

S. HRG. 113-181

**RESPONDING TO THE HUMANITARIAN, SECURITY
AND GOVERNANCE CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 17, 2013

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

86-778 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2014

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

ROBERT MENENDEZ, *New Jersey, Chairman*

BARBARA BOXER, California	BOB CORKER, Tennessee
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, Maryland	JAMES E. RISCH, Idaho
JEANNE SHAHEEN, New Hampshire	MARCO RUBIO, Florida
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, Delaware	RON JOHNSON, Wisconsin
RICHARD J. DURBIN, Illinois	JEFF FLAKE, Arizona
TOM UDALL, New Mexico	JOHN McCAIN, Arizona
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, Connecticut	JOHN BARRASSO, Wyoming
TIM KAINE, Virginia	RAND PAUL, Kentucky
EDWARD J. MARKEY, Massachusetts	

DANIEL E. O'BRIEN, *Staff Director*

LESTER E. MUNSON III, *Republican Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, *Delaware, Chairman*

RICHARD J. DURBIN, Illinois	JEFF FLAKE, Arizona
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, Maryland	JOHN McCAIN, Arizona
JEANNE SHAHEEN, New Hampshire	JOHN BARRASSO, Wyoming
TOM UDALL, New Mexico	RAND PAUL, Kentucky

CONTENTS

	Page
Arieff, Alexis, Analyst in African Affairs, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC	17
Prepared statement	19
Coons, Hon. Christopher A., U.S. Senator from Delaware, opening statement .	1
Flake, Hon. Jeff, U.S. Senator from Arizona, opening statement	3
Gast, Earl, Assistant Administrator for Africa, United States Agency for International Development, Washington, DC	7
Prepared statement	8
List, Lisabeth, medical coordinator, Médecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders, New York, NY	27
Prepared statement	29
Schneider, Mark, senior vice president, International Crisis Group, Wash- ington, DC	35
Prepared statement	37
Thomas-Greenfield, Linda, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC	3
Prepared statement	5
ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
USAID map showing Armed Conflict and Active USG Humanitarian Pro- grams in the CAR submitted by Earl East	52
Prepared statement of Simon O'Connell, West and Central Africa Regional Director, Mercy Corps	54
Letter sent to Senator Christopher A. Coons by Most Reverend Richard E. Pates, Bishop of Des Moines, Chairman of the Committee on Inter- national Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops	56
Written statement from Religious Leaders' Platform	58

RESPONDING TO THE HUMANITARIAN, SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:05 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher A. Coons (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Coons, Cardin, and Flake.

Also Present: Senator Durbin.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator COONS. Good afternoon. I would like to call this hearing of the African Affairs Subcommittee to order. Today the African Affairs Subcommittee will focus its attention on the Central African Republic, or CAR. CAR is a resource-rich, but desperately poor, country that, sadly, seldom catches the attention of international policymakers, but today is in the midst of an appalling and man-made crisis. The violent crisis in CAR is a stark reminder of the very real human costs of fragile states, weak governance, and corruption.

To this sobering discussion, I would like to welcome my partner on the subcommittee, Senator Jeff Flake of Arizona. Senator Flake brings a deep commitment to Africa and I look forward to working with him to promote lasting solutions to this complex crisis.

I would also like to welcome other members of the committee who may be joining us, as well as our distinguished witnesses: Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa; Earl Gast, Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID; Alexis Arieff, Africa analyst at CRS; Lisabeth List, medical coordinator, Medecins Sans Frontieres; and Mark Schneider, senior vice president of the International Crisis Group. Thank you all. I look forward to hearing your insights and thank you for being here.

The voices of Central Africans must also inform our policy decisions and I am grateful to have recently spoken with Central African officials for a firsthand account that helped to inform my perspective. While I regret that no CAR leaders or officials could join us today, I would like to enter into the record a joint statement from Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalaing, Imam Omar Kobine

Layama, and Reverend Nicholas Nguerekoyame—excuse me—Ngbakou, from Bangui, who are pictured here.

I would also like to enter into the record statements from Catholic Relief Services and Mercy Corps to reflect recommendations based on their recent experiences working in CAR.

CAR has a long history of instability and conflict and has been the focus of United Nations and regional efforts to support peace and security, sadly with little lasting effect. As difficult as CAR's history has been, the current crisis is far different in terms of its scope and emerging brutality. Following a March 2013 coup by the loose coalition of rebels collectively known as Seleka, little more than a facade of a transitional government now exists in CAR and the already weak national security forces have nearly disintegrated.

The people of CAR have been left powerless against a multitude of violent groups. Opportunists, many from Chad and Sudan and seemingly motivated by greed, have swelled the ranks of Seleka factions from 4,000 to nearly 20,000, engaging in horrific violence across the country.

In response to Seleka attacks, local defense groups, known as anti-balaka, have retaliated, spurring a vicious cycle of murder, maiming, rape, and destruction of property and livelihoods. More than half a million people, or a tenth of CAR's population, have been displaced and at least half are in need of humanitarian assistance, but many are beyond the reach of help due to insecurity.

We lack reliable and comprehensive data on the deaths and injuries, but civil society groups on the ground have provided chilling evidence of entire families slashed to death by perpetrators wielding machetes, babies suffering gunshot wounds, and of villages burned to the ground.

Compounding the crisis in CAR is the growing interreligious nature of the violence. Seleka rebels are primarily Muslim and have reportedly targeted Christians, and the anti-balaka are primarily Christian and are reportedly targeting Muslims. Civilians are seeking refuge around churches and mosques and, while ethnic divisions are not new in CAR, open interreligious violence, significant participation of foreigners in these attacks, and the large-scale targeting of civilians are unprecedented. They increase the risk of regional spillover and may create deeper and longer lasting societal divisions.

Today's hearing will look at how the United States and international partners can deepen their engagement to stop the violence, prevent regional spillover, and begin the process of achieving sustainable governance. There are clearly no easy solutions, but we cannot stand aside as innocent civilians are targeted.

The recent U.N. Security Council decision to impose an arms embargo on CAR, create a commission to investigate human rights violations, and authorize French military support to the African-led International Support Mission in CAR was a welcome and necessary step. France has very helpfully moved quickly to bolster its troop presence, and I am interested to hear from witnesses about what more the United States can do to support multilateral efforts to ensure AU troops have the capacity necessary to improve security and end the violence.

