Museveni accused those who raised concerns about army operations, in this case with respect to the use of attack helicopters, of being the "silent supporters of terrorism", quoted in HURIPEC, op. cit., p. 158.
[41] ICG interview with Western diplomats, Kampala, 24 October 2003.

[42] "Background to the Budget, Financial year 2003/04", Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MOFED), Kampala, June 2003.
[43] Ibid.
[44] According to official figures, the army has five divisions of 11,000 soldiers each.
[45] ICG interview with Western diplomat, Kampala, 9 February 2004.

NRM's military arm itself, key veterans of that institution such as Lt. General Salim Saleh and Major General James Kazini, both relatives of Museveni, are not being treated like others whose conduct has been questioned.

A further concern is that the army is used to protect Museveni's own power base within the Bayankole/Bahima constituency, which is over-represented within the military's higher echelons.[46] Banyankole/Bahima domination of the top ranks undermines any attempt to project the army as a national institution with a national outlook. The absence of a national outlook in turn reduces the army to an arm of NRM ideology that serves the relatively narrow political interests of its founder and a few kinsmen, most of them dependent for their survival and protection on the political patronage of their leader.

The army leadership is also increasingly derived from the former Presidential Protection Unit (PPU), renamed and expanded as the Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB) in 2002. The current Army Commander, Major General Aronda Nyakairima, was once an intelligence officer of the Presidential Guard. The current PGB Commander, Lt. Colonel Leo Kyanda, has strong ties with the president's family and works closely with his son, Major Muhoozi Kainerugaba. The chief of Military Intelligence, Colonel Noble Mayombo, is Museveni's former aide de camp and a member of inner PGB circles.

B.   THE ARMY'S OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS

Museveni's insistence on a military solution means his strategy relies upon the army both as an institution and operationally. While there are signs of improvement, the military's problems will not be fixed easily.

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[46] The army's senior ranks include President Museveni, who is commander-in-chief; five Lt Generals, Elly Tumwine (Muyankole Muhima), David Tinyefuza (Muyankole Muhima), Salim Saleh (Muyankole Muhima and half-brother to Museveni), Jeje Odongo (Teso) and Moses Ali (West Nile); Major General Aronda Nyakairima (Muhima from Rukungiri); Chief of Staff Brigadier General Joshua Masaba (Gishu); Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Benon Biraro (Ankole); and former Army Commander and Major General James Kazini (Muyankole Muhima).

1.   From bush army to conventional force

The NRM's military force emerged victorious from the war against Obote and Okello after first mounting an effective insurgency, then conducting larger scale operations to defeat the UNLA and capture Kampala. The legacy of this campaign continues to influence Ugandan politics and military affairs. Organisationally the NRM's fighters were transformed from a guerrilla force into a conventional infantry-based army. However, the guerrilla mentality has persisted. There are some questions in respect to the ability of many commanders to learn the lessons of the current operational situation and adjust their doctrine and tactics to the prevailing threat. A Western official suggested that within the army command there is a "lack of strategic vision".[47] One lesson of their own early days that has been ignored is the vital importance of maintaining sound relationships with the population. The army is no longer itself an insurgent force but local support is perhaps even more important for countering an insurgency.

Paradoxically, perhaps the most damaging legacies of the bush war of the early 1980s are the strong bonds of personal loyalties between Museveni and those who fought with him and have subsequently held senior military positions. These bonds were critical when the NRM was an insurgency and also in the first period of its governance when it set out to transform Uganda. But they have also greatly impeded the army's performance, as many who have proved to be corrupt or incompetent in meeting the present security challenges have been allowed to retain important positions. These loyalties are exacerbated by the army's politicisation, which undercuts its development into a competent professional military force.

2.   Identifying the operational problems

The longevity of the LRA insurgency cannot be explained simply, as some in the government and army are wont to do, as a consequence of an Acholi desire to resist the NRM. As already discussed, the historical legacies, the characteristics of the LRA itself, and government policies have all contributed. One of the most important factors has been the army's inherent flaws, which have been made all the more stark by the emphasis placed on the military option.

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[47] ICG interview, Kampala, November 2003.

The army's performance in its campaigns in the Congo (DRC) in the late 1990's particularly in battles with the Rwandan army at Kisangani,[48] revealed a number of deficiencies, most notably the high command's interference in combat operations, a problem that persists in Northern Uganda. The most worrying aspect is the president's propensity to go into the field to influence, if not command, tactical operations. In some respects this is another manifestation of the bush war legacy and Museveni's role as a successful guerrilla commander. While it is understandable that he would want to visit combat zones to encourage his troops and assure the civilian population, the direct command of operations suggests a number of concerns.

It is a sign there are problems Museveni feels he must address personally, showing a lack confidence in his commanders. It also indicates unwillingness to acknowledge the distinctions between strategic, operational and tactical levels of command that enable effective political and military synergy.[49] Military setbacks and incidents, such as LRA attacks in areas where he has recently been and has proclaimed a success, become personal defeats for the president that corrode his political standing.

The army is built around five infantry divisions, three of which are committed to the LRA insurgency. Tactically, its operations are focussed on zonal forces[50] tasked with protecting key assets and the civilian population and mobile forces tasked with pursuing the LRA.[51] On the face of it this would appear a logical division of missions but a number of factors make the approach largely ineffective. Primarily it remains a reactive strategy, reliant upon good intelligence and mobility, which the army mostly lacks.

The army's main measurement of success seems to be the body count, which is misleading as it ignores the lack of importance the LRA places upon the abductees it has turned into combatants. Whenever the army kills a number of LRA, more are abducted. Many commentators have suggested that the army is mostly killing recent abductees, not the LRA's hard-core fighters. At times abductees are tied together to prevent escape; when the army fires rockets and heavy artillery, most of the casualties are child soldiers. The government gave assurances that Operation Iron Fist would not affect its efforts to rescue abductees but military operations often continue to be clumsy, bloody and indiscriminate.

Despite the ongoing cycle of killings and abductions, the government, from Museveni down, constantly declares that defeat of the LRA is imminent or, even more unrealistically, that the war has been won.[52] Some of the LRA's deadliest and highest profile operations start after the president or other senior officials have made dismissive pronouncements. While a degree of rhetoric might be expected, continual claims of victory only strengthen the suspicion that the government does not understand the conflict.

An effective counter-insurgency campaign needs to focus on multiple elements: popular support (which, contrary to some claims, the LRA does not have); good intelligence (including from the population); domination of the area of operations through proactive patrolling and interdiction operations (though the LRA's mobility makes the domination of key areas such as towns less significant); and destroying the insurgent forces themselves. The decision in the early 1990's to force much of the population – reportedly 200,000 people – into "protected areas" in effect surrendered much of the countryside to the LRA and further increased the animosity of the Acholi, who suspected the government of stealing their land.

Although not all IDPs have been uprooted as a result of forced relocation by the army, government policy has exacerbated displacement and consequent impoverishment. Furthermore,

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[48] ICG correspondence with Gérard Prunier, November 2003.

[49] Similar concerns were raised by the judicial commission that investigated the "junk helicopters" scandal (see below) in respect to the president's personal role in the procurement system.

[50] An apparent reason for raising LDUs and militias has been to free regular army elements for more frequent mobile operations. However, this is only sensible if the LDUs are effective at protecting and the army is effective at engaging the LRA.

[51] It was reported that the army had a specialised counter-insurgency brigade operating in the North. However, this proved not to be so and is part of the "ghost soldiers" problem discussed below.

