

PURSUIING JOSEPH KONY

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More than seventy million people around the globe have turned their attention to Africa this month thanks to the tremendous power of social media and the popularity of celebrity causes. Together they have catapulted a 30-minute video about the vicious crimes against humanity committed by Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army to the front of our nation's consciousness.

The video is the centerpiece of the Kony 2012 campaign — a joint project of Invisible Children, Resolve and Enough designed to elevate, but not celebrate, Kony. With increased global awareness, they believe, Kony is more likely to be brought to justice quickly.

As chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, I share their goals of ending Joseph Kony's influence on this earth and protecting innocent civilians. I feel passionately that the more people who are watching central Africa, the more likely it will be that we come together as an international community to save lives in the face of conflict and mass atrocities.

Joseph Kony's unconscionable crimes against humanity are not in doubt. Under his leadership, the LRA murdered and kidnapped tens of thousands of people and advanced the use of rape as a weapon of war. Over two decades, they forced thousands of children to become child soldiers, displaced even more people from their homes and destabilized an entire region.

In 2010, Congress passed and the President signed



legislation authored by former Senator Russ Feingold to express support for increased U.S. efforts to help mitigate and eliminate the threat posed by the LRA. With the strong support of Congress, in October President Obama deployed 100 American military advisors to central Africa to train and assist regional militaries in their pursuit of Kony.

The U.S. has also taken steps to increase civilian protection, support the desertion of LRA combatants, and provide assistance to populations affected by the LRA.

I strongly support ongoing efforts to capture Joseph Kony and his top lieutenants, and am actively working in the Senate to build additional support for the U.S. mission in central Africa.

Answers to several of the most commonly asked questions about the situation follow.



WHO IS JOSEPH KONY? WHAT IS THE LRA?

The Lord's Resistance Army emerged in northern Uganda in 1987, the year after Yoweri Museveni, a rebel leader from southern Uganda, seized power as President. Alice Lakwena, an Acholi spiritual leader, emerged as a key figure among northern rebel factions seeking to overthrow the government and liberate northern Uganda. Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement was defeated by the Ugandan military in 1987, and Lakwena fled to Kenya. Joseph Kony, then in his early 20s, laid claim to Lakwena's legacy and founded the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) claiming to be a spiritual messenger.

Kony's original mission to overthrow the Ugandan government quickly evolved into one without a clear political or economic agenda. His operations appear to be motivated by little more than a desire to indiscriminately inflict violence on innocent people. The LRA has a cult-like dimension: Kony claims to receive commands from traditional spirits, and has, at times, cloaked his rhetoric in Christian and messianic terms.

For the past 25 years, Kony and the LRA have terrorized central Africa targeting civilians in a brutal campaign of abduction, murder, and forced displacement of innocent people. Under Kony's leadership, the LRA has committed mass killings, rapes, and mutilations of thousands of Ugandan, South Sudanese, Central African, and Congolese people. The LRA has forcibly-recruited thousands of children to be used as soldiers and sex slaves, abducting an estimated 66,000 children in Uganda alone. Since September 2008, the LRA is estimated to have killed over 2,400 people, abducting over 3,400, and displacing upwards of 460,000 innocent civilians in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In 2005, the International Criminal Court announced arrest warrants for Kony and senior members of the LRA for war crimes and crimes against humanity. These were the first indictments made by the International Criminal Court since its inception, demonstrating the strong international consensus that exists against Kony, the LRA, and the mass atrocities they have committed against thousands of innocent people.

HOW BIG IS THE LRA NOW?

Due in large part because of actions by the U.S. and regional militaries, the LRA's numbers have sharply declined in recent years, from tens of thousands of fighters ten years ago, to a reported several hundred today. They travel on foot in small bands equipped with light arms and accompanied by hundreds of former abductees who are forced to act as porters, sex slaves, and junior fighters. While senior positions appear to remain in the hands of



SEN. CHRIS COONS:

“Under Joseph Kony’s leadership, the LRA has murdered and kidnapped tens of thousands of people and advanced the use of rape as a weapon of war. For more than two decades, they forced thousands of children to become child soldiers, displaced even more people from their homes and destabilized an entire region.”

Ugandan Acholis, the group's lower ranks are presumed to increasingly reflect other ethnic groups from affected areas of the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan. The level of command and control linking LRA leaders to each other and to the fighters they oversee is uncertain, and little is known about the ties that bind the network together.

WHAT HAS THE LRA'S IMPACT BEEN ON CHILDREN?

Since the early 1990s, the LRA leadership adopted a policy of forced recruitment, particularly of children. The LRA has forcibly recruited at least 66,000 children to be used as soldiers and sex slaves in northern Uganda alone, according to the World Bank. The LRA has committed all six violations identified by the United Nations Security Council and Secretary-General as grave violations against children in the context of war:

- Killing or maiming of children
- Recruitment or use of children as soldiers
- Sexual violence against children
- Attacks against schools or hospitals
- Denial of humanitarian access for children
- Abduction of children

Minors make up almost 90 percent of the LRA's soldiers. Some recruits are as young as eight years old and are inducted through raids on villages. Abducted girls and





boys are beaten into submission, are sometimes required to commit atrocities against others, including their own parents, and serve as combatants as well as cooks, porters, and spies. Many children have been killed and wounded during fighting, while others have been killed because they try to escape or due to their unwillingness to obey orders.

