

The Battle for Oil in Central Africa: Fighting Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army or Confronting China?

First "Highest Ranking" U.S. Official visits Uganda

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The Obama administration recently sent the highest ranking official to discuss its support for the Ugandan government's involvement in various conflict zones in East Africa that includes Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Sudan and continue its effort to stop Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Deputy Defense Secretary Ash Carter is the *"highest-ranking DOD official ever to visit Uganda"* according to the U.S. Department of Defense official website www.defense.gov press release. The report said that the agenda discussed between Carter and Ugandan political and military leaders was to confirm Washington's commitment to the Ugandan military operations in the region:

✖ The visit gave him a chance to discuss a range of regional security challenges with Ugandan partners – including the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – and ending the longstanding threat to civilians and to regional stability posed by Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army, known as the LRA

Is Washington sincere in its concern to stop the LRA from terrorizing East Africa or is it to counter China's influence in the region? It is assumed that Washington's goal is to capture or kill Joseph Kony and members of the LRA. AFRICOM's propaganda is aimed at the African population to justify its presence.

But is Joseph Kony dead or alive? Since the KONY2012 video that went viral, CBS news reported later that same year that Ugandan soldiers were starting to question themselves if they were actually "chasing a ghost":

An Internet campaign that's gone viral aims to capture notorious rebel leader Joseph Kony, but Ugandan foot soldiers who have spent years searching for the man are starting to ask a question their top commanders prefer to ignore: Is it possible he is dead?

Ugandan army officials say the Lord's Resistance Army leader is alive and hiding somewhere within the Central African Republic. Rank-and-file soldiers, however, say intelligence on Kony is so limited that if he dies, or is already dead, his foes might never know and could wind up chasing a ghost through

this vast Central Africa jungle.

Is Joseph Kony being used in Africa as was Osama bin Laden in the Middle East for the “War on Terror”? The U.S. government stated that al-Qaida’s influence in Somalia is linked to the al-Shabaab militant group so it needs to increase its support financially and militarily to the Ugandan government. The DOD report also stated how Ugandan soldiers were involved in Somalia:

“Senior defense officials traveling with Carter said the United States commends UPDF soldiers involved in AMISOM for their commitment and selfless support to the Somali people and to the fight against al-Shabaab, an al-Qaida-linked militant group and U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization fighting to create a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is leading the fight against the LRA with the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF). *“Uganda is a key partner in terms of security and stability in the region,” a senior defense official said. “Not only do they tend to security within their borders, but ... they’re operating in the region trying to track down LRA, which is something that affects four different countries in the region. It’s not just Uganda, it’s the Democratic Republic of Congo, it’s South Sudan, and it’s the Central African Republic”* the report said. Uganda, under Western influence was instrumental in negotiations that led to South Sudan’s independence back in 2011. They are also a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council. President Obama’s statement on America’s influence on South Sudan’s Independence is clear:

This historic achievement is a tribute, above all, to the generations of southern Sudanese who struggled for this day. It is also a tribute to the support that has been shown for Sudan and South Sudan by so many friends and partners around the world. Sudan’s African neighbors and the African Union played an essential part in making this day a reality. And along with our many international and civil society partners, the United States has been proud to play a leadership role across two Administrations. Many Americans have been deeply moved by the aspirations of the Sudanese people, and support for South Sudan extends across different races, regions, and political persuasions in the United States. I am confident that the bonds of friendship between South Sudan and the United States will only deepen in the years to come. As Southern Sudanese undertake the hard work of building their new country, the United States pledges our partnership as they seek the security, development and responsive governance that can fulfill their aspirations and respect their human rights.

