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U.S. Troops to Hunt Down Ugandan Rebel Leader

By onlineeditor@nationalsecuritylawbrief.com / October 16, 2011 / Comments Off

On October 14, 2011, President Obama sent a [letter to Congress](http://politisite.com/2011/10/14/president-obama-sends-a-letter-to-congress-about-sending-troops-to-central-africa-full-text/) regarding the deployment of U.S. troops to central Africa to hunt down Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The continued atrocities committed by the LRA have wreaked havoc in the region. The group is accused of murdering, raping, and kidnapping tens of thousands of men, women and children over the last two decades.

In his letter, the President cited a [2009 Act](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ172/pdf/PLAW-111publ172.pdf) in which Congress expressed its support for increased U.S. assistance in eliminating the security threat posed by the LRA. To further Congress's policy, Obama authorized approximately 100 combat-equipped U.S. forces to deploy in central Africa to assist regional forces in removing Kony and other rebel leaders from power.

The initial team of military personnel was already deployed earlier in the week with additional forces joining them later next month. These forces will act as advisers, provide information and assistance to regional forces and will not engage LRA forces unless necessary for self-defense.

The President ordered the deployment pursuant to his constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. The letter to Congress was sent in accordance with the [War Powers Resolution](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode50/usc_sup_01_50_10_33.html) requiring the President to notify Congress within 48 hours of committing armed forces to military action. The resolution also requires that armed forces be recalled after 60 days, with an additional 30 day withdrawal period, if a Congressional authorization or formal declaration of war is not forthcoming.

The announcement of the deployment was unfortunately timed when U.S. forces are thinly stretched in the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In an [interview with CNN](http://politicallicker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/16/mccain-on-sending-troops-to-africa-be-careful/), Senator McCain stated that Obama's plan was ill-advised at such a time. While acknowledging the humanitarian crisis presented by the LRA in central Africa, the Senator cautioned the Administration from getting too involved, especially without Congressional approval.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued [arrest warrants](http://icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc97185.PDF) in 2005 against Kony and four other rebel leaders for crimes against humanity and war crimes. It would indeed be an interesting turn of events if the U.S. were to assist regional forces in turning over Joseph Kony to be tried before the ICC.

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