I look forward to working with the administration and with civil society to ensure we do everything we can to stop the suffering in CAR, hold perpetrators accountable for their atrocities, help CAR's people build a stable and democratic future as well. I strongly support ongoing efforts by the administration to increase assistance to MISCA troop-contributing countries and look forward to hearing from our witnesses about next steps for the U.S. role, including the possibility of U.S. support for a proposed U.N. peacekeeping operation.

I would also, in closing of my opening, like to thank Susan Triana, who has served very ably in my office as a Brookings State Department fellow and who provided much of the labor for this CAR hearing and who we will greatly miss in my office as she returns to the State Department.

I would like to welcome Senator Flake for his opening statement. Thank you.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF JEFF FLAKE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA**

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, chairman. I appreciate the testimony that we are going to receive, and I know that you are busy. There is a lot going on, not just at CAR but in the region as well. So I appreciate having Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield and Assistant Administrator Gast here, and look forward to the testimony.

I just want to echo what the chairman said about the importance of our involvement here to prevent spillover into the region and effects that we will deal with for a long time to come. So I applaud the United Nations for moving expeditiously and for our representation there for prodding the action that is been taken, and I look forward to the testimony and for all the witnesses in the second panel as well.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Flake.

I would like to ask now, if I might, Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield. We know you have a pressing schedule, so we very much look forward to your testimony and the opportunity to question briefly.

STATEMENT OF HON. LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. Thank you very much, and thank you, Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and other members, for the opportunity to testify before you today on this urgent matter. I very much appreciate your interest and your raising the profile of this issue. I have submitted a full written testimony to the committee and I would ask that it be entered into the record and I will summarize briefly that testimony here today.

We are deeply concerned by the horrific violence across Central African Republic, particularly the increasingly sectarian nature of the attacks on civilians, as you described. We are working closely with the members of the international community to end the violence and restore security to CAR. We have publicly condemned

Seleka's seizure of power and its campaign of rape, pillage, and killings. We have also warned that individuals responsible for fueling and engaging in violence and human rights violations will be held accountable. Ambassador Power delivered this message directly to Transitional President Djotodia in a telephone civilian on December 7.

On December 5, the United States cosponsored U.N. Security Council Resolution 2127, which establishes an arms embargo, a sanctions committee, and a panel of experts, a commission of inquiry, and an increase in the human rights monitoring capacity of the U.N. Political Office in CAR. In September we cosponsored the U.N. Human Rights Council resolution creating an independent expert position for CAR.

To immediately stem the violence, we strongly supported the U.N. Security Council's authorization of a 1-year chapter 7 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. We believe MISCA, working closely with French forces, provides the most immediate mechanism for ending the violence. In addition, we believe MISCA's robust stabilization mandate is what is needed now to confront and disarm the armed groups.

To give these forces their best chance of success on the ground, we are providing them equipment, strategic airlift, and predeployment training. On November 20, Secretary Kerry announced that the State Department, pending congressional notification, would provide \$40 million in assistance to MISCA troops, 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 articles and services for existing Department of Defense resources in order to provide immediate military assistance for France, the AU, and countries contributing forces to MISCA. We have already begun utilizing some of this funding to airlift 850 Burundians, Burundi troops, into CAR in an operation that is scheduled to be completed this week.

Because of the dangerous sectarian tension in CAR, we have actively reached out to local radio stations and other media to encourage them to transmit messages from Christians as well as from Muslim religious leaders urging peace and reconciliation. President Obama recorded a statement to the people of CAR on December 9. The message has been translated in French and Sango and broadcast repeatedly on multiple stations throughout CAR, and we have heard from people in CAR that they have appreciated hearing those messages from the President.

We are working hard to respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs. In fiscal year 2013 the United States provided more than \$24 million in humanitarian assistance, with \$6.2 million in additional assistance announced in September to assist new CAR refugees in neighboring countries.

We continue to insist that the CAR transitional government abide by the N'Djamena Declaration and the interim constitution, which calls for elections to take place no later than February 2015 and specified that members of the transitional government are ineligible to run. We are deeply concerned that the Transitional

President Djotodia has taken steps to consolidate his power by inserting up to 5,000 Seleka fighters into the security forces and by delaying the appointment of independent experts to the national electoral authority.

Given the grave situation in Central African Republic and the need to see the situation firsthand, I hope to travel there at some point soon. Currently our special adviser is in CAR.

Senator Coons, Ranking Member Flake, members of the committee, let me assure you that we remain deeply engaged at the highest level with the situation in CAR. We are working closely with our international partners to address the crisis and we look forward to keeping you and other members of the committee informed of our activities, and we look forward to additional support.

I am glad to answer any questions you might have and I look forward again to briefing you on the situation as we continue to get information.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Thomas-Greenfield follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY LINDA THOMAS GREENFIELD

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 U.N. 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 U.N. Political Office in CAR, and cosponsored the U.N. 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 U.N. Security Council's authorization of a 1-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 pro-

viding them equipment, strategic airlift, and predeployment 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 U.N. Security Council resolution requesting the U.N. Secretary General undertake “expeditious contingency planning for the possible transformation of MISCA into a U.N. 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, nonlethal 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 intercommunal 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 U.N. 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 U.N. 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 U.N., and donors in support of the electoral process.

Given the grave situation in the Central African Republic, and the need to see the situation firsthand, 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.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, and thank you for your personal engaged leadership on this vital issue.

Assistant Administrator Gast.

STATEMENT OF EARL GAST, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR AFRICA, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. GAST. Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Flake, thank you for the opportunity to be here before you. I appreciate your involvement in drawing attention to the crisis in the Central African Republic and look forward to a continued discussion on U.S. Government engagement.

Great, we have the map loaded. Before I begin, I would like to draw your attention to this map that is on the screen. It depicts the geography and the frequency of conflict in the CAR. Senators, I would like to introduce a copy of this map into the formal record.

Senator COONS. Without objection.

Mr. GAST. The areas in the northwest and around Bangui have to date experienced the greatest violence and are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Prior to the most recent Seleka attacks, aid groups had a very limited presence in those areas and targeted attacks against humanitarian workers have further limited our response capacity. Overcoming the operational constraints in these areas will take a significant amount of time and human and financial resources.

This is arguably the worst crisis in the CAR's history. As of this week, 680,000 Central Africans had fled their home. That is 150,000 more than U.N.'s December 9 estimate. Moreover, an estimated 535 persons have been killed just within the last 2 weeks due to the violence. If unaddressed, this conflict threatens to result in further significant loss of life and continued political instability threatens to destabilize the entire region.