[52] For instance the commander of the 4th Division in Gulu was reported to have claimed that the war against Kony was in fact over, *Monitor*, 27 January 2004, in the week before the LRA killed 30 civilians. Similar claims were made before the Barlonyo massacre of 200 in mid-February 2004.

government strategy is frustrated when the army is unable to protect the IDPs. Daily reports of the killing of LRA combatants are usually accompanied by news of killings and abductions perpetrated by the rebels, often within the IDP camps, thus further undermining the confidence of the population in the army. As military pressure is increased, the insurgency can be expected to increase attacks on IDP camps and other vulnerable civilians, as it did after Operation Iron Fist was launched. The army cannot realistically be expected to prevent every LRA action but it must put greater effort into protecting civilians and providing other humanitarian support.[53]

Partly in order to address the problem of insufficient troops to provide full security, the government has focused recently on the creation of Local Defence Units (LDUs). These are paramilitary groups composed of local recruits with minimal training. The Arrow Boys militia in Teso, led by Captain Mike Mukula, Minister of State for Health, has been particularly effective. The Rhino Group, led by Musa Echweru, the Soroti Regional District Commissioner (RDC), in Lira is also very popular locally, where the army is recruiting 10,000 militia. The militias are tasked with securing roads and protecting IDPs, thus freeing the army to take the offensive. However, as the recent massacre at Barlonyo showed, the coordination of operations and intelligence between army and militias is poor. Attention needs to be paid to the welfare of militia members if the experiment is not to be plagued by desertions.[54]

The government is having less success at forming militias in Kitgum and Gulu. "The government is afraid to arm the population in Gulu because of opposition to Museveni", said a high-ranking official. "Even if they don't join Kony, they could start another war after this one is finished", another said.[55] Acholi leaders have not generally been as supportive of the LDU concept as counterparts in Teso and Langi region. This is partly due to previous experiences when Acholi were armed only

with bows and arrows to face the LRA. Some Acholi who joined earlier militias were sent to the Congo (DRC) instead of remaining near home to protect their families.

Operation Iron Fist was launched in April 2002 after an agreement with the Khartoum government that allowed the Ugandan army to operate up to a certain distance inside Sudan in pursuit of the LRA. It was supposed to be the "knock out blow" on the LRA, which had camps in Southern Sudan, including a headquarters at Lubanga-tek that was well equipped with vehicles, radio communications and weaponry provided by Khartoum. The operation destroyed these camps and documented Sudanese support of the LRA, but it did not destroy the insurgents, who, knowing the army was coming, either retreated deeper into Sudan or returned to Northern Uganda, where the level of violence against civilians increased noticeably. The operation is theoretically still underway but has become a familiar war of attrition.[56]

This failure should have persuaded the army of the limitations of conventional operations against an elusive opponent that does not need to defend territory and is not greatly affected by casualties. The emphasis on expensive conventional systems such as tanks and attack helicopters rather than improved mobility, intelligence and communications has left the army short of the tools it requires to counter the LRA militarily. It needs to develop new structures, acquire the right equipment and develop sound counter-insurgency strategy and tactics, but to do so it will have to overcome the intransigence and inflexibility of its commanders in both Kampala and the field.

The army's inability to meet its challenges has other causes as well. The Congo campaigns, for which it was not prepared and following which it has not replenished equipment or retrained and rested many of its personnel, produced a high level of battle fatigue for troops who have been on continual duty for years. As a consequence of donor concerns over corruption and the government's general approach to the insurgency, President Museveni has been under pressure to cap defence spending at 2 per cent of GDP. This is

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[53] Particularly serious examples of the army's inability to provide adequate protection occurred in the first week of February 2004. LRA fighters dressed as army personnel infiltrated an IDP camp in Abia, north of Lira, and killed approximately 45 people and followed this with a massacre at Barlonyo that took the lives of over 200.

[54] Welfare problems in the regular army are discussed below.

[55] ICG interview, Kampala, Dec 03.

[56] The army has recently announced that it will be returning to Southern Sudan, *The New Vision*, 4 February 2004.

deeply resented within the army and government.[57] Holding the defence budget at 2 per cent, however, does not necessarily produce a commensurate reduction in corruption or increase in efficiency. Defence spending and reform need to be looked at qualitatively, not quantitatively. The more likely effect of a quantitative measure is to further decrease legitimate expenditure while waste and corruption remain constant. Moreover, in order to meet the shortfall, the government reduced the budgets of all other departments by 23 per cent, thus weakening social spending.

Expansion of the Presidential Protection Unit to a brigade (3,000-plus personnel) is not a sign that the government is assigning the right priorities within the defence budget. The money – reportedly some 30 per cent of that budget[58] – could be spent better elsewhere, such as for improving the welfare of soldiers or raising a special forces capability to target the LRA leadership. That a key officer in the new brigade is the president's son and it has a high percentage of his own ethnic group feeds suspicions he is creating a personal militia to ensure he remains in power whatever the outcome of the 2006 presidential election.[59]

The army's problems can only be addressed qualitatively through a thorough reform process supported by the donor community.[60] The generally poor morale and physical conditions are obvious symptoms of wider problems, such as corruption, which impede performance. Complaints are particularly acute among non-Acholi, who feel they are risking their lives to save some Acholi from other Acholi, a view also reflected by some at higher levels. Visible corruption, failure to pay soldiers regularly, poor conditions and equipment all further erode morale and represent a greater threat to the army and its personnel than Joseph Kony's rebels.

3. Corruption and its consequences

The level of corruption in the army has reached levels that can no longer be hidden. Museveni himself is reportedly shocked and embarrassed.[61] Corruption and mismanagement are believed to consume approximately a quarter of the defence budget,[62] with many at the top and close to the president implicated. The types of corruption vary widely and include: low-level theft and extortion from civilians; creation of "ghost soldiers" whose pay is pocketed; acquisition of faulty equipment (from uniforms to helicopters and tanks- usually as a result of a bribe or personal business association); and exploitation of resources in the Congo, including the suspicion that this was the motivation for the intervention. Much is difficult to prove, as it is either concealed by national security claims or relies upon informal personal relationships and networks. However, the UN and the government have investigated a number of cases.

The Porter Commission[63] was established to investigate accusations of the UN Panel on Exploitation in the DRC against the government and/or Ugandan citizens, including military personnel. The Commission's report concluded that some members of the army, and Major General Kazini,[64] who was Army Commander until June 2002, in particular, and civilian associates had engaged in corrupt and inappropriate activities. It urged that a defence review should make or recommend:

❑ …a careful assessment of the ability, intelligence and education achievements of particular officers. Some of those who have given evidence before this Commission have barely been able to make themselves understood, even to the rank of Major.

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[57] The army was reduced from approximately 100,000 to some 50,000 to 60,000 in the late 1990s, a figure that senior commanders told ICG they considered inadequate to conduct operations in the North and Northeast while properly rotating and reinforcing units. ICG interview, October 2003. The army's precise size is difficult to ascertain, in part due to the problem of "ghost soldiers" discussed below.

[58] ICG interview, Kampala, February 2004.

[59] A Western official said that Museveni was deeply affected by the assassination of former Congo president Laurent Kabila in 2001; the expanded Presidential Guard is to ensure he does not meet the same fate. ICG interview, Kampala, October 2003.

[60] This may require an increase in defence spending above the 2 per cent cap, however, contingent upon certain processes being put in place to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

[61] ICG interview, December 2003.

[62] ICG interview with Western diplomat, October 2003.

[63] The Porter Commission was set up by President Museveni in 2001 to investigate the allegations against Uganda in the report of the UN Panel on the Exploitation of Resources in the DRC.

[64] See Porter Commission, Recommendations, para. 44.2.

❑   A stringent examination of the capacity of the officer to fulfil his office as a professional soldier.

❑   The commitment of the officer to the defence of the State rather than self-advancement and self-enrichment. And respect for civil authority as required under the Constitution.[65]

These recommendations amounted to an indictment of the army as an institution where personal and political associations can prevail over professionalism and duty. Officer inadequacies have created an environment where corrupt activities are not only perpetuated but also hidden and protected, often to the great detriment of the military mission.

