



PERIOD COVERED: AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 31ST

ITURI WATCH

SEPTEMBER 04

For enquiries or comments, contact: DLCKivu@lycos.com at the AIP Bunia Field Office. Quartier Lumumba, Boulevard de la Libération No. 53, derrière la Tribune Municipale.
Tel. (+ 243) 9867 8490, 9861 3639.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Demobilisation and Community Reinsertion programme was launched on the 1st day of September, setting in motion a process that is meant to bring peace and reduce criminality in Ituri. However, the return to normalcy in Ituri will remain a long-term challenge to all the actors involved, both national and international. The conflict in Ituri has resulted in the total breakdown of the fabric of relations within and between communities. If peace is to return, the demobilisation of former combatants will need to be accompanied by the reconstruction of these intra and inter-community relations. The September 19th massacre at Lengabo was a painful reminder of this reality.

As much as the international community has committed huge funds to Ituri, much of it is destined to the physical dimension of peace building: rehabilitating infrastructure, disarming and reintegrating ex-combatants, strengthening and expanding the judicial coverage, etc. However, the psycho-social dimension and the reconstruction of the relationship between local communities has received inadequate attention. This breakdown of society is both the cause and effect of the human and physical suffering in Ituri. The International Community needs to show that it has the political will to address this root cause of the conflict and invest in long-term peace-building between different communities. **There is a window of opportunity for the international community to invest in sustainable conflict prevention rather than to wait until full-scale crisis and invest in conflict management.**

FROM THE FIELD

It is common knowledge in Ituri that UPC-L holds MONUC among its legitimate enemies and/or targets. .

To show this bad feeling against Monuc and to try to disrupt the DCR process, a Moroccan blue helmet was abducted on September 2, 04 and released five days later after enormous pressure on the leadership of this armed groups.

The onus of responsibility to restore order within the district will ultimately lie with the government of the DRC. To date the government has supported the creation of the Ituri Pacification Commission in March 2003 and more recently has appointed government representatives and deployed the first integrated battalion to Ituri. The TNG and the Ituri Brigade have created enormous expectations among the Iturians. The government must show that they are willing to give the necessary political, logistical, and financial resources to meet these expectations and start to restore security and confidence.

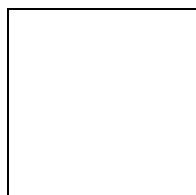
CONFLICT INDICATORS

Proximate Causes

- ▶ *Slow deployment of the FARDC in Itui and Desertion of some its members.*

Only a third of the brigade of the FARDC has arrived so far in Bunia. The 600 or so troops that are already in Bunia have not yet engaged any of the militias. According to a FARDC official, "They don't have the necessary human and logistical resources to confront the militias." However, the Iturians see this as a fear on the part of the FARDC to engage militiamen, working as hard as they can to avoid confrontation with armed groups, and letting armed militiamen continue to operate freely at night when they feel like. One *They have several hundred men, communications and arms; if they can't do anything to protect the population, then why are they here?"*¹

The negative perception of the FARDC was reinforced on September 20, when 2 soldiers of the FARDC were alleged to have deserted. Rumours were widespread, on one hand that these two soldiers had been bought out by one of the local armed groups with a view of acquiring some intelligence on the FARDC, and on the other that they had been kidnapped for their arms and their money. However, the official position from the head of the Congolese armed forces, Colonel Ekuba is that being Ituri natives, these two soldiers had simply decided to quit the army on their own, probably under their respective families' pressure; claiming even further that one of them has even returned his gun and uniform. If either one of these explanations or speculations is true, it shows that the new army is either susceptible to being bought out by local militias; or that they may lack the capability to defend themselves.



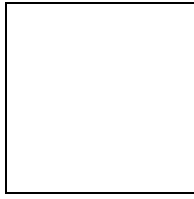
Conspicuous absence of the UPC-L at the official launch of the DCR process in Bunia and little real implication by other groups in the process.

The DCR programme was intended for the five armed groups that signed the Dar es Salaam accords in May 2003 (FAPC, FNI/FRPI, PUSIC, FPDC, UPC). However, late in 2003, the UPC split into two separate groups, one led by Thomas Lubanga (Upc-L) and the other led by Floribert Kisembo (UPC-K), former chief of staff of the UPC. The UPC-L is believed to be the most military capable as well as the most politically hard-line group in the process.

The UPC-L were absent at the official launch of the DCR programme in Ituri on September 1, 2004. This absence was meant to send a message of non-cooperation and acceptance of either the form or the content of the DCR. As worrying as this may appear, it is hoped that the concerned dignitaries present, from government and the international community all got the message loud and clear.