The U.S. Department of Defense states that Uganda and its neighbors were victims of Kony’s atrocities where thousands were murdered, raped and even kidnapped:

Uganda and most of its neighbors have been victims and now are taking the fight to Joseph Kony and his followers. For more than two decades, according to a U.S. Africa Command fact sheet, the LRA murdered, raped and kidnapped tens of thousands of men, women and children. In 2011, the LRA committed more than 250 attacks. In 2012, the United Nations estimated that more than 465,000 people were displaced or living as refugees across the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan as a result of LRA activity in 2011

The U.S. Department of Defense says AFRICOM and the United Nations reported that Joseph Kony's victims were from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. It is also known that these countries including Uganda (estimated to have over 6 billion barrels of oil) have abundant natural resources. The Central African Republic has a vast amount of gold, diamonds, and uranium, timber and oil. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has copper, cobalt, niobium, tantalum, petroleum, diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, uranium, coal, hydropower, and timber.

South Sudan's main natural resource is oil, but it also contains gold, silver, iron ore and copper. These African states also have agricultural resources such as peanuts, tobacco, cotton, coffee, rice, palm oil and many other resources that can be used for many industries. They have resources Washington needs so that the Military-Industrial Complex can wage war on Iran, China and Russia at a moment's notice. Recently, the New York Times published an article called 'A New Anti-American Axis?' stated that China and Russia are working in conjunction to weaken American Superpower status around the world. The tone of the New York Times declares both countries actions are unacceptable to Washington in the case of whistle blower Edward Snowden:

The flight of the leaker Edward J. Snowden from Hong Kong to Moscow last month would not have been possible without the cooperation of Russia and China. The two countries' behavior in the Snowden affair demonstrates their growing assertiveness and their willingness to take action at America's expense.

Beyond their protection of Mr. Snowden, Chinese-Russian policies toward Syria have paralyzed the United Nations Security Council for two years, preventing joint international action. Chinese hacking of American companies and Russia's cyberattacks against its neighbors have also caused concern in Washington. While Moscow and Beijing have generally supported international efforts to end Iran's nuclear weapons program, they clearly were not prepared to go as far as Washington was, and any coordinated shift in their approach could instantly gut America's policy on the issue and endanger its security and energy interests. To punctuate the new potential for cooperation, China is now carrying out its largest ever joint naval exercises — with Russia.

The Obama Administration is now focusing on China's interests in Africa. China is negotiating with many African countries in the region that has much needed natural resources for its economy. Washington has been paying attention to the Middle East and Latin America's natural resources for most of its existence. As the Department of Defense stated in its report concerning the LRA:

In May 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the Lord's Resistance Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, which reaffirmed U.S. commitment to support regional partners' efforts to end LRA atrocities in central Africa. In October 2011, Obama authorized the deployment to central Africa of 100 U.S. forces whose mission is to help regional forces end the threat posed by Kony.

The multiyear U.S. strategy seeks to help the governments of Uganda, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan, and the African Union and the United Nations end the LRA threat to civilians and regional stability, defense officials said. Its four objectives are to increase

civilian protection, apprehend or remove Kony and senior LRA commanders from the battlefield, promote defections of those who follow Kony and urge them back into the community and provide continued humanitarian relief to affected communities, they added.



Map of Uganda Oil and Gas Discovery

In a 2011 report by the World Resources Institute (WRI) called “Avoiding the Resource Curse: Spotlight on Oil in

Uganda” stated what was also discovered in Uganda:

In 2006, commercially-viable quantities of oil were found in the Albertine Graben in western Uganda. The Albertine Graben, the northern portion of the Albertine Rift,⁵ stretches from the border of Uganda, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the north to Lake Edward on the Uganda-DRC border in the south—a distance of over 500 kilometers and an area of about 23,000 square kilometers.

The Ugandan government has established nine oil prospecting blocks in the Albertine Graben, of which five blocks have been allocated to oil companies for prospecting purposes (Figure 1). By mid-2009, over \$700 million had been spent on oil exploration in the region. Oil companies have drilled in only three of the nine exploration blocks, but have already found more than 2.5 billion barrels of oil.