However, we still have the chance to stop it. The United States has been playing a critical role in shaping the international

response to the crisis and we are ready to lead additional efforts that build on our current humanitarian platform. Since 2011 we have provided more than \$68 million in humanitarian assistance to the CAR. In 2013 our programs benefited 430,000 Central Africans in basic nutrition, in health, protection, livelihoods, water sanitation, and hygiene, and agricultural assistance, as well as funded U.N.-led logistics and coordination. Our USAID partners also continue to assist those affected by the LRA in the southeast of the country.

However, due to the scale of underdevelopment in CAR, limited access, and the volatile situation on the ground, the international community has not been able to meet all humanitarian needs. Insecurity hinders full deployment of our teams and some NGO, U.N., and government facilities have been looted or destroyed. In addition, logistical constraints have greatly increased the cost of humanitarian interventions. Transporting supplies from Cameroon by road and by air is extremely expensive and the widespread violence has dispersed the majority of the population into hard to reach rural areas.

This complex and fluid situation requires creative programming options to reach the dispersed populations. We are working with our implementing partners to find a balance between expanding assistance into conflict areas and reducing the risk to humanitarian actors and beneficiaries. We are also examining ways to prevent the emergence of new conflict. If French and the African Union peacekeepers are able to improve the security situation, USAID hopes to increase local peace-building efforts, amplify the peace messages of religious and community leaders, and support radio stations in areas suffering from a lack of information.

In the coming months, the international community will have an enormous and challenging role to play in the CAR's political transition process. But for now our focus is to reach those in need and save lives. Without the international community's urgent and committed intervention, this already alarming crisis threatens to continue its downward spiral and expand the reach of devastation well beyond the borders of CAR.

Thank you, members of the subcommittee, for facilitating our assistance and for your support to the people of the Central African Republic. I welcome any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gast follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR EARL GAST

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and members of the subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I appreciate your involvement in drawing attention to the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) and look forward to a sustained discussion on the U.S. Government's engagement.

Since its independence from France in 1960, the CAR has been one of the poorest, most unstable countries in the world. According to the United Nations Development Program, its indicators in health, education, gender equality, income, and trade measure not only well below global averages but even remarkably below the standard for "low human development." Successive autocratic governments punctuated by political instability and conflict have only exacerbated the effect of poverty on Central Africans.

It is in this context that the current crisis developed and because of this context that the emergency in the CAR has rapidly escalated and stymied the delivery of assistance to those most affected by it.

Since the Seleka rebel alliance seized power by overthrowing long-time President Francois Bozize in March 2013, the group has killed, kidnapped, and raped hundreds; forcibly enlisted as many as 6,000 child soldiers; and engaged in widespread looting. Largely drawn from the CAR's 15 percent Muslim minority, the Seleka alliance has increased its ranks from 4,800 to roughly 18,000 soldiers in part by incorporating Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries and preying on uneducated youth. In response, some Christian and other non-Muslim communities have formed "antibalaka" self-defense groups, which have retaliated and further escalated tensions. While Christians and Muslims have a history of peaceful relations in the CAR and the roots of conflict are in an imbalance of power, resources, and governance, the violence we have seen in recent weeks is taking a dangerous new turn toward deliberate attacks against civilian communities along religious lines. This increasingly sectarian violence and the retaliatory cycle of killing now underway has the potential to grow much worse, with mass atrocities emerging as a real possibility.

According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of December 9, one in ten Central Africans—533,000 people—had fled their homes; one in five—1.1 million people—do not have enough food to eat. If unaddressed, the humanitarian crisis threatens to result in a significant loss of life; continued political instability in the CAR threatens to destabilize the subregion and potentially allow violent extremist groups to occupy ungoverned spaces in the north, in addition to elements of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) already present in the southeast. It is arguably the worst crisis in the country's history; on November 26, United Nations Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson said that the CAR is "descending into complete chaos before our eyes" and presents a "profoundly important test to our international solidarity and our responsibility to prevent atrocities."

The U.S. Embassy in Bangui suspended operations in December 2012 due to instability and evacuated all U.S. personnel. Nonhumanitarian assistance to the central government has been restricted as a matter of policy, with exceptions for civilian protection, health, antitrafficking in persons, and forestry and biodiversity. Additional restrictions on our economic and security assistance to the CAR Government also apply.

Despite these constraints, the United States continues to play a role in shaping regional and international responses to the crisis, and USAID is poised to lead additional humanitarian, peace-building, and conflict mitigation efforts that build on our current humanitarian platform.

As President Obama has said, preventing mass atrocities is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility. Although the CAR continues to slide closer to the brink of catastrophe, we still have the chance to help prevent it. Accordingly, the U.S. Government is identifying funds to support immediate violence prevention and conflict mitigation programs, among other options.

USAID is expanding the provision of humanitarian assistance to respond to the most urgent health, nutrition, protection, food security, and logistical needs in areas affected by instability. Since FY 2011, the U.S. Government has provided more than \$68 million in humanitarian assistance to populations in conflict-affected areas through small-scale, targeted programs in accessible areas of CAR. In FY 2013, USAID and State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration supported not only programs in basic nutrition, health, protection, livelihoods, water, sanitation, hygiene, and agricultural assistance, but also U.N.-led logistics and humanitarian coordination mechanisms. In addition, the U.S. Government and our partners also continue to assist those affected by the LRA in the southeast, and NGOs working in that region have reported that our presence and that of the African Union Task Force has prevented Seleka fighters from moving into southeast CAR. U.S. Government partners are also working to protect wildlife and biodiversity in the southwest to prevent income from poaching from falling into the hands of armed groups.

On November 10, a USAID-facilitated air shipment of UNICEF relief supplies arrived in Bangui. The commodities included 12,000 fleece blankets, 800 kitchen sets, 12,000 mosquito nets, 240 plastic mats, and more than 5,300 plastic sheets—collectively supporting an estimated 170,000 people in the northwestern CAR, one of the areas hardest hit by the conflict.