Perhaps the best example of this is the "Junk Helicopters" scandal. Concerns about the purchase of MI-24 attack helicopters from Belarus, through a Ugandan intermediary, led to a judicial commission of inquiry,[66] whose findings were later endorsed in a parliamentary white paper. The commission recommended that General Salim Saleh[67] and others be prosecuted for their roles in the handling of the purchase.[68] It also pointed to failures in the procurement system. A proper assessment of needs and the utility of the system had not been undertaken; the decision to purchase was an enthusiastic personal and political one of the president himself;[69] and the problems arose from the "special relationship" between the president and the general (his half-brother).[70] As a consequence of a flawed procurement process exploited by corrupt individuals, the government bought helicopters that on delivery were found not airworthy, contrary to the conditions of the contract and the reports of personnel involved in the

transaction. The government lost U.S.$6 million to $12 million and had to spend additional funds to make the two defective aircraft useable.

The latest public manifestation of corruption within the army is the "ghost soldiers" saga, which continues to be investigated but has already resulted in the court martial of a number of personnel for other offences, including Major General Kazini and Brigadier Henry Tumukunde, the former chief of the Internal Security Organisation (ISO). The army has suspended all paymasters. The ghost soldier phenomenon is reported to have arisen in the mid-1990s in the 4th Division based in Gulu,[71] and have included use of personal bank accounts to deposit and disburse public money and the deaths and disappearances of personnel associated with these payments. Perhaps the starkest demonstration of the problems was the recent discovery of reportedly some 4,000 Rwandans who left the NRM's forces in the early 1990s to form what became the army of the current Rwandan government but remained on Kampala's payroll along with dead Ugandan veterans. The president was reported to be "shocked".[72]

These and other incidents undermine the morale of the army and the confidence of Ugandans in their government and society. They also undermine the confidence of the donor community, which covers approximately 50 per cent of Uganda's budget, in the integrity of the government and the utility of its support. For instance, the Dutch ambassador told Finance Minister Gerald Ssendaula as they signed an agreement bringing The Hague's bilateral aid for 2003 to €34 million euro (UShs 78 billion) that "in the past year, progress in the fight against corruption has been disappointing, we eagerly await the follow up of the junk helicopters and the Porter reports, which have to do with corruption in the army".[73] Many donors interviewed by ICG expressed the same sentiments. It is likely that without more accountability and prosecution of corruption, Uganda will see a reduction in financial and political support.

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[65] Ibid, para 44.4.

[66] See "Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Purchase of Military Helicopters", Government of Uganda, 24 August 2001.

[67] A nom de guerre. His real name is Caleb Akwandwanaho.

[68] Saleh admitted he agreed to accept a U.S.$800,000 inducement for ensuring the purchase of the helicopters through a middle man. The commission recommended that he and the other key actors be prosecuted under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1970. This recommendation has been endorsed by the government white paper on the judicial inquiry. See "Judicial Commission", op. cit., paras 3, 3.5 , and 3.5.9.

[69] Ibid, para 2.2.2 for the president's comments on the need to acquire the helicopters. See also para 2.2.9-10.

[70] Ibid, paras 3.3.8-9.

[71] *The New Vision* reported on 16 December 2003 that Defence Minister Amama Mbabazi's report on ghost soldiers in the army discovered the most cases were in Northern Uganda, and the most egregious of these happened between 1996 and 1998 when the army was building a local defence force (LDU).

[72] *The Monitor*, 6 December 2003.

[73] *The Monitor,* 27 November 2003.

In response to such pressure, President Museveni usually adopts a belligerent tone, at least publicly, as he did in the celebration of the eighteenth anniversary of his movement's victory, on 26 January 2004, when he called for donors not to interfere in the country's internal politics. While primarily reacting to reported public statements by diplomats regarding whether he should stand for a third term, the downplaying of army corruption as the result of "small paymasters" was hardly reassuring. Donors have no right to dictate the form and substance of Uganda's constitutional arrangements but they do have a right to insist on probity and accountability for the funds they disburse.

Army personnel have been responsible for human rights abuses, which according to Human Rights Watch include summary execution, torture, rape, child recruitment, and inhuman conditions of detention in unauthorised locations[74]. Such occurrences and the failure to correct them[75] are characteristic of the conflict. Just as failure to prosecute corruption undermines government legitimacy and army effectiveness, so does the failure to address human rights abuse openly and honestly. Beyond individual actions, wider accusations need to be accounted for, including the recruitment of child soldiers and support for paramilitary groups such as the Kalangala Action Plan.[76]

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[74] See "Renewed Conflict in Northern Uganda", Human Rights Watch, July 2003.

[75] According to Human Rights Watch, when abuses occur, "they are rarely prosecuted for crimes committed against civilians. Even when UPDF [army] abuses have been investigated, the investigations have sometimes been kept internal and therefore have created an appearance of impunity, which has not improved public trust. UPDF responses to allegations of abuses against civilians, such as rape, unlawful killing, and torture, range from the crime going unpunished, to being 'punished' by transferring the accused, to the court martial of some individual soldiers without proper investigation, all the way to the rare true court martial. Often it appears that the action followed, or the punishment meted out, is at the sole discretion of the individual field commander", ibid, p. 41.

[76] Ibid, pp. 47-50, the Kalangala Action Plan, is a paramilitary group used by the NRM to threaten political opponents during the 2001 Presidential elections.

IV.   FINDING SOLUTIONS

The dynamics between the Acholi, the LRA and the Ugandan and Sudanese governments have produced a conflict in Northern Uganda that belies a one-dimensional solution. Most debate centres on the false dichotomy of a military vs. negotiated solution. A military-only solution – unlikely in any event because of army deficiencies – would deal with the immediate manifestation of the problem, the LRA, but not solve the North-South divide or produce national reconciliation. Similarly, negotiations may create the illusion of progress or be manipulated by the belligerents to gain a battlefield advantage that leads to increased violence, while addressing only the humanitarian consequences of a conflict would treat the symptoms, not the cause. An effective strategy will need to aim comprehensively at achieving a negotiated settlement while maintaining military pressure to contain the conflict and minimise victims, while at the same time enhancing the prospects of national reconciliation and improving the humanitarian situation in the North and Northeast.

A.   A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY

Government policy needs to address the LRA insurgency and Northern grievances simultaneously. The LRA should be dealt with through military, humanitarian and diplomatic and political means. Northern grievances require economic and political reforms. Only a more comprehensive counter-insurgency campaign coupled with effective economic and political initiatives can provide the key to a solution in the North. As yet, there is not enough military pressure to make any diplomatic opening possible, and not enough of a diplomatic opening to render such pressure meaningful. A progressive approach should provide sufficient space to create opportunities, build confidence and test the commitment of the parties to resolve the conflict.

1.   Creating a negotiation opportunity

The Museveni government needs to make an honest attempt at negotiations. Establishing a clear and unequivocal path for talks with whomever in the LRA wishes to pursue them is important for a number of reasons. First, it matters politically at

home and abroad for Museveni to counter the suspicion that he is pursing a military strategy for personal advantage or seeks only a military solution to a North-South dispute. Secondly, it may provide the opportunity for splitting the LRA.

LRA commanders appear to believe they can survive and perhaps continue to prosper if they remain in the bush but would be killed if they came out. To lay the groundwork for dialogue, the government could undertake confidence-building measures. Potentially one of the most important involves amnesty. This has been on offer, in one form or another, to all members of the LRA since 1998. The relevant legislation was recently extended for six months but is due for further review in April 2004 when the government has indicated it intends to modify the terms to exclude, for the first time, Joseph Kony and otherwise unspecified leadership elements. It should consider maintaining the offer for all members of the LRA – including commanders – except Kony in order to encourage potential divisions within the leadership.[77] It should also transfer unpopular officials away from the North, transmit strong, coordinated public messages laying out objectives and expectations, and deploy a single "peace team". In the past, too many initiatives, with competing incentives, often worked at cross-purposes. Both the government and the LRA exploited this anarchy. One centrally backed, clear path must be laid out.

