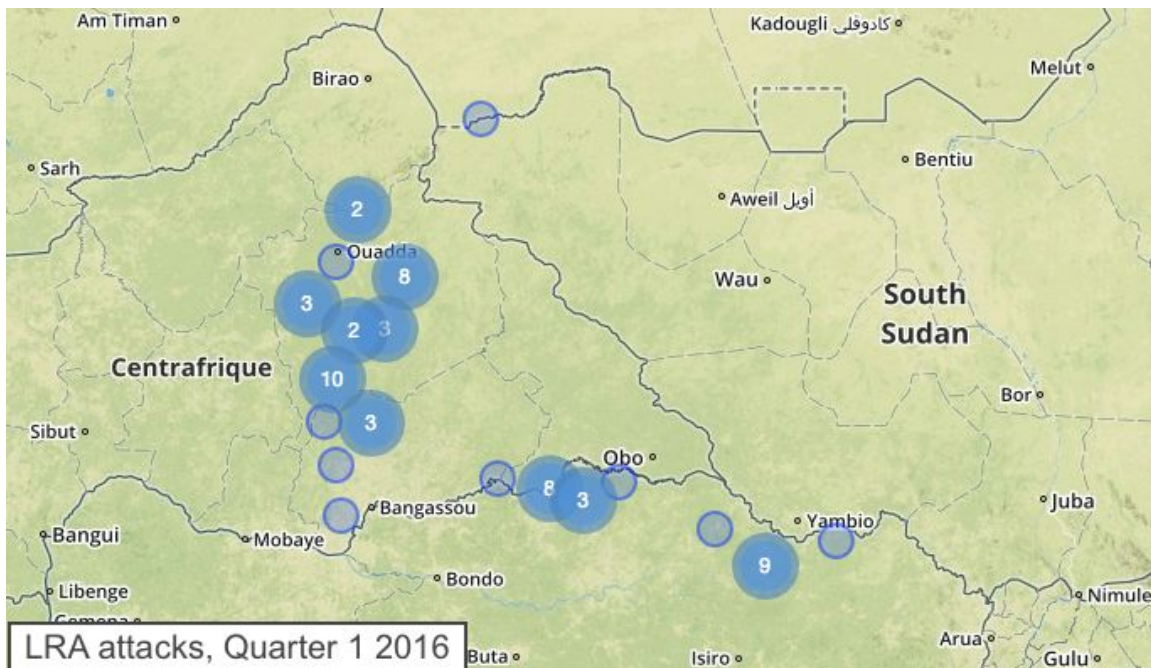


LRA Crisis Tracker Quarter 1 2016 Report



Overview

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was responsible for 296 civilian abductions during Quarter 1 2016 (Q1 2016), covering the months of January–March 2016. The 296 abductions, the most by the LRA in a single quarter since Quarter 3 2010, highlighted a significant surge in LRA violence. 14 long-term abductees escaped from the LRA in Q1 2016, including three adult male Ugandan fighters.

