

STRICTLY INTERNAL – NOT FOR CIRCULATION

PEACE AND CONFLICT FACTORS IN THE DRC AND RWANDA. 2004

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the Bundestag Parliamentary visit to the Great Lakes region, FEWER AFRICA was asked to prepare a briefing on current peace and conflict dynamics in Rwanda and the DRC. This short assessment will cover the Demobilization and Reintegration of former combatants (DR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR). It is divided into the following four sections:

1. The original framework of and current challenges facing the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program for the greater Great Lakes region (MDRP);
2. The current advancement of DR in the DRC and Rwanda (when I refer to DR I am concerned with the repatriation of foreign groups from the DRC into neighboring countries; in this case Rwanda);
3. The current status of DDRRR, that is to say the demobilization and reintegration of Congolese armed groups into civilian lives and an official military force;
4. Possible entry points for engagement for the German government and the parliamentary mission to the region.

1) THE MDRP

Turning to the security sector, which is the focus of my presentation today, I would like to emphasize that the MDRP had three strategic assets in its original elaboration:

- Firstly, it is the most significant demobilization program on the continent, with sufficient resources to address the initial challenges of the demilitarization of the Great Lakes.
- Secondly, the MDRP focused on demobilization as a *regional issue*. This was essential to address the intertwined nature of the conflict, to enhance confidence building measures, improve consistency and lastly, it was based on ownership of the program by each national government, which would set up its own DR office to implement the program in function of the reality of their specific national context.

To this end, elaboration of the original MDRP program corresponded to priorities of the international interventions in the region; that is to say: ownership, and creating regional solutions to regional problems.

Time is running out in the current context of the DRC transition process. In the DRC, there are going to be elections in less than 20 months. However, this cannot happen whilst many

soldiers/civilians remain armed, demobilization has not occurred, and a national army is not in place. Hence, there has been work to fast-track the MDRP program to fit into the time frame of the elections. Coming at such a critical juncture, the German parliamentary visit to the region is important and hopefully will signify a higher level of engagement of Germany and the international community at large in the Great Lakes region. DR and DDRR must be carefully considered to make sure that, although they might not be perfect processes, they work as an impetus for peace.

2) DR – THE REPATRIATION OF RWANDAN TROOPS FROM THE DRC

Having been restrained for a long period by an ineffective mandate for dealing with the reality of the Great Lakes conflict, the MONUC now has a new face. It has a Chapter VII mandate and a charismatic leader whose principal objective is to accompany the transition. However, it needs to demonstrate its transformation and, in order to do so, the MONUC requires objectively verifiable outputs. These have most recently been defined as the repatriation of armed groups.

In order to examine its advancement, I went to observe the repatriation process with the MONUC in Masisi. The MONUC DR workers went into the forest with MONUC soldiers to convince two FDLR and one Interhamwe to return to Kigali, and then to register them with the MONUC, and their dependents with the UNHCR. The soldiers, aged under 30, seemed very tired of staying within the brush, although were still highly wary of returning to Kigali.

However, they were promised upon returning the equivalent of 80 USD of food, as well as 2 months training in a “solidarity camp” and the possibility of returning to their homes and villages. A combination of the cutting off of ammunition supplies, the return of Rawakabije and 100 important officers of the FDLR, war fatigue, and the promise of amnesty and a better life was enough to incite these soldiers that had been in the DRC for over 9 years to return to Rwanda. After being registered in Goma, the soldiers were taken across to the Solidarity camp in Rwanda where they have been registered, fed, treated correctly and then reintegrated into their villages.

Although it is impossible to make an accurate assessment of progress on both sides of the border after such a short mission, the process appears to be advancing considerably. An independent, comprehensive assessment of this process will be necessary to increase the confidence of international, national, and local stakeholders.

The repatriation of Rwandan troops is, in and of itself, positive - they have been in the DRC for the last decade, raping, pillaging, killing, and terrorizing the population. In addition, this development could be seen as a sequential process, in which first the foreign forces are evacuated, and then other aspects of peace are addressed.

However, this development should be examined in the framework of the assets of the entire DR program for the region. The negative side to the current repatriation of Rwandan troops arises from a lack of control and communication between the donors of the MDRP and the field, as well as between Kigali and Goma. With very little coordination and monitoring of community-based reintegration of returning Rwandans, coupled with porous borders between the DRC and Rwanda, there is a significant and worrying gap in the DR process.

Furthermore, repatriated soldiers have been committing crimes against Congolese civilians, yet leave with no opportunity for justice for their victims in the DRC.¹ In addition, on the Rwandan

¹ The situation is exceedingly complex and cannot be covered in such a short briefing paper. An independent Western Analyst, has summed up the political dilemma as follows : “It is a case of impunity/pragmatism versus rights/justice. It is, like all moral dilemmas, a choice between two evils. If you encourage the repatriation of the Rwandans without

side of the border it is still unclear what exactly happens to the soldiers following their repatriation. Reports have been received from the human rights group Liprohdor that in Gisenyi in December, genocide survivors were savagely assassinated with machetes by returning combatants who had gone through the demobilization program. The Rwandan government has caught those accused and they are currently on trial. This example demonstrates quite clearly the need for a regional approach.

