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"Update on the Evolving Security Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Implications for U.S. National Security"

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Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify on the evolving security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and its implications for U.S. National Security. Giving your time and attention at this critical moment is a welcome sign of U.S. leadership that is an essential ingredient for reinforcing regional efforts to achieve sustainable peace.

I will take just a moment to give context to my remarks today. I have worked on the Great Lakes region since 1999 as a Director in the Clinton National Security Council and then from 2001 to 2008 as Special Assistant for Africa to President Bush and as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs working with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Many of the recommendations I will offer today are informed by the diplomatic initiatives developed and experience gained during those years.

My analysis and framing of the current crisis in Eastern Congo is more driven by my shuttling between Kinshasa and Kigali since the M23 rebellion started in April. I have met and spoken repeatedly with Presidents Kabila and Kagame and senior Ministers and officials in both governments. I have been an informal listener who knows the background and have built trust with both leaders because the only side I have ever taken is for peace.

I mention this context because I believe the dialogue on how to resolve the Congo crisis has become unhelpful and polarizing. It has dissolved into emotional grandstanding and finger pointing. Without a foundation in U.S. strategic objectives, our policy risks becoming rudderless and driven by narrow and vested interests.

U.S. Interests in the DR Congo

The United States primary interests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) should be to support local and regional efforts to:

1) achieve national peace and regional stability;
2) advance good governance, national integration and reconciliation, and;
3) create the enabling environment for development that benefits all Congolese.

Congo's strategic location at the very center of Africa, bordering nine countries – Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – means that instability in Congo touches all of Africa to the north, south, east and west. Moreover, the country of 70 million people is endowed with vast human and natural resources, great forest and mineral wealth, and enormous hydro power making it a strategic country in the global effort to address food security, climate change, and generate clean and alternative sources of energy.

Yet, despite its vast potential wealth, 71 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and many Congolese live in fear of armed groups present in North and South Kivu, Equateur, Orientale Province, Maniema, and Katanga Provinces. These armed groups are domestic, including Mai Mai militia and the M23 rebellion, and foreign from neighboring countries such as the Ex-Rwandan Armed Forces, Interhamwe militia members, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Tackling these negative forces is a necessary condition to achieve sustainable peace in DR Congo and regional stability in the Great Lakes region.

The Evolving Security Situation

Resolving the current crisis of the March 23 Movement (M23) rebellion is the most urgent priority given the national humanitarian crisis and regional destabilizing impact of the conflict in north Kivu. It is well known that M23's precursor, the armed rebel group, National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), signed a peace treaty with the DRC government on 23 March 2009. The agreement established CNDP as a political party and many of its soldiers and officers were integrated into the country's Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). Not as well known is that CNDP units within the FARDC were viewed as both capable and highly motivated to take on the FDLR. The DRC and Rwandan governments were closely aligned from 2009 until this past April in their common efforts to eliminate negative forces from eastern Congo.

The M23 rebellion was sparked by three largely concurrent developments: First, the soldiers, like many in the FARDC, were dissatisfied with conditions in the army, particularly not receiving their pay and provisions. Second, the international community relentlessly pressured President Kabila until he called for the arrest of their leader, General Bosco Ntaganda, who is indicted by the International Criminal Court, despite the government lacking the capacity to execute an arrest. Third, the government made clear its plans to redeploy former CNDP soldiers out of the Kivus, and M23 claims, without the necessary security for those so redeployed.

Whereas in 2008 Rwanda demonstrated its ability to influence CNDP actions when it helped prevent them from taking Goma; fast forward to 2012 and the past constructive cooperation between Kabila and Kagame has been severely undercut by the UN Group of Experts' accusations of Rwandan and Ugandan support for M23.

What Lessons for U.S. Policy?: Reinvigorating Diplomacy

A whole of government effort is required for the United States to assist Congo and the region to establish the conditions for sustainable peace and stability.

First and foremost, presidential leadership is needed. President Bush, Secretary Powell, and especially National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice were actively engaged in ending the Second Congo War. President Bush met with Kabila and Kagame together and separately throughout his Presidency and his Secretaries of State helped forge common understanding and backed robust and active U.S. diplomatic engagement to end the war and build confidence between the neighbors.

Advocacy to appoint a "Presidential Envoy" for the Great Lakes Region will not achieve its intended purpose if the President is disengaged. Envoys gain their clout and gravitas from perceptions that they really have the ear of a President that cares.

Second, sustained, robust and imaginative diplomatic engagement is essential. Peace building requires establishing processes across government ministries and at local levels and within communities that can build confidence as milestones are achieved.

- The Bush team's efforts included developing a "**Tripartite Plus" Process** in 2004 that created a forum for problem-solving and sharing information between DR Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and eventually Burundi. It was attended by Foreign Ministers, Defense Chiefs of Staff, Intelligence Chiefs, and Presidential Advisors from the four countries and eventually led to the full normalization of diplomatic relations marked by sending Ambassadors to reopen their missions in capitals.

- We financed and supported a **Joint Planning Cell** in Kisangani for Operations and Intelligence officers from DR Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda to share information and develop plans to tackle the negative forces in eastern Congo.