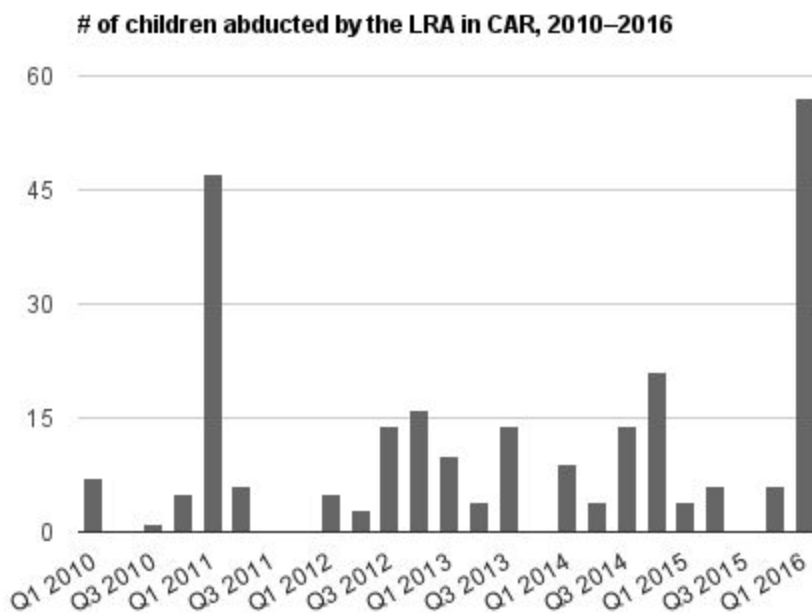


Senior LRA leaders reportedly order child abductions in eastern CAR

The majority of LRA abductions in Q1 2016 occurred in the Central African Republic (CAR), where the LRA abducted 252 individuals throughout Mbomou, Haut Mbomou and Haute Kotto prefectures. LRA abductions in eastern CAR peaked in the first half of Q1 2016, with 226 abductions from 1 January–15 February and only 26 abductions from 16 February–31 March. Several LRA groups were reportedly operational in eastern CAR in early 2016, including groups led by Onencan “Angola” Unita, Otto “Sam” Ladere, Aligatch, and Otim Larwedo. An LRA splinter group led by Achaye Doctor, which has been operating independently of Kony’s control

since late 2014, may have been responsible for several attacks near the border of CAR and DRC, including on the communities of Zemio, Tabane, and Tamboura.

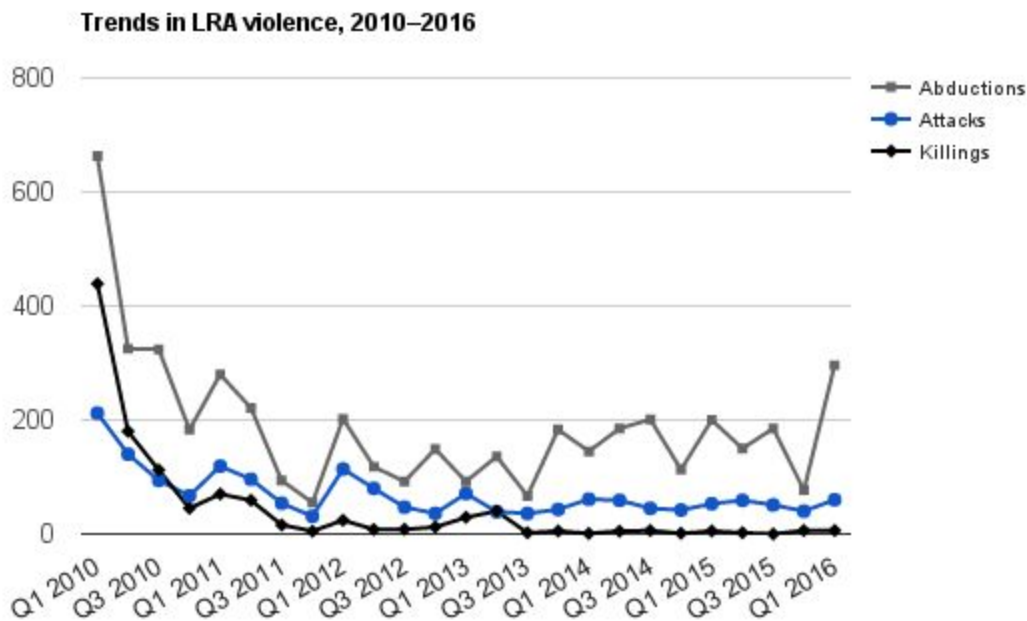
A majority of abductees were adults who escaped or were released within days of being abducted, meaning they were used as short-term porters of looted goods. However, the LRA abducted 57 Central African children in Q1, 36 of whom remain in captivity or are otherwise unaccounted for. Two adult male Ugandans who defected from the LRA on 22 March 2016 reported that in late 2015 senior LRA leaders ordered groups operating in eastern CAR to abduct young boys above the age of ten, which may help explain the rise in child abductions in Q1 2016. Senior LRA leaders also reportedly expressed plans to train the new recruits as fighters to bolster the LRA's fighting strength. Though the LRA is weaker than at any point since the early 1990s, groups conducted similar small-scale child abduction campaigns in 2014 and 2015.