Sexual violence is a systematic part of the armed group's tactics, and includes rape, use of girls as sex slaves, and sexual exploitation. For the survivors of sexual violence, especially girls returning with babies, their families and communities often find it difficult to accept them.

The United Nations estimates that the LRA has forced over 1.6 million Ugandans – half of them children – to flee to squalid and overcrowded camps in order to escape wanton attacks and killings. As the LRA moves through other countries in central Africa, similar displacements of families and children are widespread.

WHERE ARE KONY AND THE LRA NOW?

The LRA has not been in Uganda since 2006. Most of the LRA combatants are currently in the eastern Central African Republic around the Zemongo Reserve and in Haut and Bas Uele in northern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as along the border areas of South Sudan, notably on the fringes of Western Equatoria and possibly Western Bahr El Ghazal.

The area of operation, highlighted on the map above, is roughly the size of the state of Oregon. Since 2009, the few hundred LRA combatants have traveled in several mobile units and made it difficult to trace their whereabouts.

WHAT IS THE U.S. DOING TO CATCH KONY?

For two decades, while the LRA operated in northern Uganda, the U.S. provided humanitarian assistance and support for community reconciliation and development initiatives aimed at supporting the social and economic recovery of the war-torn area. The U.S. has increased its engagement in recent years, as the LRA's regional presence has expanded. The current U.S. strategy to respond to the LRA includes humanitarian assistance for affected areas in central Africa; reconciliation, post-conflict recovery, and development initiatives in northern Uganda; and support for regional military efforts, most notably through the recent deployment of U.S. military advisors.

In May 2010, Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the *Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009*. The bill stated that it is the policy of the United States to work with regional governments toward a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict in northern Uganda and other affected areas, including by supporting multilateral efforts to provide civilian protection, and capture Kony and other LRA top commanders.

With this congressional authorization, President Obama deployed approximately 100 U.S. military advisors in October 2011 to provide assistance to regional forces that are working toward "the removal of Joseph Kony from the battlefield." According to the President's notification to Congress, these forces are providing information, advice, and assistance to regional military forces in Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, and the Democratic



Republic of Congo. The initial team deployed to Uganda on October 12, 2011, and all have since reportedly reached the field, including a second combat-equipped team and associated headquarters, communications, and logistics personnel. Although these military advisors are combat-equipped, the President was clear that “they will not themselves engage LRA forces unless necessary for self-defense” and “all appropriate precautions have been taken to ensure the safety of U.S. military personnel during their deployment.”

CAN THE U.S. DO MORE?

Since the passage of the *Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act* in May 2010, the Obama Administration has developed a strong strategy for combatting the LRA and finding Joseph Kony. Senator Coons strongly supports the administration's approach, but believes there is even more we can and should do. Senator Coons has authored a resolution in the Senate that welcomes the ongoing efforts of the Obama Administration to implement a comprehensive strategy to counter the LRA and calls on the U.S. to work with partner nations and the international community to continue to:

- Strengthen the capabilities of regional military forces deployed to protect civilians and pursue commanders of the LRA
- Enhance cooperation and cross-border coordination among regional governments
- Promote increased contributions from other donor nations for regional security efforts
- Support efforts to increase civilian protection and provide assistance to populations affected by the LRA

The resolution also calls on the Administration to utilize existing funds to:

- Enhance mobility, intelligence, and logistical capabilities for partner forces engaged in efforts to protect civilians and to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and his top commanders from the battlefield
- Expand physical access and telecommunications infrastructure to facilitate the timely flow of information and access for humanitarian and protection actors
- Provide increased opportunities for LRA commanders, fighters, abductees, and associated noncombatants to safely defect from the group

WHAT IS THE KONY 2012 CAMPAIGN?

“Kony 2012” is a public awareness campaign led by a group called Invisible Children with the stated goal of making Joseph Kony famous... not to celebrate him, but to raise support for his arrest and set a precedent for international justice. The campaign began with the release of a 29-minute video that became a YouTube sensation, and will reportedly continue over the next six weeks. The campaign will culminate in a day of action on April 20 when volunteers will blanket public areas with Kony 2012 posters and stickers.



The Invisible Children video and website urges people to contact 20 select celebrities and “culture-makers” (including Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, and Rush Limbaugh) and 12 select policy-makers (including Senator John Kerry and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon) and urge them to support the goals of the campaign.

WHAT CAN YOUNG AMERICANS DO TO HELP CAPTURE KONY?

The best way young Americans can help is to become informed. They should seek out information on Kony and the LRA from a variety of sources, and contact their elected leaders to let them know this issue is important to them. This can take the form of a petition, letters, or even a meeting with their elected officials telling them why you are concerned. It is important to stay engaged and engage those around you by sharing information. The voices of young people matter, and elected officials want to hear about their views on this and other issues.

Young people can also get involved by helping support non-governmental organizations that provide services for victims of LRA violence and provide humanitarian relief in LRA-affected areas of Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