The report also stated that 6 billion barrels of oil is located within Uganda’s Albertine Graben.

Some analysts estimate that Uganda’s Albertine Graben may hold more than 6 billion barrels of oil. Projected production of 100,000 to 150,000 barrels per day would significantly increase revenues for the government and, if well managed and invested, could improve economic growth, reduce poverty and promote development in Uganda.

On September 2010, President Barack Obama’s statement concerning a new U.S. law in the United Nations summit’s ‘Millennium Development Goals’ as reported by the WRI:

“We know that countries are more likely to prosper when governments are accountable to their people. So we are leading a global effort to combat corruption—which in many places is the single greatest barrier to prosperity, and which is a profound violation of human rights. That’s why we now require oil, gas and mining companies that raise capital in the United States to disclose all payments they make to foreign governments. And it’s why I urged the G-20 to put corruption on its agenda and make it harder for corrupt officials to steal from their people and stifle their development.”

Back in 2007, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) had a press release titled “Pentagon Official Describes AFRICOM’s Mission, Dispels Misconceptions” reported that

Theresa Whelan, deputy assistant secretary of defense for African affairs said:

“Although this structure is new, the nature of our military engagement on the continent will not change,” she said. “It will remain primarily focused on conducting theater-security cooperation to build partnership capacities in areas such as peacekeeping, maritime security, border security, counterterrorism skills.”

AFRICOM’s mission is to control resources in the continent although Whelan tries to clarify its “misconceptions”. *“Some people believe that we are establishing AFRICOM solely to fight terrorism or to secure oil resources or to discourage China. This is not true,”* she said. Then she mentions the natural resources Africa has and why many people will benefit from U.S. involvement. In reality, major U.S. oil corporations and the Military-Industrial Complex will benefit in an open-market environment, meaning American interests will be the main focus of AFRICOM.

“Natural resources represent Africa’s current and future wealth, but in an open-market environment, many benefit,” she continued. “Ironically, the U.S., China, and other countries share a common interest — that of a secure environment in Africa, and that’s AFRICOM’s objective.”

Whelan also said that *“AFRICOM is about helping Africans build greater capacity to assure their own security.”* The report said *“The United States does not seek to compete with or discourage African leadership and initiative, Whelan said. Rather, AFRICOM will benefit its partners on the continent prevent security issues from escalating without U.S. intervention.”* African nations are aware of U.S. interventions since World War II to stop the rise of communism. The U.S. government intervened in more than 50 countries through Coups, direct military actions and assassinations of its political leaders.

The agenda is for the control of the natural resources throughout Africa. If Washington can counter China by influencing governments through military and financial aid, then the possibility of exploiting oil and other commodities will benefit the Military-Industrial Complex and Wall Street.

Washington wants to control the majority of oil in Africa so that the petrodollar would continue to dominate world oil markets. With a looming war on the horizon, Middle East oil would become difficult to obtain for the U.S. military machine especially if Iran is attacked. Iran would block the flow of oil with a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. military needs oil to sustain a long-term war against its perceived adversaries namely Iran, China and Russia. Can the United States overstep China’s influence in Africa?

With the U.S. involved in coups, wars and political manipulation of governments in the past and present, China seems more favorable to most governments in Africa. Why? China is not overthrowing governments or invading countries, they negotiate with the intention of doing business with the country for the long-term. China seeks business partners for its own economic growth with investment projects in many African nations. As for America’s future in the African continent, it seems the Africa Command (AFRICOM) and its new drone base in Niger

does not seem to win the “hearts and minds” of most African governments and its people.

Then again, the U.S. can intimidate countries within Africa with its military and intelligence apparatus by either implementing a coup, assassinating a political leader (Patrice Lumumba of the Congo) or even a direct military intervention. The question is will Africa stand up to the most powerful empire in history or will it continue to allow Western powers (U.S. France and Britain) to exploit its natural resources?

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