

**“The Future of the LRA in Northern Uganda”**

The Great Lakes Policy Forum convened on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to discuss the LRA’s resumption of a full-scale terror campaign in northern Uganda as well as the recent, violent incursions into north-eastern DRC.

The situation in northern Uganda and along the nation’s border with DRC has continued to deteriorate following the failure of the Juba peace process this spring, and indiscriminate acts of violence, child abductions, property destruction and looting once again beleaguer a region long troubled by Joseph Kony and his self-proclaimed Christian guerilla troops. These renewed hostilities have caused hundreds of thousands of people to be displaced from their homes, and many humanitarian agencies have had to scale down their relief operations or withdraw from the region entirely due to the lack of security.

At the GLPF it was established that policy-makers interested in quelling the activities of the LRA and restoring peace to the region must recognize that DRC is not, in fact, a “post-conflict” environment; they must also acknowledge that the situations in northern Uganda and southern Sudan are closely intertwined. Their primary concerns ought to be the immediate protection of civilians and the provision of assistance to displaced people. An investment in active, in-region diplomacy would also greatly benefit the peace process, and forum participants expressed a common belief that the philosophy of the incumbent administration will lead it to allocate additional resources to this previously-neglected area. Of course, an effective counter-insurgency strategy for dealing with the LRA must also be devised.

Options might include the possibility of an armed intervention similar to Operation Artemis, the 2003 EU-led military mission to DRC that effectively restored stability to the provincial capital city of the Ituri province, Bunia. However, given the likelihood that such an intervention would lead to a protracted counter-insurgency campaign fought, for the most part, in remote jungles, this option has little to recommend it to European countries. There is also the possibility of using the threat of military force to compel a peaceful solution. In this scenario, Joseph Kony must be dealt with directly in order to avoid another signing mishap like the one that took place earlier this year. In addition, particular attention must be paid to ensuring Kony’s personal security and offering him incentives that would ensure his permanent withdrawal from the country. Yet, even if Kony could be induced to accept the terms of a third country asylum, for example, the possibility of someone taking his place always remains. Ultimately, the Ugandan government is responsible for addressing the social problems that have a history of generating widespread violence and discontent in northern Uganda. Ideally, the PRDP constitutes a powerful first step in that direction.

The PRDP, or Peace, Recovery and Development Program, is directed at empowering and restoring a northern Uganda enfeebled by more than 20 years of war. The PRDP aims to restore stability to the region by pursuing four separate but mutually reinforcing strategic objectives: 1) consolidation of state authority; 2) rebuilding and empowering communities; 3) revitalization of the economy; 4) peace building and reconciliation. These objectives are to be achieved through the implementation of fourteen priority programs, and the PRDP’s total cost is estimated at over

USD600 million over the course of 3 years. There was some disagreement among forum participants about whether the PRDP in its current state can accurately be described as much more than a “framework”. Questions were raised regarding the Ugandan government’s commitment to the program, given that welfare indices in the North continue to lag behind those of the rest of the country and that efforts at reconstruction appear to be progressing very slowly.