Due to the scale of underdevelopment, limited access, and the volatile security situation, the international community is not able to meet all humanitarian needs. Insecurity hinders full deployment of humanitarian teams in the field. Humanitarian capacity was already limited in the worst-affected areas of the northwestern CAR prior to the conflict, and following attacks on humanitarians, operational capacity remains low. Some NGO, U.N., and government facilities have been looted or destroyed. Without sufficient security, many agencies are reluctant to restart robust operations. At the same time, there is an acute lack of local capacity. The

escalation in violence has driven many of these personnel to congregate in the capital or flee the country. The recent designation of the situation in the Central African Republic as a Level 3 emergency—the highest level—will help encourage U.N. humanitarian agencies and NGOs to quickly identify and allocate necessary resources to address the ongoing crisis.

Logistical constraints and security concerns greatly increase the cost of scaling up humanitarian interventions. Transporting supplies from Cameroon by road and by air is extremely expensive, and the widespread violence has dispersed the majority of the displaced into the bush, creating additional challenges for the delivery of aid. The international community is working to identify and implement creative solutions to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in CAR.

USAID is making a concerted effort to reach the CAR's most vulnerable people and to reduce the risk of violence by limiting mass congregation for aid distribution. The targeting and looting of humanitarian actors requires low-profile partner responses with creative programming options to reach the dispersed populations. We are working with our implementing partners to find a balance between expanding assistance into conflict areas and reducing the risk to humanitarian actors and beneficiaries.

Increased conflict and widespread lawlessness resulted in mounting protection risks, including indiscriminate civilian killings, gender-based violence, arbitrary detentions, and the recruitment of child soldiers, among other violations. We are alarmed by reports of increasing numbers of unaccompanied children—who are vulnerable to forced conscription into armed groups. USAID has partnered with UNICEF to implement child protection programs in internally displaced persons sites throughout Bangui, including identifying separated and unaccompanied children, referring vulnerable children to services, and providing psychosocial support. Ultimately, a drastic improvement in civilian protection is essential for preventing atrocities and saving lives.

In addition to addressing critical needs, we are also examining ways to prevent the emergence of new conflict. If French and African Union peacekeepers are able to improve the security situation, USAID hopes to take advantage of that window of opportunity to increase local peace-building efforts, amplify the peace messages of national, religious, and community leaders, and support community radio stations in areas suffering from a lack of information.

Additionally, close coordination between the U.S. Government and other donors, primarily the European Union (ECHO) and the United Kingdom (DFID), can facilitate targeted interventions to address the most critical needs and hopefully elicit greater impact. To enhance this collaboration, the State Department and USAID are participating in the European Union—hosted “Friends of CAR” working group, which serves as a platform for interaction and coordination among donors who are funding, or considering funding, activities in the CAR.

In the coming months, the international community will have an enormous role to play in the political transition process established in the Libreville Agreements, N'djamena Declaration, and the Interim Charter that calls for elections by February 2015 and precludes members of the current government from running as candidates. The citizens of the CAR will need to view the electoral process as credible to prevent further violence or disruptions to the political stability that is the goal of the transition. The transitional authorities and the international community will need more information about the technical requirements needed to successfully organize the elections before deciding how best to support a credible process. USAID will continue to assess what programming in support of elections and the political transition it may be able to support as the security situation evolves.

For now, however, USAID's focus is to reach those in need and save lives. Without the international community's urgent and committed intervention, this already alarming crisis threatens to continue its downward spiral and expand the reach of its devastation well beyond the borders of the CAR.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Flake, and members of the subcommittee for facilitating our assistance to the Central African people. I welcome any questions you might have.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Assistant Administrator Gast, and thank you for your long and effective engagement in relief work in Africa and around the world.

Let me start, if I might, what will be 7-minute rounds of questions. First, if you might just broadly, so what specific actions can the United States Government take next that will help end the humanitarian suffering, restore some security, and move CAR

toward a sustainable path of democratic governance? What are the most important next steps we should be taking, Madam Secretary?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. I think the most important steps to take are the steps we are taking right now to address the security issues, because without addressing those security issues we will not be able to move forward on addressing the more important human rights issues, as well as the humanitarian issues that we are all witnessing and we are all horrified by.

So we are working to move as fast as we can to provide airlift and training to the troop-contributing countries. Burundi, as I mentioned, we provided that support this week and hopefully they will have about 850. We are working with the French to provide them with additional assistance as well, and other countries that have made an offer to contribute troops.

Once that is done, I think we can then focus on trying to find a political solution, working to make sure that there is disarmament as well as finding mechanisms to work with the various authorities to get them to prepare for the election which we hope to take place in 2015.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Assistant Administrator Gast, what is the critical next step beyond the security stabilization in terms of humanitarian relief?

Mr. GAST. Security is always first. With security, we will then be able to gain access. I think the United Nations has taken a very, very important step just within the last week, and that is announcing that it has upgraded the emergency attention on CAR by declaring it a Level 3 response. At any time in the world, the United Nations can manage only three Level-3 crises. CAR would be the third one, Syria and the Philippines being the other two.

What that means is that they will have a very experienced person at the assistant secretary general level in CAR to run the humanitarian operation. It also gives them the ability to tap in emergency response mechanisms, and it will also get elevated attention throughout the United Nations. We feel that this is critical and we commend the United Nations for taking that action.

Then of course, because the needs are growing we will need additional resources, we collectively, the international community, to support those people in need.

Senator COONS. Let us focus, if we might, on the U.N. role and where it might go in terms of security. What are the funding and policy considerations the United States analyzing with respect to potentially transitioning MISCA from an AU to a full U.N. operation, and are there lessons learned from U.N. operations in Somalia or Mali or DRC that are relevant and potentially being applied to peacekeeping and CAR?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. I think the most important lesson for us is that we have to act quickly. It does not matter whether it is a DPKO in the initial phases. We think right now getting MISCA up and running, building their capacity on the ground, is the fastest possible means of addressing the security concerns. So we are focusing our attention on getting the troop-contributing countries on the ground, making sure that they are well trained, that they are well equipped, and then getting them outside of the capital.

Our view is that if this is successful, that is our goal, to stop the fighting. I think if it is not successful and we are not able to do it under MISCA, then we have to move to a DPKO and upgrade the number of troops that we have on the ground. But what we have on the ground now is what we have to work with. It is fast. If we had moved to a DPKO it would take us months to actually get on the ground. So the United Nations has the authority to start the planning for a DPKO, but in the meantime we are moving forward on addressing the security issues with MISCA.

