

**Regional News**

Many former soldiers of Burundi's recently ended civil war are called upon to fight on behalf of the militant Hutus in Congo, particularly in South Kivu. Burundi is located just south of Rwanda and east of DR Congo. These Burundians are offered diamonds, gold, and a job for fighting in Congo, which is much more attractive than the \$0-100 they received as a disarmament package from the Burundian rebel groups after many years of bush fighting. The Burundians have no money, no job, and are called upon by organizers to kill for money no matter what ethnic allegiances they previously carried. They are raiding prisons and freeing more rebels, causing more conflict in the region.

A former rebel leader, known as Jaguar, provoked hundreds of former rebels to leave their posts in the DR Congo army last Friday. Some of these soldiers were not paid a salary for 5 months and were complaining of a maldistribution of ranks, so deserting the army was an easy next step for them. These soldiers were looting multiple eastern towns, but MONUC (a French acronym for the UN Organization-Mission in DR Congo), is mediating the problem, and seems to have come to a solution with Jaguar.

**Congo Culture**

The FARDC, the national Congolese army, is responsible for one-third to one-half of all rapes and sexual violence cases in both North Kivu and South Kivu. The soldiers do not treat these rapes as a means of sexual satisfaction, but more as a socialization technique, i.e. "male bonding." The men use rape to exert their power and also to form bonds with each other. Men are also mocked and treated like they are not serious rebels if they do not want to participate, and are often--if not always--forced to rape women too.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Goma's Heal Africa's Hospital and said there is a local epidemic of fistula among women. Fistula is the rupture of walls of the vagina, bladder, and rectum, which causes serious long-term consequences, specifically infection and disease.

Men are known in the DRC for sending their wives away after rape because their culture calls for it. The men say that if they were to keep their wives, others would think that they have AIDS too, which is looked down upon. Another reason the husbands send their wives away is because the men feel humiliated because they cannot protect their families, so the way men end up dealing with it is through abandonment.

The need now is to get the men involved in rehabilitation for the women. The men need to get enraged and stop the violence. If the men do not try to help stop this increasing issue and intervene in every possible way, it will never go away.

What about the children conceived from these rapes? Many women have abortions. But for the ones that don't, these women have to decide whether they will keep their children. Most girls are kept within the family. Congo is where the anomaly in orphanages lies: there are more boys than girls in Congolese orphanages because it is thought that boys will turn against their families as they get older, so many are abandoned after birth.

### **International Relations**

United Kingdom's Africa Minister Gareth Thomas announced that the Department for International Development would partner with the Government of the DRC and the World Bank to double its funding for road building programs in the DRC from 38 million pounds to 76 million pounds. This would promote trade and investment, as well as security. Currently, 95% of the DRC's roads are really just dirt paths, making it very difficult to transport food and medicine and maintain trade routes.

### **United States Foreign Policy**

In a statement to President Barack Obama, Senator Russ Feingold recognized the current administration's commitment to not only making Africa a priority, but also to including Africa as a crucial piece of the US foreign policy.

Senators Brownback, Durbin, and Feingold are working with the administration and have introduced legislation that would commit the US to do more about conflict minerals as well as ending the increasing violence by the LRA in northeast Congo.

Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at a nonprofit public policy organization in Washington D.C., is convinced that the US needs to take charge to contribute to solving the problem. He suggests a new recruiting idea for the US military, including a Peace Operations division, in which enlistees would serve for two years. Yes, there would be risks involved with this, but the troops would prepare through 12 weeks of boot camp as well as 12 weeks of specialized training. Their pay structure would be similar to those currently in the military, and peace operations jobs would consist of tasks such as monitoring villages and inspecting individuals for weapons.

Secretary Hillary Clinton has made new efforts to one, help prevent and respond to gender and sexual violence, and two, bring the root causes of Congo's crisis to the forefront. Feingold and O'Hanlon are both aware that Secretary Clinton's visit to the Congo and voicing the Congo's ignored problems is only the first step in the process. Feingold explains that the US is not done with this issue. He says that we must engage with Africa and then back up our engagement with resources that will make a difference.