- We launched the **Awards for Justice** program across the region to track former Rwandan genocidaires to reinforce accountability, remove spoilers, and as importantly to reinforce good faith between the neighbors.

Third, more confidence- and peace-building efforts are needed within Congolese communities. The State Department should consider properly securing and re-opening **Goma House**, initiated under Secretary Condoleezza Rice as an American Presence Post to extend our diplomatic reach beyond Kinshasa.

- Houses of Peace in major cities in each Province should be funded to provide neutral ground for diverse communities to nurture communication to prevent and mitigate conflict over local issues.
- Local government efforts to build cross border community ties can help to reduce regional tensions and promote economic development and cooperation.

Fourth, regional mediation is the surest path to sustainable peace. Supporting the mediation process of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) under President Museveni will deliver greater results in resolving the crisis than sanctioning Rwandan and Ugandan officials. The call for sanctions simply drives a wedge between the essential actors capable of ending the M23 rebellion.

- USG can play a positive diplomatic role in the ICGLR mediation by backing it financially and helping to shape the agenda, especially to keep the focus mainly on military grievances rather than allowing M23 to open a wider and prolonged political dialogue. Any national dialogue or reconciliation process should properly be held in DR Congo where broad civic participation is possible.

- The Howard G. Buffett Foundation's recently announced initiative to support the peace talks is a beacon that should be matched by the United States.

What Next for U.S. National Security Policy?

Backing the regional ICGLR initiative is also prudent in light of the limited U.S. government resources appropriated to effect lasting positive change in DR Congo. Comprehensive security sector reform is needed to improve the Congolese government's and especially its military's capacity to tackle armed negative forces marauding throughout the east. Preparations should also start now to mobilize international support for any Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs for M23's rank and file. Several initiatives can be undertaken to improve security and stability without deploying U.S. forces or a major new commitment of USG financial and personnel resources.

First, the USG should increase funding for International Military Education Training and targeted security sector reform. The USG provided less than $20 million in Peacekeeping Operation Funds (PKO), $6 million in International Crime, Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds and $500,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) in FY2011. U.S. efforts to build institutional and operational capacity of the military and police as trustworthy providers of security are currently mainly focused on "seconding" a few advisors and trainers working with Congolese officials and holding workshops. The IMET funding is now declining to $450,000 (FY2012) and $400,000 (FY2013) at a time when more effort is needed to instill a new ethos and professionalize FARDC, especially on military justice, human rights and civil-military operations.

Second, train a second battalion to augment the major military reform effort the USG has undertaken to date, i.e. the FARDC's 391st light infantry battalion. This training program known as "Operation Olympic Chase" began in 2009 and cost $15 million. In June/July 2012 the 391st was deployed to North Kivu to fight the M23 rebels. Positive consideration should be given to training a 392nd to build an effective military that is respectful of Congolese citizens and accountable to civilian authority.

Third, if asked, the USG should consider providing planners, logistics, and possibly equipment to support an International Neutral Force (INF) to monitor the borders between Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, and to act as a strike force against all negative armed groups. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has decided to commit 3,000 troops from Tanzania, South Africa, and maybe Angola. The INF can fit within the current MONUSCO force ceiling of 19,000 since the UN force is currently undermanned at approximately 17,700. The USG has had success backing such African regional peacekeeping operations in Burundi and Somalia. The USG can also use technology to offset to some degree the number of peacekeeping personnel needed by offering contract advisors with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to monitor the border areas watching for unlawful rebel crossings and illicit activities.

Fourth, consider how to improve MONUSCO's poor record of protecting civilians. The force has been flawed from its beginning in 1998 and its damaged reputation, after allowing Goma to fall to M23 on November 20th, may be irreparable. Careful consideration is required to assess the best option for deploying the INF. It would be a mistake to bring the INF into a mission where the mandate is confused and the rules of engagement are varyingly interpreted and communicated to the command by UN headquarters in NY, the UN Special Representative in Kinshasa, and the Force Commander in the region. Sierra Leone is a model that could be replicated. Pakistani forces joined the UNAMSIL peacekeeping operation under a UN mandate but with a distinct mission to move the Revolutionary United Front rebels off the diamond mines in Sierra Leone.

Conclusion

American leadership – including Presidential engagement; robust imaginative diplomacy; and targeted military and security assistance – can arrest the rapid decline since spring of security and confidence in the DR Congo and Great Lakes Region.

A coherent, comprehensive and ambitious initiative is required to foster the conditions needed to build sustainable peace and development. Congo has for too long been portrayed as a country of continuous instability, insecurity, rampant human rights violations, and epidemic rape and sexual violence. This image obscures the country's vast potential, distorts the reality, and robs Congolese of their dignity.

The U.S. Government and we in civil society must act with humility recognizing that the governments and people of the region themselves are ultimately responsible. We can only assist them to establish the inclusive governance, and robust regional security mechanisms, that are the foundations for eliminating all armed negative forces and creating the conditions for empowered citizens and economic prosperity.