Senator COONS. If I might, for both of you, two questions. What are the repercussions for regional spillover? What are the regional repercussions here in terms of interests? Chad in particular appears to be playing a fairly prominent role, but President Idriss Deby's objectives are unclear and Chad is viewed I think with suspicion by many in CAR.

Then my last question will be, What role has the Atrocities Prevention Board played within the U.S. Government in terms of elevating the level of focus and priority being paid to the CAR issues, and then what does that tell us about APB and its role going forward?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. It is clear that all of the regional neighbors of CAR have some interests and we do not know exactly what those interests are and what roles they will be playing. Chad in particular, we understand that a number of the Seleka troops came out of Chad. Many of them were ex-combatants, not necessarily attached to the government. But we do think that President Deby can play a role in monitoring his border and also controlling the activities of people crossing the border from Chad.

Again, we have also seen that some of the Seleka troops came out of Sudan. Many of them were some of the ex-Darfur rebels, and it is important that, again, we control the access that they have across the border into CAR.

That said, it is really important that the regional partners play a role in finding a solution. I think both Chad as well as Congo Brazzaville have played a positive role in helping to address the issues, particularly as part of the N'Djamena Declaration. So we are hopeful that, working with them, we can move forward in finding what is going to be a long-term political solution.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Assistant Administrator Gast, regional interests?

Mr. GAST. With regard to spillover effects, one thing that we are beginning to see is an increase in the number of refugees. So those refugees could have a destabilizing effect on other countries and their ability to provide services, even with U.N. support, to the people.

So right now the number of refugees from CAR is roughly about 70,000, more than half in the DRC. But with the growing displaced population, the IDPs within CAR—and as I mentioned, it grew by more than 100,000, 150,000, in just a week's time—it could have further destabilizing effects on other countries.

You also, Senator, asked the question about the Atrocities Prevention Board, and perhaps my colleague will say something about that. But it is an interagency process. There are 10 or 11 agencies that participate. It is a very good way of sharing information and

collectively coming up with an understanding of the problem and just drawing on the strengths of various agencies, whether it is analytical or programming, coming up with a comprehensive approach to how we are dealing with human rights abuses and atrocities.

So the APB has come up with a number of recommendations with CAR and, as we are trying to pursue gaining additional resources from some of the contingency funds, we are looking at some very good, sound, peace-building efforts at the community level, getting information out to communities through community radio, as well as other peacekeeping activities. And that is from the knowledge and wealth of all the agencies that have participated in the Atrocities Prevention Board.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Madam Secretary.

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. If I could just add briefly to that. I think the Atrocities Prevention Board gave us the tools to come together as an interagency and in fact gave us a lot of direction as we looked at the human rights needs and looked at the situation there. The APB has been particularly focused, as my colleague mentioned, on developing communications strategies to ensure that messages that relate to interreligious tolerance from the United States as well as from voices in CAR, as you noted in your video there, and religious leaders are widely disseminated in CAR, especially by radio.

But we looked at all kinds of mechanisms. We have used VOA, we have used text messaging to the extent that that works. Certainly the decision to have the President make a statement that is being widely heard in CAR came about as a result of our actions on the Atrocities Prevention Board.

Senator COONS. Well, I am glad to hear that the APB has played a very constructive and sort of all-of-government role here in elevating the crisis and in finding solutions to it so far.

Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your testimony.

You mentioned, I think both of you, and rightly so, that the first priority is security. Before getting back to agriculture or anything else, just stem some of the humanitarian crisis. But our ability to help with security there I would think depends on what the players see in the future in the next year. Along those lines, some have raised the question of whether or not the interim President, Djotodia, if he has any incentive to work toward a democratization, elections next year or in 2015, if he is not going to be a part of it.

That, let us face it, has impacts on how willing he is to cooperate. Some have said that he was really kind of forced into this agreement by—well, we know he was—by the regional powers and others. But can we move forward on that basis and that security arrangement? Is it likely that he will be willing, he and those around him, to step back at that time and to have a secure situation leading up to that time? Can you address some of the political possibilities?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. I think we do question his commitment to honoring the agreement, and some of the actions that he

has taken most recently really give us reason to pause. His decision to put in Seleka troops into key locations, his decision not to name the members of the national election board, his decision to fire ministers without consulting with the Prime Minister, are all actions that raise for us concerns about his commitment.

We are continuing to put pressure on him to honor the commitments made in the N'Djamena Accord, and he has been told in no uncertain terms both when he had his conversation with Ambassador Power, but also in his conversations with the French, that he will be held accountable if he does not move the process forward.

Senator FLAKE. What does that mean? Be held accountable to whom?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. I think to the international community, for committing gross human rights violations, not contributing to the process that will lead to peace. I think when we say that they get the message of what that means, and I think at some point we might have to question whether he continues in the role that he is playing. But I think the international community, along with the regional partners, will hold him accountable.

Senator FLAKE. Well, thanks. My concern is being held accountable for somebody who worries about being held accountable after this episode and after the democratic government comes in might be more inclined to try to consolidate his own power.

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. And I think that is what he is doing.

Senator FLAKE. Yes, that seems to be so. I am not saying that we are pursuing the wrong policy there at all. It just makes it doubly difficult, I think, in the current situation.

With regard to the weapons that are there and the task of the peacekeepers now, how have weapons proliferated throughout the country since the coup last year and what challenges does that present going forward? Are they still coming in? You mentioned that is one reason we need secure borders. But how much of a problem is that?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. It is a huge problem. We do not know where the weapons are coming in from. We hope that the panel of experts will give us some insight on where these weapons are coming from. We know they are coming from across the border. Who is funding the weapons purchases, it is unclear, and this is something that we are all trying to get a handle on, so that again under the U.N. resolution people can be held accountable for that.

Senator FLAKE. Is this a matter—I know it is not this simple, but the Seleka forces probably have most of the weapons, but the militias, on the other hand, probably have the numbers; is that a rough estimation? Or are there weapons on—I am sure there are a lot of weapons on each side, but is there a big difference in who has the weapons at this point?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. I think there are weapons on both sides. I do not know what the balance is, but as the French have gone in to disarm we are seeing that when they have disarmed Seleka that some of the anti-Seleka people actually have weapons and have attacked using those weapons. But that is something that we need to investigate and it is why it is so important for us to be on the ground for there to be security so that we can address those issues.

Senator FLAKE. The death of two French troops just in the last couple of weeks, how has that affected the French Government's ability? Has it hardened their resolve or has it made the people more skittish about involvement? What is your read there?