President Museveni must be seen to support this approach fully, backed by the U.S. and EU. Consideration should be given to invoking a third party facilitator, perhaps a "troika" of the U.S., Sudan (the only government with access to the LRA) and a neutral country such as Ireland, Austria or Switzerland. Such a team could help bring about conditions to allow direct negotiations between the government and the LRA at a suitable time. The

LRA is reportedly highly suspicious of Washington but the State Department would need to go beyond its self-imposed, terrorist list-driven limitation of being willing to discuss only humanitarian issues with the LRA. Indeed, a solely humanitarian focus might delay substantial dialogue and actually allow the LRA to recuperate. The army believes that Kony has taken advantage of past peace initiatives to rearm, reorganise, and recruit.

Ugandan civil society and opposition figures want the U.S. to use its leverage to promote a solution in the North. However, there is a widespread feeling that it has been too soft on Museveni. A Northern activist said, "The U.S. is sending mixed signals. State is telling the government to dialogue, while the DOD [Department of Defence] is pushing military aid. This encourages Museveni to be rigid".[78]

The concerns of the army and of those opposed to Museveni will have to be met by an incremental approach based first on a truce and improved humanitarian access. Once there are signs that the LRA leadership, with or without Kony, is interested in negotiations, measures such as limited or general ceasefires can be implemented to test each side's commitment. After this, it should be possible to allow those LRA fighters who want talks to move into de-militarised zones. Unless the LRA applied a comprehensive ceasefire, normal security operations would continue outside those zones.

Any strategy will have to encompass those to whom the LRA listens or relies upon, such as shop-owners, businessmen, parliamentarians and others to whom it turns when it needs something or wants to get a message out. Fear of possible U.S. actions will be an important motivation for the LRA, and this potential leverage should be used. The U.S. will have to lean heavily on Sudan to cut off its support to the LRA and bring the insurgency to the table. Khartoum has begun to view the LRA as a liability internationally but much depends on how useful it considers it internally. This depends in turn on the process of peace negotiations with its SPLA foe. The international observer mission that is expected to be part of any agreement to end Sudan's civil war should give priority attention to monitoring possible resupply of the LRA along with Sudanese militias in the south of that country. Other leverage should be employed as well. For

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[77] After considerable lobbying by the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), the government introduced legislation in 1998 which offered a blanket amnesty to all LRA fighters and commanders who returned from the bush. This has been renewed on a number of occasions. The Amnesty Act is problematic in a number of respects. For example, there are inconsistencies between it and the Anti-terrorism Act. See Refugee Law Project, op.cit. p. 46. There is also a question of the possible impact on transitional justice in the event that its implementation resulted in failure to prosecute those who committed very serious crimes under both national and international law.

[78] ICG interview, December 2003.

example, suggestions that its leaders might become liable to trial for war crimes before the International Criminal Court (ICC) could be made to induce the LRA to negotiate.

Kony is unlikely to participate in any meaningful dialogue but it is important to create realistic exit strategies for his commanders and fighters. This requires a deft combination of more focused and efficient military pressure, targeted diplomacy, reintegration programs for LRA personnel willing to lay down arms, and robust, visible political and economic initiatives in the North. Incentives to LRA commanders and fighters should include:

❑   insurance of physical security;

❑   relocation options;

❑   physical protection;

❑   welfare issues (houses, allowances, etc.);

❑   DDR for the combatants;

❑   rehabilitation for the North, and

❑   jobs in the government or UPDF where possible or appropriate.

The recent statement by the prosecutor of the ICC that he will investigate the LRA and Kony[79] adds to his pariah status. Other measures, such as a substantial bounty, should be considered.

If after political measures have been exhausted the consensus is talks will not resolve the conflict, channels should be kept open but options will narrow to reducing the effects of the conflict by providing security and improved living conditions in the North. However, this requires major army reform

2.   Security sector reform

Despite slow improvements in army tactics and fewer attacks in 2003 than in 2002, the effect on civilians over the past twelve months has been greater. Three further districts are in a state of war. IDPs have increased 40 per cent to roughly 1.5 million. At least 20,000 children are estimated to have been abducted since Operation Iron Fist began. Thousands of civilians – "night commuters" – are coming into towns after dark. The army clearly needs to become more effective in counter-insurgency. This entails implementing the conclusions of the defence review with specific focus on how it fights in the North.

Stronger efforts at curbing corruption will be necessary. The recent firing of senior commanders show Museveni's desire to improve relations with donors and clean up the army before the 2006 presidential election but further prosecutions and sackings are required. ICG is told they are planned. "We have moved very firmly and we have much more to go," promised a senior UPDF official.[80] The U.S. and UK should make continued cooperation with the military conditional upon serious measures being taken.

The culture of impunity is being addressed for the first time. Major General Aronda, the new Army Commander, is considered to be a professional, methodical and at times ruthless officer who will go after corruption diligently. The sweeping away of Kazini and Saleh loyalists will boost morale. Political support for Aronda as he pursues the root causes of the army's problems will be the key. As one Western military analyst told ICG, "the rank and file may be illiterate, but they are not stupid".[81]

Many high-ranking officials are overconfident, particularly about Operation Iron Fist, citing army success at dislodging the LRA from its bases in Southern Sudan and "pinning [it] down" in the North. They do not believe the government could do more in the overall struggle. Many consider that such inadequacies as there are result from donor-demanded cuts in defence spending and see the recent defence review as vindication of their view that the government has under-spent on defence. "The Ugandan government hasn't failed; it is good to see the international community joining us" said

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[79] ICC Statement of the Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo to Diplomatic Corps The Hague, Netherlands 12 February 2004. The ICC is pursuing preliminary contacts with Ugandan officials. If a full-scale investigation is ultimately to be credible, the ICC presumably would need to extend it to abuses committed by the Ugandan army as well. There may also be need to reconcile aspects of the ICC's operation with implementation of the Amnesty Act should the latter be used to offer immunity to former insurgents against whom the court might wish to pursue a case. On the general matter of the relationship of the ICC to amnesty acts and truth and reconciliation commissions (not specifically with regard to Uganda), see Justice Richard May of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "Memo for Workshop on International Criminal Accountability", Washington, D.C., 6-7 November 2003.

[80] ICG interview, Kampala, November 2003.
[81] Ibid.

a senior army commander.[82] They suggested that the approach taken several years earlier with the Ugandan National Rescue Front (UNRF) II, which involved offering a few positions to leaders, was an appropriate model for dealing with the LRA.[83] However this may reflect a misunderstanding of the fundamental differences between the LRA and other insurgent movements that over the years have been integrated into the army. Such a misunderstanding is shared by a number of NGOs and diplomats.

The UK assisted the army to undertake a defence review, the first of its kind in Africa. It is just completed, and the government is now deciding what to do about its findings. It came about in response to the donor-imposed cap of 2 per cent of GDP for military spending and represents a great opportunity for a comprehensive transformation of the army in management, command and control, mobility, motivation, procurement, and accounting. If its recommendations are implemented, the general results should be:

❑ a more professional, non-political army;

❑ improved and transparent procurement;

❑ a rationalised command structure with separate political-strategic, operational and tactical levels of responsibility; and

❑ more effective field operations.

This transformation is envisaged to take place over fifteen years, with a projected first-year cost on the order of UShs 400 billion, (U.S.$222 million), an increase of approximately 28 to 30 per cent in the current defence budget that would bring it to approximately 2.6 per cent of GDP.[84] The government will need to remain focused on the issue of affordability, which means it may be heading for another disagreement with donors, although the degree of analysis and justification in the review should reduce friction. Donor agreement will be very much influenced, however, by the extent of government commitment to deal with problems that have been extant for years, especially corruption.