Triggers

¹ Interviews Bunia September, 2004

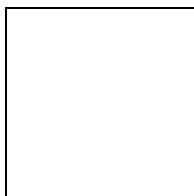


*nch Demobilisation and Community R
(DCR)Programme*

st; Mahagi transit site is the
ex-combatants As of September 25 , The of the other
sites in Kasenyi, Aveba, Kpandroma and Nizi had no registered x-combatants The
transit site Populaires pour la
émocratie au Congo (FPDC) and 3 from the Forces Armées du Peuple Congolais (FAPC)
Some of the main reasons for this slow start to the demobilisation process are:

- To date, there has not been a comprehensive sensitisation campaign to explain the DCR process to civilians and combatants across Ituri. Consequently, misconceptions and speculations about the DCR process are widespread.
- Leaders of the armed groups are waiting to be re-integrated into the national army. The government of Kinshasa has stated that leaders will be reintegrated, but there is still a wait for the presidential decree nominating them to their posts.
- Leaders of the armed groups have stated that they must be integrated into the national army before they are disarmed.
- There are currently no security guarantees for former combatants once they finish with the intended 5 day demobilisation programme. The majority of the former combatants in the Mahagi transit site have been there for over 2 weeks. Combatants will be hesitant to enter into the sites until they are clear about what awaits them once they leave the camps.
- Many of the cantonment sites of the military leaders are at a considerable distance from the demobilisation sites. The leader of the rebel Front des Nationalistes et Intégrationnistes, Floribert Ndjabu Ngabu, stated that the combatants had no transportation to get to the sites

Following interviews in Bunia, Mahagi, and Kasenyi it appears that many of the combatants and their host communities are unaware of what the DCR is all about.² This is potentially an explosive conflict situation. It should be noted that there are not, as planned in the DRC operational framework, any large scale community-based income-generating projects going on at present which would readily occupy the ex-combatants to be soon bulkily demobilised.



Fresh ethnic Killings in Ituri

On Sunday September 19, 04 Ngiti militias attacked an ethnic-Bira village, Lengabo, located at about 10 km east of Bunia. 14 people were killed in this attack and 91 houses torched. Reports gathered locally indicate that the immediate trigger of this attack was a retaliation of an earlier incident which took place the previous day in which a party of three Ngiti tribesmen (probably militias) were stopped at Lengabo by some Bira

² September 23rd-27th Field research

militiamen, who after harassing them and snatching their goods, killed one, seriously wounded another on the head. A third one slipped away and went to report the news to his tribesmen at home, in the village of Medu, about 10 km away.

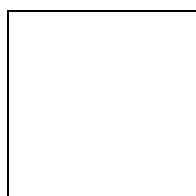
Pour memoire, the current Ituri crisis was sparked off in 1999 in Djugu territory as a retaliation to such provocation, and then sucked in whole communities. The ensuing battles spiralled out of control as each of the belligerents sought to acquire more fire power to compensate their respective losses. Following the massacre, over 300 suspects were questioned in Medu and on September 25th, ten suspects were arrested and transferred to the Bunia remand prison by the judicial authorities. This arrest was a joint operation between Monuc and the State prosecutor's office in Bunia.³

PEACE INDICATORS

Processes

Effective Deployment of the MONUC to Aru

Since September 16, 2004 a total of 150 Monuc troops from the Bangladeshi contingent have been permanently deployed to Aru. This deployment is very significant especially now that the DCR is under way. Aru has historically been the political and military stronghold of the warlord Jerome Kakwavu of the FAPC until last month when a government-appointed Aru Administrator took office. The deployment of Monuc troops will definitely give to this government-appointed Administrator more confidence in his efforts to restore state authority in this part of Ituri. The next step should be the deployment of the FARDC and the establishment of a Tribunal de Paix in Aru.



Judiciary

On Tuesday 14th of September 04, 18 inmates from the Bunia Central prison were transferred to Kinshasa by the Ituri judicial authorities. Some had already been judged in Bunia and were going to serve the jail terms in Kinshasa, while others were going to face prosecution there. This is a sign of the Kinshasa's increased interest in Ituri situation as well as the commendable effort by the judicial authorities to show other criminals in Ituri that the reign of impunity will no longer be tolerated. These inmates could have well been sent to Kisangani, the provincial capital of Province Oriental, but sending them to Kinshasa has a significant political undertone.