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. I think it has hardened their resolve. We regret the death of the French soldiers as well as Congolese soldiers who were killed. But I think it really has hardened their resolve to pursue this mission to a positive conclusion.

Senator FLAKE. Back on the humanitarian issues, there is a lot of agriculture that is being disrupted. Administrator Gast, can you address that? Is that something that, with what is going on now, is there going to be a lag time because certain crops were not harvested or were not planted, that we are going to have a disaster in the future? Or how do you address that? That is really—it is a lot of subsistence agriculture, we know.

Mr. GAST. You are absolutely right, Senator. About 55 percent of GDP comes from agriculture and it is the largest employer in the country of Central Africans. So we are very concerned, and we know that the violence has broken the traditional cycle of how people get inputs and how they provide their products to the market. We expect that that will be part of the assessment that takes place, but I have not seen any numbers come out on specifically the loss of productivity in agriculture.

At a macro level, the GDP is expected to contract by 10 percent this year as a result of the conflict. But we know that it is going to be primarily in the agricultural sector.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Flake.

Madam Assistant Secretary, we know you have other pressing commitments, and if we might thank you for your testimony. We both look forward to being briefed on more details when you have them about the basis on which we could build stability and a transition toward a democratic state and deal with the humanitarian crisis.

So thank you very much. If you do not object, we will continue to question the Assistant Administrator. But I know that we are now at the time when you really needed to leave.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Senator COONS. So we are very grateful you were willing and able to testify before us today.

Ms. THOMAS-GREENFIELD. Thank you very much.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Assistant Administrator Gast, if I might, just following up on some of the questions that Senator Flake was asking. Are there community-based, viable community-based efforts under way to stop this cycle of intercommunal violence? And in the absence of stopping the violence, will the humanitarian crisis accelerate further in terms of food insecurity, hunger? Are we at real risk of this spiraling into a dramatically larger conflict within CAR or regionally?

Mr. GAST. I think you are right, we are at risk of it spiraling out of control. Senator, with your support actually, we have in the southeastern part of the country supported what we call our secure

communities program that we are implementing with the organization CRS. Essentially, these communities have been affected by the LRA over a period of years, whether it is attacks on communities, abductions of children, men living in communities. It is an early warning system as well as it provides an early warning system to them to communicate to other communities about threats, as well as to the United Nations; and then also it helps them draw up plans for the communities to stay safe.

Also included in that is community-based radio as well as peace messaging, so that the communities feel safe with one another. We think that that is a good model and it is something that we would like to expand on and support in other places.

But as we talked about before, security is absolutely critical. There was supported through other development programs in the country a network of community-based radio stations. Because of the violence, that has been disrupted. Many have been looted and are no longer functioning. So we hope to reinstate those, because they are critical on both the security side as well as the humanitarian side in informing communities and humanitarian workers where the problems lie.

Senator COONS. The CAR Government, the transitional authorities, are desperate for resources for reconstruction, for transitional tasks. But as long as there is no legitimate government or functioning institutions and security, major donors are understandably hesitant to commit any significant sums for government operations. How can we break this particular Catch 22 and what path forward do you think there is for building some platform on which to develop a real state in CAR, where at this point there is barely even a legitimate government or security function?

Mr. GAST. In 2012 the government began to undertake some reforms for CAR. Actually, some of the reforms were pretty impressive. It led to an extended credit facility on the part of the IMF. The World Bank and also the African Development Bank provided some lending. But since the change in power those programs have ended. So they are certainly feeling the squeeze at the central government level of not having resources.

I think there are three steps. One is immediately address the humanitarian crisis. That will continue, but it needs to be addressed. The infrastructure needs to be built. Communities need to be stabilized. Services need to be provided to those who need services.

The second thing is supporting the political transition. It is stated that the transition, meaning through elections, will have to occur by February 2015, but that is going to be an enormous challenge. Just looking at all the things that have to be done, from the development of a new constitution, new electoral law, creating a new institution, the national electoral administration, training, a voter registry, that is an enormous task.

But I do not think that the development resources will come in until we see the transition, the political transition down the road.

Senator COONS. Well, thank you.

Do you have any further questions, Senator?

Senator FLAKE. No, I am good.

Senator COONS. Well, Assistant Administrator Gast, we are grateful both for your testimony today and for your intense interest in the region and in this particular area. If I might just in closing ask one last question. Beyond the humanitarian relief and the establishment of security, CAR is going to need significant international support for the political transition, governmental institutions. What kind of support is USAID in particular considering, whether it is from OTI or elsewhere, and where do you see our key allies in terms of joining us in providing essential assistance, and what is the path toward that being sustainable?

Mr. GAST. Good question, Senator. We are looking internally at the resources that we have available within the agency to support both the political transition as well as the emergency crisis. With regard to other donors, there is a donors conference that is being set up in January. So we see that as an opportunity to identify the needs and also to take stock of what commitments other donor countries can provide.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Senator FLAKE. One question.

Senator COONS. Senator.

Senator FLAKE. With regards to their mining, mineral extraction there, we have seen elsewhere in Africa in almost every country China has made moves into that space. We have not seen that yet in the CAR; is that correct?

Mr. GAST. We have not in terms of exports to China or any investment on the part of the Chinese in CAR.

Senator FLAKE. So no investment there, either?

Mr. GAST. No.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Assistant Administrator Gast. We are grateful for your testimony and for your service and your leadership.

I would like to invite the second panel now to join us, if we might.

[Pause.]

Senator COONS. We would like to welcome our second panel to this hearing. First we will hear from Ms. Alexis Arieff, the African analyst at the Congressional Research Service; next, Lisabeth List from Medecins Sans Frontieres, and Mark Schneider, again, from the International Crisis Group. Welcome. It is great to have both repeat witnesses and those who are with us for the first time.

Ms. Arieff.

STATEMENT OF ALEXIS ARIEFF, ANALYST IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. ARIEFF. Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, thank you for inviting the Congressional Research Service to testify here today.

You have heard today about the evolution of the crisis in CAR. I have submitted a written statement for the record. In my remarks I want to highlight five key elements of the crisis and then conclude with a look ahead.