The review, if implemented, will also assist in the development of a better organisation and strategy for dealing with the LRA. Reinforcing battalions to their proper size after ghost soldiers are removed would have a dramatic effect on performance and morale. Senior commanders see the importance of the review. "Before this, there was no consensus about problems and their solutions", said a senior officer. "The review will go a long way to building consensus internally and with donors".[85] Planned and existing U.S. training and support aim to promote a more professional and mobile army focused on the protection of civilians and better able to fight an effective counter-insurgency campaign against the LRA.

Army officers speak of new procurement regulations, communications equipment, and modernised units. The U.S. wants to support Ugandan efforts to create a senior staff college, focusing on civil-military relations and professionalism. This could help shape the military for decades, as further restructuring would inevitably flow from this effort.[86] Foreign Military Financing (FMF) has been approved to train six battalions in counter-insurgency and provide night vision equipment, although disbursement of the funds is on hold because of concerns about the army's human rights record.[87] This training may

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[82] ICG interview, Kampala, December 2003.

[83] The UNRF, led by Moses Ali -- now a government minister -- was an armed group from West Nile and including many former soldiers of Idi Amin that opposed the NRM. The UNRF II contained those UNRF elements that did not join the initial integration and continued to fight. Most of these eventually accepted amnesty and integration in 2002.

[84] "Uganda Defence Review - Summary of key Findings and Proposed Strategy for Defence Transformation", November 2003.

[85] ICG interviews, Kampala, December 2003.

[86] The U.S. European Command (EUCOM) has – in the context of its global counter-terrorism effort – focused on providing intelligence support to the Ugandan army. EUCOM and the army have created a counter-terrorism fusion cell in which daily joint intelligence assessments are made.

[87] The Department of State's 2003 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in respect to Uganda stated that "the Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Domination by the [National Resistance] Movement of the political process limited the right of citizens to change their government. Security forces committed unlawful killings. Security forces were responsible for short-term disappearances. Torture by security forces and beating of suspects to force confessions were serious problems. Security forces were responsible for incommunicado detention, and prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. The Government punished some security force officials who were guilty of abuses; however, impunity remained a problem. Arbitrary arrests and

eventually provide a base upon which to establish a special forces capability to target the LRA leadership. That could reduce reliance on blunt conventional forces and free funding, troops and material to improve protective forces.[88]

The U.S. has also provided non-lethal equipment, such as high-tech surveillance gear and heat sensors. In return it receives public support for its war on terrorism and, under a longstanding agreement, the use of Entebbe airfield when needed.[89] This relationship has been criticised for causing Washington to overlook government faults, including in the conduct of the conflict in the North. However, ICG interviews with U.S. officials indicated a strong awareness of the realities. The close bilateral relationship potentially gives the U.S. unmatched ability to offer incentives and apply pressure. It should use that leverage to make a significant difference in Northern Uganda.

The ethnic composition of the army and its loyalty especially to Museveni present problems in any attempt to make it truly professional. Recruitment, for example, is often conducted outside the established constitutional requirement that it be a nation-wide exercise on a designated day. Museveni is the army's founder, and he often still recruits and controls it on the basis of patronage and loyalty to himself and NRM ideology. After winning the contested 2001 presidential election, he made this clear when he stated that the army is one of three legs on which the NRM rests.[90] Given the continued persecution of opposition politicians, such as the former presidential candidate Besigye, who question the army's competence and management, it is doubtful that the NRM is willing to let it become fully accountable to the parliament and subject to public scrutiny, at least not while it is

uncertain whether Museveni will seek another term as president in 2006.

3. Humanitarian action

Many of the humanitarian problems facing the population in the conflict areas result from displacement. Much can be alleviated by returning as many people to the countryside as possible once the security situation improves. Where return is not possible, the government needs to improve security and living conditions at the IDP camps. President Museveni reportedly reacted to a question relating to the recent LRA massacres at the Abia IDP camp by saying that if "conditions were unbearable they would have got out. They are not in prison".[91] If accurately reported, this is a clear example of the attitude that needs to be adjusted if the government and those most affected by the war are to gain confidence in each other.

Relocations are largely a result of both implicit and explicit army policies and actions that make it untenable for many to remain in their homes. Their return to the countryside requires reversing the tendency to move them into centralised locations that may make them more inviting targets for the LRA and exacerbate their economic and social problems. Explicitly, it means reversing the Security and Production Program (SPP). The government also needs to pay more attention to those who cannot return home. This involves more than protecting international NGOs such as the World Food Programme better. It must be seen providing relief to its own endangered citizens.

International support should be focussed not only on alleviating the immediate effects of the conflict but also on enabling political progress. Increased humanitarian aid to IDP camps is at the heart of USAID's Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI). If talks move forward, the U.S. is prepared to help resettle people from the camps to their home areas. The hope is that both sides could accept limited demilitarised zones so civilians could return to their fields, in a slowly expanding, de facto ceasefire. However, NUPI may rely too heavily on an inappropriate model from Sudan's Nuba Mountains. Army officers reject a comparison to the ceasefire there. They say the LRA is not comparable to the SPLA, which controls territory so that such measures as

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detention, including those of opposition politicians and their supporters, and prolonged pre-trial detention were problems."
[88] This might result either in efforts to make the LDUs more professional, which would reduce concerns as to their future role and influence, or, if the regular army were not required to pursue the LRA, in reduction of LDUs.
[89] Uganda was one of only four African countries to support the war in Iraq. The U.S. considers it, therefore, an important ally in the region.
[90] "The Movement Cannot Rig", *The New Vision*, 16 March 2001. The other two legs are the Local Councils (LCs) – the administrative bodies established by the NRM across the country – and the State House (the Presidential residence and office).

[91] *The Monitor*, 9 February 2004.

"corridors of tranquillity" are appropriate. The LRA, however, controls no territory, cannot move humanitarian aid and has never made an agreement that it has kept. They also cite great differences in geography.

Noting that food is presently delivered to the IDP camps, a European aid official asks, "what would corridors of tranquillity do besides possibly making the delivery a bit cheaper"? In fact, it would be naïve and dangerous – in response to a deal on corridors of tranquillity – to end military escorts with food deliveries. A Western military analyst also calls humanitarian corridors naive: "Kony could issue orders to subordinates not to ambush, but if they are hungry they will disregard these instructions. Morale and command/control are deteriorating within the LRA. However, safe havens might work: security guarantees and assistance could be provided to these areas while negotiations are ongoing".[92]

B. LONG-TERM RECONCILIATION

The Acholi must be made to feel a part of Ugandan society. The NRM simply has not succeeded in unifying the country. To rectify this will require specific political, economic and social initiatives aimed at building the North's connections with the central government while enhancing autonomy and localized decision-making. The World Bank's Social Action Fund should focus on supporting decentralisation by building the government's capacity to deliver services in the North, rather than creating a separate parallel funding mechanism for social goods. It needs to focus its support on the districts. A critical element of any long-term solution will be restoring the economic viability of the conflict- ridden areas.

Acholi politicians are beginning to perceive the full measure of the LRA's unacceptability, although many also believe that the government is simply taking advantage of the U.S. to get more aid and sympathy. However, some of the Acholi diaspora remains pro-LRA, seeing the insurgency as a tool with which to undermine Museveni. Numerous Northern political and civil society actors have tried to assert a more coherent political and economic agenda for the region that would take advantage of

any policy initiatives that might emerge in response to the LRA. In general, such an agenda includes:

❑ post war reconstruction assistance – infrastructure, capacity building for institutions, support for agricultural production and trade, promotion of private enterprise;

❑ affirmative action: scholarships, employment opportunities;

❑ decentralisation, as the most effective way to transfer resources and decision-making to the North;

❑ social reform, prioritising schools, clinics, housing (Kony has burned down many villages), social services, and drugs for HIV/AIDS patients;

❑ settlement and reintegration of IDPs, requiring agricultural inputs, micro-enterprise opportunities, and construction-related employment;

❑ psychological and social support for LRA combatants, abductees and traumatised communities; and

❑ civil society support.

