

Testimony of Assistant Secretary Linda Thomas Greenfield

Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State

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Thank you very much Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and Members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today on this urgent matter. We are deeply concerned by the horrific violence across the Central African Republic (CAR), particularly the increasingly sectarian nature of the attacks on civilians. We are working closely with the United Nations Security Council, the French, other EU countries, and our African partners to support efforts to end the violence and restore security, rule of law and democratic governance to the CAR.

In September, the violence that has gripped CAR since the Seleka rebellion began last December took an alarming turn for the worse. After 10 months of abuses by the largely Muslim Seleka fighters, Christian self-defense militias, known as “anti-balaka,” meaning “anti-machete,” formed and began to attack both Seleka fighters and Muslim communities, whom they collectively blamed for Seleka’s depredations. This dangerous dynamic of reprisals risks turning a country where ethnic and religious tolerance was the norm into a country where citizens are targeted based on their religion or ethnicity.

We have publicly condemned Seleka’s seizure of power and its campaign of rape, pillage, and killings. We also condemn the violence perpetrated against civilians by anti-Balaka groups in recent weeks and months. We have publicly and privately called on CAR transitional authorities to end the violence and have warned them that those responsible for fueling and engaging in violence and human rights violations would be held accountable. Ambassador Power delivered this message directly to Transitional President Djotodia in a telephone conversation on December 7. So that the international community can investigate and then hold accountable those responsible, we supported the UN Security Council’s establishment of an arms embargo, a Sanctions Committee and a Panel of

Experts, authorization of a Commission of Inquiry, an increase in the human rights monitoring capacity of the UN Political Office in CAR, and co-sponsored the UN Human Rights Council resolution creating an Independent Expert position for the Central African Republic. The Council also expressed its strong intent to swiftly consider imposing targeted measures, including travel bans and assets freezes on those responsible for the violence and abuses in CAR.

To immediately stem the violence, we strongly supported the UN Security Council's authorization of a one-year Chapter VII mandate for the African Union-led International Stabilization Force in the Central African Republic (MISCA), and for an expanded French troop presence in support of MISCA. Because MISCA draws on the existing 2,500 troops in CAR under the MICOPAX regional peacekeeping operation, we believe MISCA, working closely with French forces, provides the most immediate mechanism for ending the violence. In addition, we believed MISCA's more robust stabilization mandate is what is needed now to confront and disarm the armed groups. Senior officials from the State Department and our ambassadors in the region have engaged with the leaders of African troop contributing countries to urge them to encourage their troops to be proactive in protecting civilians in CAR. To give these forces their best chance of success on the ground, we are providing them equipment, strategic airlift and pre-deployment training, the EU is expanding logistics support, and the French have advisors in the field.

We recognize the situation on the ground is subject to change and that the international community needs to start planning for those contingencies *now*. For this reason, we fully supported the UN Security Council resolution requesting the UN Secretary General undertake "expeditious contingency planning for the possible transformation of MISCA into a UN peacekeeping operation." We will consult closely with you if it appears that such action may become warranted.

We are coordinating closely with the French, who have deployed 1,600 troops in CAR in support of MISCA. French and MISCA troops are engaged in the dangerous mission of disarming armed groups; regrettably, France and the Republic of the Congo have already suffered casualties.

We have acted quickly to support the French and MISCA deployment. On November 20, Secretary Kerry announced that the State Department,

pending Congressional notification, would provide \$40 million in assistance to MISCA troop contributors from existing resources. On December 10, the President delegated authority to Secretary Kerry to direct the drawdown of up to \$60 million in defense article and services from existing Department of Defense resources in order to provide immediate military assistance for France, the AU, and countries contributing forces to MISCA. Together, these resources will fund airlift support, non-lethal equipment, training, logistics, and planning support to MISCA troop contributors. To expedite the deployment of MISCA forces on December 12, Secretary of Defense Hagel authorized military transport aircraft to carry troops from Burundi – a new MISCA troop contributor with deep experience in peacekeeping and stabilization – to CAR. The deployment of the Burundian troops is ongoing and should be completed this week.

Because of the dangerous sectarian tensions in CAR, we have actively reached out to local radio stations and other media to encourage them to transmit messages from Christian and Muslim religious leaders urging peace and reconciliation. President Obama recorded a statement to the people of CAR on December 9 in which he urged them to reject violence and look toward a future of security, dignity, and peace; the message has been translated into Sango and played on multiple radio stations throughout CAR. The State Department is also working with Voice of America (VOA) to produce a radio program featuring American and Central African religious leaders to convey those same messages and to be broadcast on VOA and local radio stations. U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ambassador Rashad Hussain, used his participation in the December 10 OIC Ministerial to urge Islamic leaders to be proactive in passing messages to their followers in CAR to refrain from violence. Ambassador Hussain's call for peace and reconciliation was reiterated in a message from the OIC Secretary General, who condemned the inter-communal violence and called for peace between CAR's Christian and Muslim communities.

We are continuing to provide humanitarian assistance to those displaced within CAR and to CAR refugees in neighboring countries. The humanitarian situation in CAR is dire as CAR's population of 4.6 million; 2.8 million are in need of emergency assistance. There are now more than half a million people internally displaced, including over 189,000 people displaced in the capital Bangui due to the violence in early December. Additionally, over 222,000 CAR refugees are residing in neighboring

countries, including 69,000 who fled CAR in the year since the Seleka rebellion began.

We are working hard to respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs. In FY 2013, the U.S. provided more than \$24 million in humanitarian assistance to CAR, with \$6.2 million in additional assistance announced in September to assist new CAR refugees in neighboring countries. Currently, with U.S. support, humanitarian agencies and NGOs are conducting protection activities and delivering health services, food, emergency relief items, and nutrition assistance. We continue to coordinate with other donors and our UN and NGO partners to assist those most in need and encourage quick deployment of experienced personnel and resources to address the challenges on the ground.

While our initial focus has been on ending the violence and improving security, even as we seek to provide urgent humanitarian assistance, CAR's medium- and long-term stability depends on a political transition process that can lead to credible elections and a legitimate democratic government. We are deeply concerned that Transitional President Djotodia has taken steps to consolidate his hold on power. Of most concern was his decision to assign his Seleka fighters as the commanders of 10 of 12 military regions of the country, and his program to train and insert up to 5,000 Seleka fighters into the armed forces, police, gendarmerie, and presidential guard. We, as well as other members of the international community, have told Transitional President Djotodia that this plan is not consistent with UN Security Council resolution 2121, which calls for professional, balanced, and representative CAR security forces.

We are also deeply concerned that Transitional President Djotodia will not follow through with his commitment to hold elections by February 2015. We continue to insist that the CAR transitional government abide by the N'Djamena Declaration and the interim constitution, which call for elections to take place no later than February 2015, and specify that members of the transitional government are ineligible to run. Djotodia has already delayed preparations for the elections, including by failing to appoint members to the National Electoral Authority and the High Council on Communications, which regulates media access during elections. In November Republic of the Congo President Sassou-Nguesso, who has led the mediation efforts in CAR, publicly expressed his strong opposition to any delay in the elections and his adamant opposition to members of the

transitional government running as candidates in those elections. We will continue to coordinate closely with the region, the African Union, the UN, and donors in support of the electoral process.

Given the grave situation in the Central African Republic, and the need to see the situation first-hand, Ambassador Samantha Power and I hope to travel there very soon.

Senator Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and Members of the Committee, let me assure you that we remain deeply engaged with our international partners to address the crisis in CAR. We look forward to keeping you and the Committee informed of our efforts. I hope that this information is helpful to the Committee. I am glad to answer any questions you might have.