First, CAR has experienced recurrent governance and security crises. Governments in the capital, Bangui, have rarely controlled vast rural areas or provided services to the population. That said, as you mentioned, the current situation in CAR is not the norm. When I was there in early 2011, the capital and much of the countryside was relatively stable. A peace process with northern rebel groups suggested that a more inclusive and sustainable model of governance was possible. Over the past year, violence and humanitarian conditions have worsened dramatically. The fabric of CAR's diverse society has also been badly damaged by recent brutal attacks along ethnoreligious lines.

Second, Seleka factions and Christian self-protection militias do not have clearly defined memberships or clear chains of command. The terms "Seleka" and "anti-balaka" in fact appear to refer to loosely branded franchises rather than clearly structured networks. Some factions are likely also being manipulated by political aspirants and ideologues.

Civilians meanwhile have increasingly taken up arms against each other in a decentralized fashion. The conflict therefore potentially affects the entire population of CAR and could easily spill over its borders. Troubles in the turbulent region surrounding CAR could also easily spill into the country.

Third, external actors have repeatedly intervened in CAR in search of resources and leverage. CAR's territory has long been a destination for raiders and poachers. Chad, Sudan, Libya, and other countries have periodically sought to wield influence. Foreign troops, including from France and neighboring states, have been present for decades in various roles. Regional leaders' responses to the current crisis may therefore be driven in part by self-interest. In turn, CAR leaders have regularly appealed to outside forces for protection and advancement of their interests.

Fourth, while Seleka commanders have shown themselves to be brutal and opportunistic, the movement has fed on genuine feelings of exclusion and persecution among CAR's northeastern population. The northeast is largely Muslim, in contrast to the rest of the country, where Muslims are a minority. It is also culturally and geographically closer to Chad and Sudan than to Bangui. Acting President Michel Djotodia is CAR's first Muslim President and the first from the northeast.

In this context, national identity is contested. The term "foreigner" in fact is often used by non-Muslim inhabitants of CAR to describe northeastern ethnic communities with cross-border ties. International policymakers may wish to be sensitive to these dynamics so as to avoid creating the perception that demanding the disarmament and repatriation of Seleka combatants is akin to condoning the exclusion of, or violence against, Muslims who have been in CAR for generations. Such perceptions could drive Muslim civilians into supporting militia groups or create a narrative of anti-Muslim persecution that could reverberate widely.

Fifth, the planned political transition, as you have heard today, is likely to be very challenging. Election preparations will be starting from near zero. President Djotodia appears likely to cling to power. Warlords and potential rivals within Seleka are also unlikely to simply step aside.

The balance of power between Djotodia and other Seleka figures is uncertain and factional violence is possible. Commentary in the local press reveals sharp polarization. Some have welcomed international intervention, while others are suspicious of regional troops, particularly those from Chad with its complex history in CAR, and of French motivations.

The crisis in CAR touches on a number of issues in which Congress has demonstrated an interest in recent years, including stability in Central Africa, trends in wildlife poaching and other cross-border criminal activity, and the Lord's Resistance Army, which has been present in the southeast since at least 2008. Looking ahead, Congress may determine the means and duration for any additional U.S. humanitarian aid to CAR, any further help for French and African troops deploying there, and any future support for elections, border security, or accountability and national reconciliation. A U.N. peacekeeping operation, if authorized in the coming months, would create new U.S. funding requirements and policy considerations.

In the longer term, CAR confronts enduring governance and security challenges. Added to these now are questions about the future place of ex-Seleka combatants and the communities that some of them claim to represent. Repeated international efforts at military intervention, peace-building, and security sector reform in CAR have had mixed and overall limited effects.

Finally, an ongoing debate regarding the pros and cons of African-led versus U.N.-conducted stabilization operations is at play. While neighboring states often have a front-line interest in addressing a crisis, their militaries are frequently handicapped by a lack of capacity and interoperability and by political rivalries and competing interests among regional leaders. U.N.-conducted operations are often better funded and vetted than African-led operations. Yet they can be slow to materialize, more cautious with regard to offensive operations, and more costly. This debate is likely to continue as the United States considers whether and to what extent to further strengthen the AU operation in CAR or support any future U.N. peacekeeping operation.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I will be happy to answer any questions the subcommittee might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Arieff follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALEXIS ARIEFF

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting the Congressional Research Service to testify today on the multifaceted crisis in the Central African Republic.

I will begin by providing an overview of the situation in the Central African Republic, including an analysis of the escalating patterns of violence in recent months and the country's history of poor governance. I will also address the role of regional actors and the presence of the Lord's Resistance Army. I will conclude with an analysis of some of the potential policy issues and challenges facing Congress as you look ahead. I will provide a timeline of selected key events at the end.

OVERVIEW

The Central African Republic (CAR) is in crisis. Armed factions are exploiting a security vacuum after a loosely allied rebel coalition known as Seleka ("Alliance" in the local Sango language) took control of the central government in March 2013. A transitional government led by a self-appointed President, a Seleka leader, appears unable, or unwilling, to halt the violence and human rights abuses. CAR has long

been seen as peripheral to core U.S. policy interests. However, U.S. policymakers are now focused on the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in CAR and the potential impact of the crisis on regional stability. U.S., U.N., and French officials have warned of the potential for mass atrocities and even “genocide.”¹

Policy issues of possible interest to Congress include whether the planned provision of U.S. support to French and African military operations in CAR is appropriate and/or sufficient, and if so, what additional funds and/or authorities may be necessary. An ongoing debate at the U.N. Security Council concerns whether to authorize a U.N. peacekeeping operation in the coming months, which could create further U.S. funding requirements. CAR’s security vacuum has also reportedly driven an increase in wildlife poaching, and could threaten U.S.-supported regional efforts to counter the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a small but vicious militia of Ugandan origin that has been active in CAR since 2008. The United States supports a Ugandan-led African Union (AU) military operation against the LRA in CAR and neighboring states, including through the deployment of U.S. military advisors in the field.

Seleka faction commanders, who are mostly Muslim, have overseen seemingly systematic attacks targeting Christian communities, leading to the mobilization of largely Christian militias that have, in turn, brutally attacked Muslims.² (CAR’s population of 5.2 million is reportedly roughly 15 percent Muslim and 85 percent Christian or animist. CAR’s territory is slightly smaller than Texas.³) While violence along ethnoreligious lines had been relatively rare in CAR, complex tensions over access to resources, control of trade networks, and national identity are now translating into large-scale upheaval. Moreover, the recent pattern of militia-inspired violence has increasingly led civilians to take up arms against each other. Seleka was formally disbanded in September 2013, although with few clear practical implications.