There is a wide diversity in the "Acholi view", however.[93] Many religious, political, civil society, and traditional leaders represent only a portion of their people's interests and lack the strategic reach to deal with the full scope of problems that need to be solved. This division in their leadership will only assist maintenance of the status quo. It is very much in the interest of the Acholi, therefore, to develop mechanisms with which to develop and convey a comprehensive and authoritative presentation of their needs and demands. It is also in the interest of Museveni and the NRM to promote the emergence of effective and credible Acholi leaders who can act as interlocutors for Acholi concerns and as a conduit to assist in solving the LRA conflict and the wider question of the North-South divide.

After eighteen years of war, it is clear that the NRM cannot solve the problems alone. For this, it must work with the Acholi. This means listening to and understanding views that

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[92] ICG interviews, Kampala, December 2003.

[93] This opinion was commonly expressed in ICG interviews with Western diplomats.

Museveni and the NRM do not necessarily agree with – a tendency that is often not apparent. In the long term, and after ending the LRA threat, there will need to be a mechanism similar to a national truth and reconciliation commission despite potential problems in differing notions of justice that are apparent to a degree in the current amnesty program. Traditional Acholi notions of forgiveness and reconciliation may not necessarily correspond to the standards of national and/or international law. However, a process of national reconciliation cannot be dictated by one party's view as to appropriate mechanisms for forgiveness and punishment.

In addition to issues directly related to the conflict, general issues of democratic development within Uganda are important for achieving long-term solutions. Multi-party democracy that is not subject to the control of any particular segment of society is a sound basis for both reconciliation and unity.

C. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

1. The Sudan factor

A peace agreement in Sudan, even if achieved, will not produce an immediate benefit in Northern Uganda. The LRA remains one of Khartoum's proxy militias. The strategic functions it has carried out for its patron have been the defence of Juba and the effort to pin down the Ugandan army so it is less able to support the SPLA. Regardless of a treaty, the SPLA will not physically control the entire south of Sudan, although it would become more difficult for the LRA to operate. Supply lines are vital. If Khartoum were to break with the past and end all support to Southern proxy militias, the LRA's days would be numbered but it is likely that some in Sudan's government will want to keep elements of the more effective militias functional as a hedge against the SPLA as well as the Ugandan army.

If supplies are kept up, the LRA can remain a potent force for destabilisation. There is a danger that pro-Khartoum Southern Sudanese militias such as the Southern Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) would continue to work with it. The LRA could maintain alliances with anti-SPLA groups in Southern Sudan and help undermine the implementation of the peace agreement in that

country as well as continue attacks in Northern Uganda. Intra-South negotiations would be critical and real power sharing within Southern Sudan a vital conflict prevention measure to reduce the possibility of disaffected elements seeking relationships with the Ugandan insurgency.

The biggest fear among senior Ugandan army officers is that peace between the SPLA and the Khartoum government could lead to a South-South conflict between the SPLA and groups that oppose it in its home region. The likelihood is low, but if the conflict does break out, it would harm efforts to counter the LRA. Kony's staying power over the years has been maximized by support from both Khartoum and his anti-SPLA Southern Sudanese allies. There is a widespread belief in the Ugandan government that if the U.S. leans on Khartoum, it in turn has the leverage over Kony to bring him to the negotiating table. It would be worthwhile at least to try to deploy those Sudanese politicians who have a long history with the LRA leader to make the effort.

The merger between the SPLA and the Equatoria Defence Force (EDF) announced on 5 March 2004, and their recent joint, if limited, military operations in Southern Sudan against the LRA are meaningful developments for Kony's prospects in that country. The EDF was responsible for initially bringing the LRA to Sudan in the mid-1990's and facilitated its contacts with the Khartoum government.[94] It continued to act as its link to the Sudanese authorities, provided safe passage and acted at times as a conduit for supplies.

The contacts between the EDF and the SPLA began in late 2002, following the Sudan government's recapture of the strategic town of Torit, which the EDF had played an important part in enabling.[95] Those contacts developed in part because the EDF resented its exclusion from the IGAD peace process, which made good progress through much of 2003. A decision was taken at a December 2003 meeting to move toward merger[96] though the EDF wanted several months in which to remove its people to SPLA-controlled areas in Eastern Equatoria before making the news public. An informal ceasefire has existed between the two

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[94] ICG interview with EDF Commanders in Khartoum, 1 October 2003.
[95] ICG interview, 6 March 2004.
[96] ICG interview, 13 March 2004.

groups since January 2004, at which time the EDF also stopped supporting the LRA. In late February, a week before announcement of the merger and after the LRA raided some 3,000 cattle from EDF-controlled areas, the SPLA and EDF began joint actions against the Ugandan group.[97]

The effect of the merger on the LRA's presence in Southern Sudan is likely to be significant, but not crippling. Most damaging will be the loss of safe passage south of Juba and Torit. However, a senior SPLA commander acknowledged that "the LRA will not suddenly become a priority for the SPLA".[98] Another senior SPLA commander said, "our real priority remains the government of Sudan, not their militias. The only way to stop the LRA is to stop the source and get the GoS [government of Sudan] out of Juba and Torit".[99]

Sudanese President al-Bashir's recent public reference to Kony and the LRA as terrorists is unlikely to be more than rhetoric.[100] But his use of that terminology and Sudan's renewal through May 2004 of the agreement permitting Uganda's army to pursue the LRA across the border suggest Khartoum is becoming increasingly sensitive to the costs involved in association with the LRA.

2.   The U.S. initiative

The international community has been central to the conflict in Northern Uganda. As has been noted, the Museveni government receives approximately half its budget from donors, which requires it at least to give a careful hearing to advice. It has a good record in a number of areas, such as AIDS prevention. Such successes dispose the international community positively towards Uganda. However, the conflict in the North undoes much of this good will and is causing many donors, particularly those giving budgetary support, to question the effectiveness of their aid.

Any donor pressure on the sensitive issue of the conflict in the North has to recognise that the Museveni government is primarily responsible for solving that problem. Nevertheless, donors have a legitimate interest in querying the use of their

money, an interest that in recent years has caused them, for example, both to place restrictions on their military aid after the rapacious Ugandan incursion into the Congo and to seek to cap military expenditures as a percentage of GDP.

International calls for the government to abandon its military strategy and pursue only a negotiated settlement, while well intentioned and understandable from a humanitarian perspective, are misplaced.[101] While it is probably true that there can be no purely military solution, neither donors nor the government have the means to induce the LRA to negotiate. The idea that a single solution, whether military, negotiated or humanitarian, can in itself solve the conflict and the problems of Northern Uganda, runs counter to complex reality.

The conflict in Northern Uganda, although predominantly an internal affair, has not escaped the influence of the U.S. war on terrorism. Museveni has been one of the staunchest supporters in Africa of U.S. policy, in part no doubt because he desires Washington's backing against the LRA and its Sudanese supporters. It is natural for him to try to argue for links between Kony and al-Qaeda, via Khartoum, as hard as he can. The basis for U.S. help to him should be the desirability of peace in Uganda and in Southern Sudan, however, not an inaccurate characterisation of the LRA.

