

## The African Union's Efforts Against the Lord's Resistance Army

In November 2011 the African Union, with support from the United Nations, United States, and European Union, launched a comprehensive approach to combat the notorious rebel group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The AU Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA (RCI-LRA) was authorized by the Peace and Security Council on 22 November and officially launched the following March in Juba. It is mandated to build the operational capacities of the countries affected by the LRA, to establish an environment conducive to the stabilization of the affected areas, and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The AU Special Envoy for the LRA issue, Francisco Caetano José Madeira, was appointed on 23 November 2011. He is tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the AU strategy against the LRA.

The RCI-LRA has three components. First, the Joint Coordination Mechanism is an ad hoc structure comprising the ministers of defense of the affected countries, chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. Headquartered in Bangui, the mechanism is responsible for political and strategic coordination. Second, the Regional Intervention Force, also known as the Regional Task Force, is the military component, tasked with capturing LRA combatants. At full deployment, it will comprise 5,000 soldiers drawn from the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and Uganda. It is headquartered in Yambio,

South Sudan, with three sector bases, in Dungu (DRC), Obo (CAR), and Nzara (South Sudan). Nearly 3,000 troops have been committed to date, though not all of these troops are operational due to logistical issues. Finally, the Joint Intelligence and Operations Center will undertake integrated planning and monitoring of the operations under the authority of the Regional Task Force. The center comprises a total of thirty officers seconded by the affected countries.<sup>1</sup>

The AU initiative is supported by international partners, in particular the United States, which sent 100 military advisers to Uganda in October 2011, and the European Union, which pledged 9 million euros in humanitarian assistance

to LRA victims in March 2012.<sup>2</sup> The AU's efforts are also a key focus of the UN regional strategy against the LRA, which is centered on the UN system but designed in close cooperation with the AU. The AU Special Envoy accompanied the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN Office in Central Africa in his travels to affected countries, and participated in coordinating the drafting of the UN strategy, completed in June 2012.

The RCI-LRA entered its operational phase in the summer of 2012, but it is unclear whether it will overcome its lack of funding and coordinated leadership amid a climate of tensions between the national armies it brings together.

### AU Special Envoy on the LRA

- |                                |                                          |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| • Authorization and Start Date | 22 November 2011 (PSC/PR/Comm. [CCXCIX]) |
| • Special Envoy                | Francisco Madeira (Mozambique)           |

### AU Task Force on the LRA

- |                                    |                                          |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| • Authorization Date               | 22 November 2011 (PSC/PR/Comm. [CCXCIX]) |
| • Start Date                       | 24 March 2012                            |
| • Force Commander                  | Colonel Dick Prit Olum (Uganda)          |
| • Strength as of 30 September 2012 | 30 personnel at headquarters             |

Notes: 1. AU Peace and Security Council, *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of the Implementation of Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM: (CCXXCIX) of the 299th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council on the Lord's Resistance Army* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2012).

2. Institute for Security Studies, "Peace and Security Council Report no. 34," 4 May 2012, <http://www.issafrica.org/pgcontent.php?UID=31476>.