

Testimony for House Armed Services Committee
“Democratic Republic of the Congo”

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Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or DRC, and the struggle to bring about long-term stability for the people of the DRC and Great Lakes region.

One of the key threats facing Congolese civilians, particularly in the eastern DRC, is a wide array of violent armed groups – most notoriously including the M23, the Lord’s Resistance Army, and the remnants of the genocidal militias now calling themselves the FDLR. But undisciplined state security forces have also proven to be a danger to civilians, particularly when the forces are not well-supported, have absorbed armed groups without vetting for human rights abuses, are allowed to operate under a separate chain of command, or have not been trained in their legal obligations.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is closely following the security developments in DRC and Great Lakes region. The unfolding crisis has highlighted the Congolese government’s failure to provide effective security, governance, and services in the eastern provinces. It has also highlighted the continued political and economic tensions between the DRC and its eastern neighbors, particularly Rwanda. Outside support, in particular from Rwanda, has enabled M23 to be the threat it is today and has posed a serious setback to efforts to stabilizing eastern DRC and ensuring the protection of civilians. We will continue to closely monitor reports of external support and respond appropriately, including by reviewing our assistance, to deter this support as the situation develops.

In the short term, U.S. efforts are focused on maintaining the tenuous cease-fire and ultimately resolving this crisis. In the long-term, we must also address the specific needs of the DRC for reform of its security sector. I note that the report published by the Eastern Congo Initiative in April states that “the Congolese government’s inability to protect its people or control its territory undermines progress on everything else. An effective security sector - organized, resourced,

trained, and vetted - is essential to solving problems from displacement, recruitment of child soldiers and gender-based violence, to economic growth or the trade in conflict minerals.” We agree with this assessment.

The current crisis in eastern DRC has highlighted for international partners the scope of the challenge within the DRC’s problematic security sector, and has served as an eye-opener for the Congolese government including President Kabila. The United States aims to work with the international community and the DRC to develop a holistic and specific agreement for security sector reform – through training and institution building – that addresses all three elements of the security sector: (1) the Congolese defense forces; (2) military justice; and (3) police. We would like to work to develop a more professional force, one that respects human rights, protects the DRC’s territorial integrity, and protects civilians. These efforts must be led by the Congolese and supported holistically through coordinated efforts of the international community in order to promote domestic and regional peace in the long term. We recognize this is a long-term effort, but the DRC, working with its international partners, can make concerted progress in the medium-term.

While the DRC builds its own security capabilities, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) will continue to be essential in providing security for the civilian population in the DRC, enabling the Government of the DRC to focus on reform, and coordinating international SSR efforts. MONUSCO has a challenging mandate in a very fluid security climate, and we will support the Department of State as the UN, Security Council members, and troop contributors review options for improving MONUSCO’s ability to meet the security requirements in DRC. To assist MONUSCO, DoD has seconded three U.S. military officers, who are serving as military intelligence officers and the Chief Information Officer within the mission. These officers are helping to support MONUSCO operational efforts and ensuring an efficient flow of information between MONUSCO headquarters and field components.

DoD’s engagement in the DRC has largely been in support of State Department-led defense sector reform initiatives and providing training to the Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo (FARDC), including the training of a light infantry battalion in 2010. U.S. Special Forces provided a 12-week training course to the battalion commanders, platoon leaders, staff officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs). This course focused on skills to train, manage and lead the battalion in accordance with the Law of Land Warfare. U.S. Special Forces also provided seven months of training for the entire battalion.

Sexual and gender-based violence prevention and human rights training were incorporated into every aspect of the training and reiterated throughout it. The Defense Institute for International Legal Studies (DIILS) delivered this training and continues to train elements of the FARDC.

In addition to the on-going DIILS training funded through the Department of State, DoD engagements with the FARDC have focused on logistics, exercise participation, basic military intelligence training, military medicine, humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian mine action. These are areas that assist in the FARDC modernization and professionalization and where there is absorptive capacity within the FARDC. DoD's logistics engagement is via the Defense Institute Reform Initiative (DIRI), which has been working with the FARDC to develop a logistics sustainment plan that can be used as a foundation for the sustainment of their forces across the DRC.

DoD has also remained engaged with the FARDC leadership on efforts to counter the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). DoD has personnel at the UN's Joint Integrated Operations Center (JIOC) in northern DRC, focused on liaising with the FARDC, UN, and Ugandan military personnel on operational and intelligence fusion efforts regarding the LRA. While the FARDC leadership have not been as proactive in counter-LRA efforts as we would like, they continue to maintain their engagement with U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and the regional Chiefs of Defense every two months to discuss ways to improve efforts in countering the LRA threat.

The scale of the need is significant-- we have trained one battalion of approximately 500 of the approximately 120,000- 150,000 FARDC soldiers. There are significant security sector obstacles for moving ahead with the FARDC and future engagement will require our continued patience and a long-term view. The FARDC's absorptive capacity for assistance is limited. The Ministry of Defense has minimal bureaucratic structure and activities are often *ad hoc*. As a result, for example, the Ministry of Defense has been slow in responding to our requests for the provision of appropriate personnel for training and information necessary for human rights vetting. The lack of English language capability further inhibits training opportunities both in the U.S. and in DRC. Coordination of international donor activities has also been a struggle.

The current crisis in eastern Congo has reinforced the need for sweeping reform within the Congolese military. The DRC government's signing in October 2012 of a UN Action Plan to end the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and

efforts to systemize the electronic payment of soldiers are signs of the government's willingness to engage on SSR, but the current situation in eastern Congo and the increasing signs of FARDC involvement in human rights abuses clearly demonstrates that more needs to be done.

I will close by saying that these problems are significant, but so is the potential of a stable and secure DRC and Great Lakes region. If the Government of the DRC commits itself to reform, U.S. and international community assistance can help implement the needed reforms. President Kabila has indicated his determination to enact needed changes, but his vision must resonate throughout the DRC government to ensure that donors have a partner interested in working together for long-term success. Until that happens, reform will be minimal, and the prospects for instability will remain high.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these important issues with you today. I look forward to answering your questions.