Survivors reported that LRA attackers most often sought to collect food, while also frequently looting cash, mobile phones, gold, and diamonds. Recent LRA defectors from several different groups have confirmed these trends, reporting that gold, diamonds, and cash are usually delivered to Kony's group, which operates along the border of CAR, South Darfur, and the disputed Kafia Kingi enclave. Phones are used primarily for recreational purposes, including listening to music stored on small memory cards.

LRA groups looted also three HF radios between 19–21 January in Zabe, Bakouma, and Tamboura. LRA groups have looted HF radios infrequently in recent years, indicating that the concentration of three such incidents in one week was intentional. The attacks in which HF radios were looted were also more brazen in nature than typical LRA activity in recent years,

including the burning of 47 households in Zabe and targeting of the Catholic parish and harassment of expatriate nuns in Bakouma.



Decrease in LRA activity in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

DRC was relatively calm in comparison to CAR in Q1 2016. The LRA abducted 43 people there, the lowest quarterly figure since 2008 and far lower than the 168 LRA abductions recorded in DRC in Quarter 1 2015. LRA activity was clustered in two distinct areas: the Bangadi-Niangara-Ngilima triangle in Haut Uele province (nine attacks, 13 abductions) and northern Bas Uele province (six attacks, 30 abductions). In addition to LRA attacks, unidentified armed groups abducted 18 people in 16 attacks in LRA-affected areas of DRC in Q1 2016.

Since 15 March, two LRA attacks have been reported on communities along the Dungu-Duru road east of Garamba National Park and the adjacent Azande protected area. Both attacks were in the vicinity of Camp Kiswahili, a historic LRA camp that was occupied for several months in 2015 by an LRA group led by Aligatch that was tasked with poaching elephants. In past years, particularly in 2015, there has been a strong correlation between the presence of LRA groups poaching elephants in the park and protected areas and increases in looting attacks on surrounding communities.

Return of long-term LRA abductees

Of the 296 people abducted by the LRA in Quarter 1 2016, 200 escaped or were released within days of being abducted, usually meaning they were used as short-term porters of looted goods. In addition to short-term returnees, there were 14 long-term returnees from LRA, defined as people who spent six months or more in LRA captivity. Among these long-term returnees were three adult Ugandan males who escaped in CAR's Haute Kotto prefecture, including Okot Odek, a former bodyguard to Joseph Kony. In addition, eight Central African male teenagers who had

spent between nine months and three years in captivity escaped from the LRA, including two who escaped from the Achaye Doctor splinter group.

April Outlook

CAR: April and May have traditionally been months of reduced LRA attacks and abductions in eastern CAR. From 2011–2015, the LRA abducted an average of 11 civilians in the month of April, compared to the overall monthly average of 19 civilians abducted. Though the surge in LRA attacks in eastern CAR in January and early February may foreshadow higher-than-average activity in April, LRA groups may also have acquired enough supplies in those raids to sustain themselves with minimal additional looting in the coming months.

DRC: From 2011–2015, the LRA abducted an average of 31 people in the month of April, the fourth-highest ranking among the 12 months. However, lower than usual LRA activity in Q1 2016 may indicate that the number of LRA abductions in April 2016 will be lower than in previous years.



Programmatic Updates

Invisible Children continues to expand the Early Warning Network into new areas impacted by armed group violence. In Q1 2016, IC personnel collaborated with community partners to install an HF radio in the community of Bria, which has since been collecting information from across the Haute Kotto region.

FM broadcasting of community sensitization and LRA defection programming across DRC and CAR is ongoing at eight locations. Several of these locations, including new FM station in Sam Ouandja, were cited by Ugandan LRA defectors as influential in their escape.

Please contact Sean Poole - spool@invisiblechildren.com & Paul Ronan - paul@theresolve.org with any comments or questions.