The U.S. should be prepared to use its influence. Its credibility with both the Ugandan and Sudanese governments makes it the best positioned power to bring those parties together. It has numerous lines into the LRA, while both John Garang, the SPLA leader, and the Khartoum government have reportedly asked how they can be helpful in this regard. The first efforts to engage with the LRA have not been successful but U.S. diplomats say they have not ruled any approach out, and a meeting with Kony would be a possibility. Uganda is tolerant of the USAID NUPI initiative but is not prepared to do anything that would be considered active support. "The idea of talking to Kony is welcome, even though we know it is impossible", said a senior government official, who added: "Kony lives like a king with 32 wives and 60

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[97] ICG interviews, March 2004.
[98] ICG interview, 13 March 2004.
[99] ICG interview, 6 March 2004.
[100] "Bashir declares Kony a terrorist", *New Vision*, 5 March 2004.

[101] For instance, Agnes van Ardenne the Netherlands minister for development co-operation, suggested during a visit to Uganda in October 2003 that "we should bring President Museveni and Kony to a negotiating table", IRINNEWS.Org, 7 November 2003.

children; he has surface to air missiles; he is better armed than the majority of African armies; what can we offer him that can lure him out of the bush"?[102]

Much rumour and misinformation circulates about the extent of U.S. assistance to the Ugandan army and about the details of NUPI. Key U.S. officials see NUPI as an opportunity to build on anticipated success in the Sudanese peace talks, since the LRA and the Ugandan government reportedly have indicated privately that they could talk with each other. Nevertheless, since no meetings have been held and none are scheduled, there is no reason to hold out high expectations. Indeed, according to a humanitarian aid official, "there is too much trumpet blowing in Washington about NUPI. They are talking about creating humanitarian corridors between Gulu and Kitgum. It is pure fantasy".[103]

The U.S. has sent a letter to the LRA asking for a meeting between it, the Museveni government and a USAID representative to talk about humanitarian aid because of the growing access problem presented by attacks on assistance convoys. It asked for a written reply through the Sudanese government. The SPLA indicated that it would provide security so the LRA could get to such a meeting, and Khartoum said it would provide security at the negotiating venue. If humanitarian aid agreements could be reached and implemented, then the parties could talk further. The letter was delivered on 17 September 2003 through the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum. The U.S. heard nothing until a message came back from one of the interlocutors asking about security for Kony at the talks. A response through another interlocutor demanded food for the LRA as a precondition for a meeting. The U.S. is uncertain about whether either of these responses was from Kony, and is unwilling to put anything on the table (e.g., food) as a precondition for talks.[104]

European governments generally are suspicious of these efforts. They feel cut out of NUPI and disagree with Washington's decision to resume military aid to the Ugandan army. They worry that the diplomatic and military aspects of U.S. policy are not coordinated and have different objectives. They favour talking over fighting, although they

acknowledge the failure of past efforts with Kony. In ICG's many interviews, European governments (and NGOs generally) expressed a number of specific concerns and questions:

- Will the LRA participate in a dialogue facilitated by the U.S. while the latter is arming Kampala's military and has designated it as a terrorist organisation?

- What are Museveni's motivations? Will he just pretend to talk in a doomed initiative in order to justify a more robust military response?

- Is U.S. military aid too blunt an instrument for enhancing the army's performance? There is a pressing need to identify the kind of aid that improves the army rather than simply increasing the killing power of a badly organised force that often hits the wrong people.

- Why is Acholi civil society, which could help the U.S. interpret the issues, not involved in the initiative?

- Why is the U.S. going it alone? There is not much information sharing and joint strategising with other governments or the donors group. There would be more strength in a multilateral initiative built around consensus.

The U.S. could allay most of these concerns by consulting more with other governments, particularly those who are closely engaged in Uganda. Since international mechanisms would be required to support and sustain a negotiation process and then deliver the economic, humanitarian and security support required after any agreement, it would seem reasonable to advance these from the beginning.

Another theme that has commonly arisen in ICG interviews, especially with Acholi civil society organisations, involves the desire for international intervention in the form of observers and/or peacekeepers. However, this is an expectation that is unlikely to be met, at least in the near term. An observer mission would not be undertaken by the international community (including the African Union) or be feasible without the agreement of the Ugandan government. The notion of peacekeepers in the present environment is even less likely.

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[102] ICG interview, Kampala, December 2003.
[103] Ibid.
[104] ICG interviews, Kampala, November 2003.
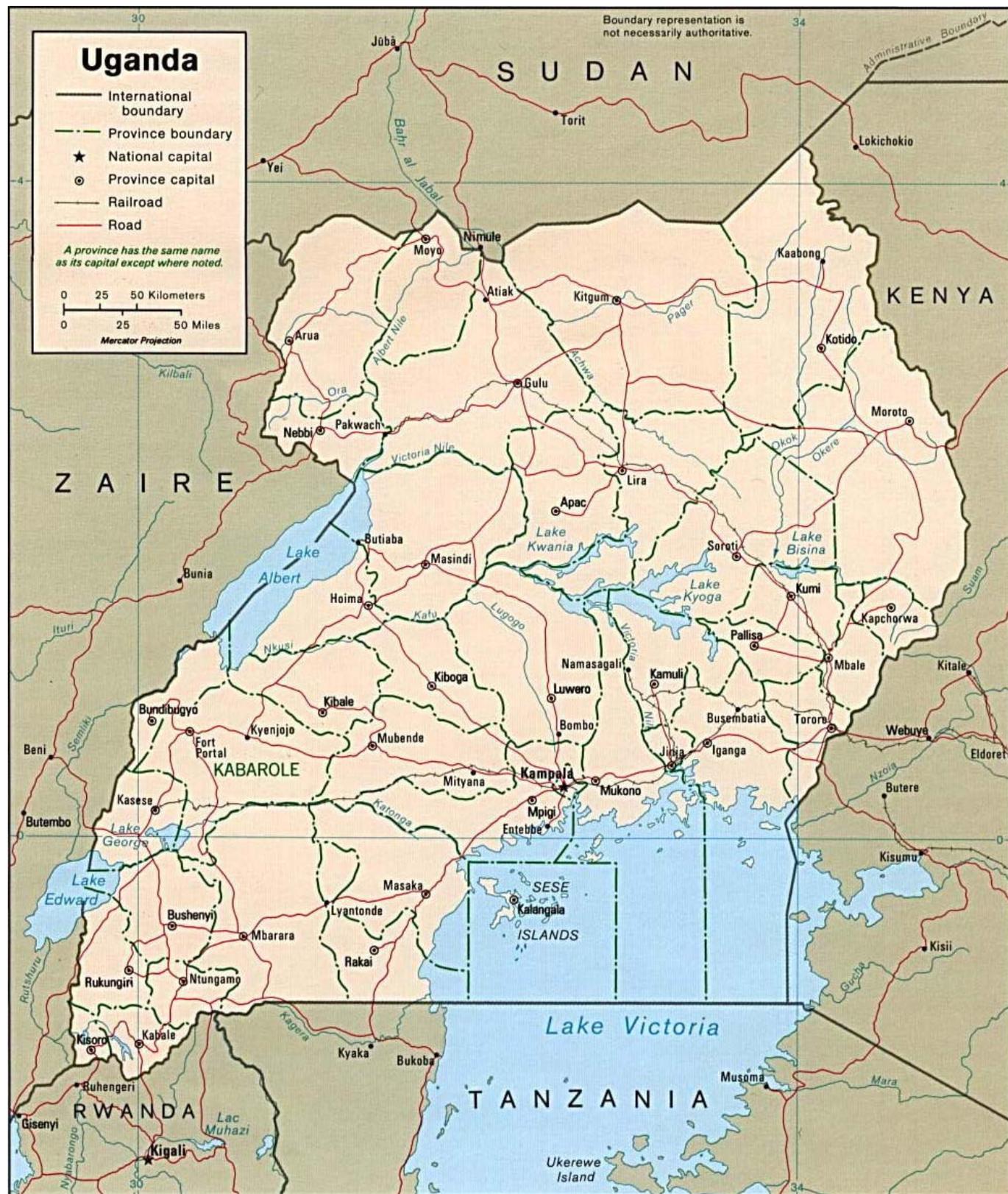
V. CONCLUSION

The LRA insurgency is a significant challenge for the Ugandan government and people. Legacies of the colonial and post colonial periods are much a part of this conflict, which has lasted 18 years. The LRA, while purporting to represent the grievances of the Acholi, is carrying out a campaign of terror, motivated by a mix of spiritualism and survival that is utterly at odds with its stated aims. Nevertheless, the NRM government has failed both to defeat it and to bridge the gulf that divides Kampala from the Acholi population, without which it will not be possible to achieve a true peace in and with the North. President Museveni's own legacy and that of his movement will be judged by their ability to solve the immediate and long term problems associated with the conflict. They have primarily pursued a strategy to defeat the LRA militarily but lack the ability to do so, primarily due to the weakness of the army.