In a region wracked by decades of poor governance, followed by civil and regionalized civil wars, it will be impossible to eliminate impunity overnight. However, there are concrete steps that the international community can take to ensure that more communication and efficient monitoring frameworks are set up on both sides of the border. Focus here should fall specifically on international donors that have a strategic interest in the DRC, both through buy-in to the MDRP, as well as through strategic and technical bilateral and multilateral support and expertise, which can support the process so that it fulfills its original goals of *ownership* and *regional solutions* to regional problems.

Such steps could include technical assistance from a country such as Germany in Peace and Stability Operations (PSO) in the region. The message suggested by the Foreign Office representative; "any attack on the MONUC will be seen as an attack on the Germans" is very clear for both Kigali and Kinshasa. This will demonstrate that the MONUC and Ambassador Swing have the full backing of the international community.

3) THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE DEMOBILIZATION AND REINSERTION OF CONGOLESE ARMED GROUPS

The third issue of note is the advancement of DDRRR. Currently, the link between the formation of a new national army (SSR) and the demobilization of "surplus" soldiers (DDR) remains to be defined. The rationale behind the DDRRR program was that it represent the focal point of each national program. But, at the time of the program's inception, there was no functioning government in the DRC. Indeed, the only country with national structures in place capable of implementing the program was Rwanda. However, the CONADER has now been set up as the Congolese institution responsible for demobilization, and the *Conseil Supérieur de la Défense* has been formed and will be the primary organ responsible for the creation of a national, modern, efficient Republican Army. These developments, coupled with the Pilot Program in Kisangani in operation since December 2003, imply that enormous advances have been made in the last 6 months.

In the interim period, there are soldiers throughout the DRC that are spontaneously re-grouping, waiting to be demobilized and reintegrated into civilian or military positions. This is particularly the case in the province of Katanga. In the absence of instructions from the government, these soldiers cannot be treated by humanitarian agencies (at the risk of violating the humanitarian principle of not privileging military personnel over civilians). Since they have not been screened by the government, which does not have the capacity in the short-term to do so, they receive minimal government aid.² There is little doubt that the re-grouped soldiers are (and will continue to) resort to the same

prosecuting their crimes of the past decade (not to mention April 94 itself), you betray their victims and their families, rob them of closure - and play fast and loose with the very rule of law that we are precisely advocating as the panacea for the region's ills. Worst of all, you are probably actively perpetuating the cycle of "unfinished business" - in short, you prepare the ground for the next explosion of genocidal mayhem a few years, a decade, a generation down the line." Interviews Bruxelles march 2004.

² In November and December 2003, groups of soldiers were visited throughout the country and payments of 10 USD were made to each soldier. When interviewed, soldiers acknowledged that they had received this, but that this was not a payment or salary but rather "une geste sociale" by the government.

survival techniques they have been pursuing for the last several years, including pillaging, looting, and ransoming the population of nearby villages.

4) POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD: ENTRY POINTS FOR GERMANY

1. *Support the quick implementation of the SSR-DDR program.* The SSR program cannot be financed out of the MDRP envelope. A program for the restructuring of the DRC army will require the technical and financial assistance of the international community. The current pilot phase of the Belgian program in Kisangani is a “drop in the ocean” compared to the efforts needed to begin creating a modern army in the DRC. However, it is support that could be built upon. This support could also include help for the “prise en charge” of regrouped soldiers by international (non-humanitarian) assistance, if requested by the Congolese government and in close collaboration with the MONUC. It is possible that the GTZ, or the Ministry of Defense, could play a part in this role.³
2. *Support the creation of structures to facilitate the demobilization of child soldiers.*⁴ Since the current armed groups consist of up to 20-30% children, this could provide substantial impetus to the demobilization program.
3. *Support projects that require high intensity manual labor and will encourage militia members to put down their weapons for other income generating activities.* An example can be found in North Kivu and Ituri with the support for the rehabilitation of roads. This has had a rapid and sustainable impact on local economies and can make transport of relief goods and commerce possible.⁵
4. *Monitoring of the advancement of the process on a regional level.* The ultimate measure of success will be the successful reintegration of former soldiers into their communities of origin. It is clear that better monitoring and follow-up is needed to assure the positive advancement and transparency in the process.

³ The link between military assistance and humanitarian aid is outlined in the Oslo Guidelines on the use of military and civil defense assets in complex emergencies). According to these principles, in complex emergencies military means can be put at the disposition of humanitarian actors. However, this can be interpreted inversely as putting humanitarian aid at the means of military actors, thus undermining the guiding principles of humanitarian action, (i.e. that ALL persons are entitled to certain basic rights in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). In addition, the perception of local populations in relation to international actors is based on appearance, and the lines between military and civilian workers are often thin (see Operation Restore Hope—the confusion between USAID and US military, or UN Peace-keeping operations and civilian-military divides.)

⁴ According to UNICEF, these are no longer to be called “child soldiers”, because as the Democratic Republic of Congo has signed the Protocol on the Convention of the child, a child cannot be a soldier. From now on, the term “child soldier” is to be replaced by “children affected by armed forces”(CAAF)

⁵ See Agro-Action Allemande *Etude de l'impact socio-economique de la rehabilitation de la route Sake-Masisi*. Goma February 2003.