The mass interrogation and arrest conducted in the village of Medu, in collaboration with the MONUC (see above) is a powerful deterrent to the possible retaliatory attacks that were likely to follow the latest ethnic massacre in Lengabo. As was said by the President of High Court of Bunia: "Justice is a fundamental element of reconciliation between and

³ Radio Okapi, Friday September 24

within communities. *Without justice there can be no peace.*"¹⁰

STAKEHOLDERS

THE KINSHASA GOVERNMENT

There are official talks of appointing five of the Ituri militia commanders to higher military ranks within the FARDC as a strategy to sway their respective armed groups to massively and wilfully accept disarming and getting demobilised. One of the most important aspects of any demobilisation program is to first "demobilise the leaders."¹³ However, this could be proved to be a very difficult task as some of these leaders have very little control or influence on their "soldiers". These are not formally structured groups with a clear line of command and control, observing strict military discipline. Thorough care should be taken in appointing these individuals to avoid causing more harm than good. It is likely that if/when the leaders are assigned a post in the FARDC, some of their "soldiers" could stop identifying with their appointed commanders, and degenerate into headless uncontrolled small armed groups on rampage across Ituri.

Our hesitation to support the nomination of militia leaders to posts in the army is based on the fact that in order for this to work there would have to be sufficient good will on the part of both the leaders and their entire armed groups. To date, the government and Monuc have used a predominantly carrot approach to deal with the Ituri armed groups. By doing so, both the government and the Monuc have conferred an unnecessary importance onto these highly disorganised armed groups who have terrorised the population over the last four years. This has yielded limited results in various respects.¹⁴

Voluntary disarmament can only work if it is attached to a strict time line at which point it will be replaced by forcible disarmament. This would have to be done by the FARDC in collaboration with the MONUC. Most of the youth making up these armed groups have never gone through any military training and would not be able to resist a well organised, forcible disarmament. The continuing problem of the Interhamwe in the Kivus – who simply do not want to disarm – should serve as an important "lessons learnt" on the limits of a campaign of voluntary disarmament.

THE ITURI ARMED GROUPS

Signing the Act of Commitment to the DCR process in Kinshasa last May was lesser a test to the Ituri armed groups than the actual demobilisation of their forces. Armed groups have continued to violate the agreement, collect taxes, appoint officials to run local government offices, control mining zones, etc.

The real moment of truth is now here for all these armed groups: Demobilisation of their elements and an end to the existence of these groups as structured entities. However, experiences from other demobilisation processes as well as persistent suspicions and mistrust among military groups and incoherent policies of the national government means that this is still far from reality. Rather than true demobilisation, we are likely to see a combination of the following developments:

1. Genuine and valuable combatants from each of the group will not appear on the

¹⁰ Interview Bunia September 28th, 2004.

¹³ Interview World bank, MDRP representative. September 2003

¹⁴ Although it should be noted that MONUC has been much more willing to use the "stick" since the arrival of the Ituri Brigade in August 2003.

lists they will hand in for demobilisation. As was noted on the national level, groups will continue to keep a military option and demobilise “disposable” elements.

2. As a cosmetic act, only women, some children, and those physically unfit will come with a few weapons and ammunitions as such a case had already been reported in Mahagi on the first day of the kick-off of actual demobilisation process among the FPDC combatants.
3. The high military command of each of the armed groups will not disband until such a time that they are given clear guarantees by government for their integration into the FARDC with their self-proclaimed grades, and get assurance that their “enemy communities” are no longer a serious threat in terms of military might.

MONUC

The Leganbo massacre offered once again a reason to the locals to question the willingness of a chapter-seven mandate Monuc in Ituri to act decisively when civilians are in danger of death. The spokesperson of the Bira community posed the question, in an interview on a local radio, Candip, how come Lengabo is just 2 km away from a Monuc military post and yet the attackers operated (firing with machine guns and torching houses) for a whole one hour, from 1 to 2 AM and safely withdrew without Monuc intervening?

Lack of intelligence gathering capacities severely inhibits the efficiency of MONUC. Difficulties in communicating in French or Swahili remains a critical problem in both intelligence gathering and communication with the local population. For the population, MONUC appears very aloof and there is a huge disconnect between decisions taken at Bunia, Kinshasa, Geneva or NY, and the reality of the local populations.

CONCLUSION

As explained above, some hiccups have already appeared in the implementation of the much publicized DCR, namely the delays in the submission of lists of combatants by armed groups as planned, the completion of the transit sites which have to host briefly the militias before they are sent into civilian life, the apparent non-existing development projects in host communities which were supposed to act as an alternative for civilian life to militia groups, etc.