To solve the conflict, the government, supported by the international community, needs to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that encompasses security, political and humanitarian action. It must reform and reorient the army, develop a clear path for negotiating with those insurgents who wish to stop fighting, and advance the country's transition to greater democracy. It must also work immediately with international and Ugandan partners to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the approximately 1.5 million persons who have been displaced by the conflict.

Nairobi/Brussels, 14 April 2004

APPENDIX A

MAP OF UGANDA

APPENDIX B

TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN UGANDA[105]

Dateline	UPDA	HSMF	LRA	NRA-Army
January 1986				NRA topples Okello government.
May 1986				Fighting in the North between NRA and fleeing UNLA troops; Gulu and Kitgum declared war zones.
August, 1986	Former soldiers of the UNLA attack Bibia in Gulu and 30 are killed by the NRA. First UPDA incursions from Sudan.	Alice Auma, a little known medium in Kitgum, claims the spirit Lakwena ordered her to stop healing and raise HSMF to wage war against evil in Acholi.		NRA 35th battalion composed of FEDEMU fighters massacres civilians in Namukora, in response to UPDA attack.
October 1986		HSMF attack Gulu and are defeated.		
November 1986	Alice takes over 150 troops from UPDA and successfully attacks NRA at Corner Kilak (Kitgum).			
December 1986		Attack against NRA in Pajule, then Lira, Soroti.		
February 1987			Kony joins UPDA as "spiritual mobiliser" in Major Benjamin Apia's black battalion. Kony and his followers seize UPDA division commanded by Okello Okeno; more UPDA soldiers later join Kony from 80th brigade.	
March 1987				First protected camps for civilians created in Gulu.
June 1987				Government declares amnesty for rebels willing to surrender.
July 1987/September 1987		"Operation Coy" to flush out UPDA.		
November 1987		HSMF defeated near Jinja. Alice arrested in Kenya for illegal entry on 30 December.	Kony attacks UPDA HQ near Pawel Owor.	
January 1988		Alice's father (Severino	Kony attacks 115th	

[105] Adapted from van Acker op.cit., Table 1, p. 48.

Dateline	UPDA	HSMF	LRA	NRA-Army
		Lukoya) attempts to continue HSMF in Kitgum.	brigade of UPDA and integrates it into his force	
23 March 1988	Agree to ceasefire and sign formal peace agreement with NRA.		Lukoya joins Kony, as well as Lukonyomoi of United Uganda Godly Movement (UUGM).	Sign peace agreement with UPDA.
May 1988	Peace talks with NRA led by Salim Saleh in Gulu.		Overall commander of UPDA, Odong Latek, joins Kony with 39 soldiers.	President Museveni extends amnesty to all armed groups.
June 1988	Peace treaty between UPDA and NRA. Over 2000 UPDA join NRA			Peace treaty with UPDA. Also start of major operations by NRA against remaining rebels.
February 1989				Museveni declares three-month moratorium on military operations near Gulu; after failure, NRA intensifies assaults and moves people back into camps.
April 1991				Launches a major four-month "Operation North" led by Minister of State for Defence David Tinyefuza to end insurgency.
July 1991			Major revenge killings and atrocities against citizens.	
January 1994			Peace talks started, led by Betty Bigombe; talks break down after President issues ultimatum for conclusion in seven days.	
1994			Sudanese support for Kony; mass abductions of children start.	
February 1996			LRA offensive in Gulu.	
June-December 1996			Kony spreads the message that if Paul Semwogerere of DP becomes president, he will lay down arms.	Presidential and Parliamentary elections; Museveni wins but receives little support in Acholi areas. Acholi living in the diaspora convene "Kacoke Madit", a series of London meetings to seek a solution for

Dateline	UPDA	HSMF	LRA	NRA-Army
				the conflict.
January–December 1997			Kony starts a series of heavy attacks on Kitgum population; into 1999; many atrocities by LRA against Acholi.	Parliament recommends escalation of military efforts to end war. Saint Egidio host meeting of LRA and government in Rome.
March-June 1998	.		The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative presents a memorandum for peace to Museveni and hold Bedo Piny, a three-day consultative meeting to focus on ending the war	
September 1998				Amnesty Act is published in Uganda Government Gazette.
December 1999				Signing of Nairobi Peace Agreement between Uganda and Sudan.
June 2001			Local peace talks in Gulu under auspices of District Reconciliation and Peace Team (which end in failure).	
April 2002				Army launches "Operation Iron Fist" against LRA in Sudanese territory after agreement with Khartoum; this shatters a two-year period of relative quiet.
2003			Unilateral ceasefire by LRA produces limited government ceasefire; nomination of presidential peace team and unsuccessful attempts to start negotiations; large-scale violations of ceasefire; expansion of conflict to Teso and West Nile. LRA moves into Soroti, Katakwi and Lira. The Arrow Group and Amuka group formed in Teso and Lango to fight LRA. Top LRA commanders Charles Tabuley, Tolbert Nyeko and Caesar Acellam killed.	
Jan 2004 Onwards			Museveni asks International Criminal Court to investigate LRA abuses. ICC prosecutor appears willing to explore this. Frontier Guards formed in Kitgum to fight LRA. UPDF offensive against LRA continues. Sudanese ambassador to Uganda, Sirajal-Din Hamid, says Khartoum prepared to help investigate Kony and have him arrested.	

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
APG	Acholi Parliamentary Group
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative
BMTT	British Military Training Team
DMZ	Demilitarised Zones
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EDF	Equatoria Defence Force
EU	European Union
EUCOM	United States European Command
FEDEMU	Federalist Democratic Movement of Uganda
FMF	Foreign Military Funding
FUNA	Former Uganda National Army
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
HSMF	Holy Spirit Mobile Forces
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPFC	Inter-Political Forces Coalition
LDU	Local Defence Unit
LRM/A	Lord's Resistance Movement/Army
NCC	National Consultative Council
NC	National Conference
NEC	National Executive Committee
NIF	National Islamic Front

NRM/A	National Resistance Movement/Army
NUPI	Northern Uganda Peace Initiative
OIF	Operation Iron Fist
PGB	Presidential Guard Brigade
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SSDF	Southern Sudan Defence Force
UFM/A	Uganda Freedom Movement/Army
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
UNLA/F	Uganda National Liberation Army / Front
UNRF	Uganda National Rescue Front
UPA	Uganda People's Army
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
UPDM/A	Uganda People's Democratic Army / Movement
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

APPENDIX D

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 100 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates thirteen field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogotá, Cairo, Freetown, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 40 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Nepal; in Europe, Albania, Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governmental departments and agencies currently provide funding: the Australian Agency for International Development, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Luxembourgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the New Zealand Agency for International Development, the Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan), the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Foundation and private sector donors include Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, the United States Institute of Peace and the Fundação Oriente.

April 2004

APPENDIX E

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[*] The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program to the Middle East & North Africa Program in January 2002.

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