

DRAFT

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Academy for Genocide Prevention

**Monitoring Roundtable:
Democratic Republic of Congo**

15 March 2006

In a meeting at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, three non-governmental experts briefed USG officials from the State Department (S/CRS, INR, and AF), USAID, CIA, and U.S. embassy staff in Kinshasa, as well as officials from NGOs and the French government, concerning the threat of violence and atrocities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although a broad majority of Congolese support elections, the slow pace of security sector reform and the lack of political buy-in from potential spoilers within the transitional government create the danger of political disintegration and a security vacuum following the elections scheduled for June 2006, (though the latter could potentially be ameliorated by an EU Standby Force if necessary.)

Participants also called attention to the humanitarian situation in the Eastern provinces, including Ituri, North Kivu and Central Katanga. Attacks against civilians and the looting of villages by Mai Mai and other elements fleeing the MONUC-supported Congolese forces—as well as by the Congolese forces themselves—have increased population displacement. More than 1.7 million persons are displaced in the DRC, the majority of them from the east. Positive developments within the DRC were also noted, including strong popular support for the electoral process, increased restraint and cooperation from neighboring countries, and international support of MONUC's continued presence in DRC.

This report summarizes opinions expressed by participants in the roundtable and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Conflict Drivers

With the mandate of the Congolese transitional government scheduled to expire on June 30, 2006, the political situation in the DRC remains precarious. Speakers at the roundtable identified the slow pace of security sector reform as a

primary driver of instability and threat to peace after elections, as well as the most visible sign of the lack of political buy-in from spoilers within the transitional government. Integration of the Congolese Army (FARDC) has made little progress in the past year, and only 6 of 18 brigades needed for elections are operational. Those that are functional often play a predatory role reminiscent of the “live off the land” mentality promoted under Mobutu. Lack of pay, equipment shortages, and parallel command structures that mirror political rivalries in Kinshasa further undermine FARDC’s unity and capacity. The lack of security is the primary cause of the enormously high death toll in the DRC as it denies civilians, particularly IDPs, access to resources and basic health services necessary for their survival.

Rwanda and Uganda continue to support militias in the east in the form of arms, equipment, training, and advising, in violation of the UN arms embargo (albeit at lower levels than in previous years). The ongoing conflict is also fueled by struggles among armed groups over control of Congo’s natural wealth.

Road Signs

Participants in the session presented divergent views on the prospects for peace after the June elections.

One speaker, noting that the 2002 Sun City Accord had provided all “carrots” and no “sticks” by rewarding all major belligerents with official positions in the transitional government, contended that key factional leaders will probably seek to disrupt the political transition. Most actors understand that they will likely lose power in the upcoming elections—and may even be tried for war crimes—and accordingly have little motivation to engage in the process or demobilize their militias. The first round of the national elections, the delay of which has already forced two six-month extensions of the process, is now scheduled for June 18—making it unlikely that a new government will be in place before the end of the transitional government’s term on June 30. This speaker characterized MONUC’s performance of its peace enforcement mandate as lackluster, asserting that MONUC has failed to halt the violence in Eastern DRC, undermining both its own credibility and that of the transitional government.

Other speakers were guardedly optimistic, pointing to several positive developments over the past year:

- Strong popular support within DRC for the electoral process, manifested by the registration of more than 25 million Congolese for the elections and the overwhelming passage on December 18, 2005 of the referendum on the new constitution (promulgated February 18, 2006) as well as enthusiastic participation by members of the transitional government in the new Nganda Initiative for leadership training supervised by Amb. Howard Wolpe. According to Amb. Wolpe, this training program has had significant effects in beginning to overcome the profound lack of trust among factional leaders.

- More restrained behavior by Uganda and Rwanda vis-à-vis the conflict in Eastern Congo. Although it is difficult to determine whether this development reflects merely temporary tactical moves by the Ugandan and Rwandan leadership or a genuine change of course, their continued restraint after June 2006 would limit the potential spillover effects of a return to large-scale violence in DRC. Several speakers pointed to the U.S.-brokered Tripartite Commission as an important forum for reducing regional tensions. The Tripartite Commission, established in 2004, brings together foreign ministers of DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda (and, since 2005, Burundi) for regular consultations on regional security concerns.
- Increasing unity and effectiveness of international policy toward the region, reflected by:
 - MONUC's growing capacity to deter and punish violent attacks against civilians in Eastern DRC, which has brought a measure of stability to the region;
 - The presentation of the 2006 DRC Action Plan by the humanitarian community working in the DRC, which better assesses the humanitarian and protection needs of the populations affected by the conflict and provides a coherent framework for addressing these needs. Local NGOs would play an important role in the implementation of the plan.
 - The European Union's current deliberations over whether to prepare to deploy a rapid reaction peacekeeping force to the DRC under German leadership, in the event that the security situation deteriorates after the June elections;
 - Small initial steps toward holding Congolese and regional leaders accountable for human rights violations, including the recent judgment by the International Court of Justice against President Museveni of Uganda in a suit brought by Congolese citizens; as well as the prosecution of Lendu leader Chief Kahwa Mandra in a Congolese court in November 2005; and [on March 16] the arrest and deportation to the Hague of Thomas Lubanga, leader of the Hema-affiliated Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC).

Several potential developments in the Congo warrant close attention over the coming months, according to participants in the session:

- The success of army integration and overall reform of the security sector, both as a sign of an improving security climate and of political ownership in Kinshasa.
- The results of the June 18 elections and the responses of the losing factions. It is anticipated that many Congolese will vote for local people such as NGO workers, teachers, and church leaders. There is significant concern, however, as to how current leaders who stand to lose from such a development will react. It is unclear whether members of the transitional government such as MLC leader Jean-Pierre

Mbemba or RCD-G leader Azarias Ruberwa possess either the will or the capacity to mobilize their militias to contest the election results.

- The status of EU talks concerning the potential deployment of a European rapid reaction force. The process could be delayed by the need for approval by the German Bundestag.
- The conduct of Uganda and Rwanda in the aftermath of the elections.

Opportunities for Engagement

Participants in the session stressed the need for continued support and a unified approach by international donors, and stressed that such support will be especially vital in the post-election climate as security actors attempt to transfer responsibility for civilian security from MONUC to the Congolese military and police. Legitimate deterrent force will be required for dealing with potential spoilers and protecting civilians, and MONUC must be able to fulfill this role until Congolese forces have the capacity to take over. Participants emphasized that donor nations must not allow elections to be used as an excuse to scale-back MONUC as a continued strong MONUC presence is indispensable for the future success of the new government.

- Promoting trust and cooperation among the political actors in Kinshasa and the region through processes such as the Tripartite Commission and the Wilson Center's Nganda Initiative.
- Enforcing the arms embargo through targeted sanctions of regional violators identified by the UN's Congo Sanctions Committee.
- Increased humanitarian relief and security in Central Katanga, Ituri, and the Kivus, including support for communities to facilitate sustainable absorption of IDPs and refugees; as well as the continuation of USAID's program *Synergie d'Education Communautaire et d'Appui à la transition* (SE*CA), which supports community reintegration and revitalization.
- Further prosecutions of war criminals to combat the culture of impunity.