These difficulties at the beginning of the DCR programme are worrying if the right tools are not available to address them. Flexible action plans by all stakeholders need to be used in order to allow room from quick adjustments in ensuring the success of this critical process. Stakeholders like the UNDP whose aim is to accompany the CONADER and help provide the demobilized youth with income generating opportunities may need to quickly revisit its funding policies and procedures in light of the current situation.

Other alternatives to dealing with criminals of war should be sought, instead of only

rewarding them with positions in order to win their cooperation. Both the government and the international community should not legitimize such a practice in a country like the DRC, where the armed groups in Ituri have learned that they “did not fight enough to get the posts they wanted.” (Ituri update, June) While concessions need to be made in any peace process, there is a limit to how much one can sacrifice impunity for amnesty to deter others from taking up arms to pursue their objectives.

As for the Lengabo killings, AIP had highlighted in its April monthly report, brewing tension among the ethnic Biras. *The request by Bira community leaders for external mediation and conflict resolution activities to diffuse tensions was unable to find funding.* ²¹ A preventive strategy against conflict through early warning and early response is AIP’s core value and operational strategy; as this is not only cheap to implement (through training seminars, local dialogue forums, and peace-building initiatives – see our April report) but also has the potential to prevent unnecessary death as has occurred in Lengabo.

As has been mentioned in previous reports, it is time to invest not only in the *hardware of peace-building, but in the software as well*. The fabric of society has been ripped apart by over four years of increasingly violent conflict. Conflict transformation and peaceful coexistence programmes should be given as much priority because they would ably act as a crucial mechanism to preserve all the current physical efforts and sacrifices to restore normalcy in Ituri. Only this would show that the international community is committed to investing in conflict prevention, and not simply conflict management.

Finally, as this month’s report highlights, the Lengabo killings call for the following mixture of observations and suggestions:

1. The Monuc rapid intervention capacity has once again proven wanting. Is it due to the lack of will by the military who feel they need not put their lives on the line for what they perceive as none of their business? Some targeted research may be needed to dig out what lies behind this appalling laxity.
2. Monuc’s intelligence gathering is terribly weak and largely inappropriate in a complex ethnic-based conflict like Ituri. Reports from the people from Lengabo suggest that this attack was announced days before it took place. How come no preventive measures were taken by Monuc? Obviously they were not even aware of the feuding. And yet, a dissuasive deployment of Monuc troops in and around Lengabo would have averted this largest ethnically motivated killing in Ituri since 2003, instead of always deploying troops reactively after the damage is already done.
3. What exactly are the few FARDC troops already in Bunia doing if such things have to continue happening? The strength of an army can’t realistically be in the numbers of its troops on the ground but rather on their operational efficiency. The population is quickly starting to lose its confidence in these soldiers. It is absurd to plan using the FARDC only when the deployment of the entire brigade would be completed while on the ground the situation is wanting.
4. If Monuc and the FARDC had started working closely together, even exclusively in terms of intelligence gathering, the FARDC could have helped, by virtue of their being Congolese and therefore capable of interacting easily with the locals, to collect information and analyze rumors usually preceding anything of the magnitude of the Lengabo attack.
5. Colonel Marcel Ekuba’s conciliatory tone with the militias lacks persuasiveness. An army of any country is vested with the mandate of legitimate use of force when the situation warrants it as it does in the case of Ituri. Actions will speak louder

²¹ A proposal of less than 10,000 USD was presented for funding to three different donors, but none had funds available for this initiative.

than words. As one resident of Ituri asked “Is the FARDC an army sent to protect us? Or are they an evangelical movement preaching peace to gun-totting Ituri militias?” Continuing lack of action is a recipe for disaster in the long run. The declarations of the government have created high hopes for the population of Ituri.²² Without concrete action, the sending of a conflict-shy army to Ituri will be seen as yet another betrayal by the central government.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CONADER National Commission on Demobilisation and Reintegration
DCR Disarmament and Community Reinsertion
DRC Democratic Republic of Congo
FARDC Congolese Armed Forces
FAPC Popular Armed Forces for the Congo
FNI Nationalist and Integrationist Front
FRPI Revolutionary Front for Ituri
IDP Internally Displaced Person
IIA Ituri Interim Administration
MONUC United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
PUSIC Party for Unity and Safeguard of the Integrity of Congo
RCD/Goma Congolese Rally for Democracy/Goma
RCD/ML Congolese Rally for Democracy/Liberation Movement
TNG Transitional National Government
UPC Union of Congolese Patriots

²² See Ituri Updates March 2004- June 2004