Seleka leaders mostly hail from CAR’s remote northeast. This area is culturally and geographically close to parts of neighboring Chad and Sudan, where some of the movement’s members and commanders reportedly originate. Acting President Michel Djotodia is CAR’s first Muslim President, and the first from the northeast. While Seleka leaders appear to share a sense of marginalization and persecution with successive CAR regimes with many northerners and Muslims in CAR, they otherwise appear to be united by little other than their opposition to the former government, which they ousted in March 2013. Their opportunism, brutality, and internal divisions have led to a spiral of chaotic violence and the further collapse of an already weak state.

Humanitarian conditions remain dire, although the full impact of the current crisis is difficult to assess. At least 602,000 residents have been displaced to date, including 69,000 who have fled to neighboring countries as refugees and 533,000 who are internally displaced.⁴ Conditions prior to the current crisis were already poor, due to a lack of basic health care, education, and other social services, as well as a legacy of past conflicts. Indeed, conflict and political instability have been recurrent in CAR, fed by the tendency of successive governments to foster narrowly based regimes more interested in pursuing patronage networks than in expanding state services and social inclusion. Seleka leaders have followed this pattern, for example carrying out a series of targeted assassinations of army officers associated with the former President earlier this year.⁵ Still, the current situation in CAR is not a timeless status quo. Violence has worsened dramatically over the past year, and has, in turn, severely constrained the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide vital services.

The pace of violence accelerated in early December 2013, with at least 500 killings reported in the capital, Bangui, as the U.N. Security Council prepared to adopt Resolution 2127. The resolution authorizes an AU intervention force and the French military, which has long had a presence in CAR, to “take all necessary measures” to protect civilians, stabilize the country, enable humanitarian access, support the disarmament of militias, and contribute to security sector reform.⁶ Following passage of the resolution, France rapidly increased its troop levels in CAR from about 400 to 1,600. French patrols, along with civilian protection efforts by regional troops, have led to a decrease in violence, for now. French forces have directly engaged militia fighters, leading to at least two French casualties and, reportedly, the killing of a senior Seleka commander. CAR’s transitional government and many of the country’s beleaguered citizens have welcomed France’s deployment. However, conditions remain tense and volatile.

A CHALLENGING POLITICAL TRANSITION

Michel Djotodia, a previously little known figure, declared himself President after the Seleka rebellion rapidly seized control of the state in March 2013, deposing President Francois Bozize.⁷ He has clung to that position despite initial condemnation by regional leaders, who subsequently agreed to recognize him as the “head of state of the transition.” Under regional and international pressure, Djotodia has acquiesced to a transition roadmap culminating in elections in early 2015, in which he cannot be a candidate.⁸ He also nominally shares power with Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye, a human rights activist and opposition politician who was appointed under a January 2013 peace accord between Seleka and then-President Bozize, known as the Libreville Agreements. As a member of the transitional government, Tiangaye is also barred from running for President under the Libreville framework.

Despite this stated roadmap, the timeline for the planned political transition is likely to be hindered by ongoing violence, a lack of political will on the part of transitional authorities, and the scale of needed preparations. A new constitution and electoral law may be needed, along with new voter registration as many civic records have reportedly been destroyed.⁹ Based on his actions to date, Djotodia appears likely to seek to prolong his hold on power, while attempting to exercise greater influence within armed factions and state institutions. Warlords and potential rivals within the Seleka movement are also unlikely to agree to a diminution of their power or freedom of action. The balance of power between Djotodia and other Seleka figures—such as strongman Nouredine Adam, who until recently served as Security Minister—is uncertain, and factional violence is possible as the fractious coalition comes under new pressures.

ESCALATING VIOLENCE

In recent months, Seleka forces and largely Christian militias known as “anti-balakas” (anti-machetes) have engaged in tit-for-tat massacres, threatening to create a new dynamic of violence along ethno-religious lines. These events could easily spark tensions throughout the religiously diverse central Africa region. They have also created a humanitarian crisis. Local populations who have fled their homes in rural areas due to fear of Seleka or anti-Muslim violence are reportedly living in abominable conditions.¹⁰ CAR’s religious leaders have sought to calm tensions, often at considerable personal risk. They too have come under assault in recent days, and French troops reportedly recently intervened to protect the national leader of the Muslim community from a mob.¹¹

Abuses by armed groups against civilians, including killings, looting, torture, and the burning of villages, have been particularly salient in the western region of Bossangoa and Bangui. This may be because Bossangoa and parts of the capital are associated with support for the former President, because they are particularly ethnically diverse, or because of Bossangoa’s strategic location on the road linking Bangui to Chad. Still, the motivations behind the attacks remain largely unclear, along with the identities of many of the perpetrators. It is also possible that the international community is simply not yet aware of similar abuses in more remote locations. Civilians from both religious communities also appear to be increasingly targeting each other for violent retribution.

The largely Christian militias that have organized in response to Seleka abuses appear in many cases to be community-driven, decentralized, and uncoordinated. However, in some cases, such as during a recent assault on Bangui, “anti-balaka” groups have displayed relatively sophisticated capacities and armaments, contributing to perceptions that they are supported—perhaps by design, perhaps opportunistically—by ex-military officers and/or regional figures who seek the return of deposed President Bozize.¹²

President Djotodia appears unable, or unwilling, to exercise control over combatants associated with Seleka. In September, following high levels of violence by Seleka forces, Djotodia ordered the former rebel movement dissolved, but this has had little practical impact on the actions of already fractious commanders. Seleka elements are reportedly asserting increasing control over state resources, including customs revenues and mining concessions. Additional fighters, including from neighboring states, have reportedly self-identified with Seleka since March, driving its numbers up from some 4,000 in early 2013 to an estimated 20,000 in November.¹³ They may hope to benefit from government patronage or to profit opportunistically from looting and access to more fertile land than is available to the north.

Some community leaders in CAR argue that the vast majority of Seleka combatants are foreigners from Chad and Sudan, and that there is a “de facto foreign occupation” of CAR.¹⁴ Yet as the anthropologist Louisa Lombard has documented, the

term “foreigner” is often used by non-Muslim inhabitants of CAR to refer interchangeably both to persons from other countries and to northeastern, often Muslim and Arabic-speaking ethnic groups with cross-border family ties.¹⁵ Given such sentiments, international policymakers may wish to be cautious in their use of the term “foreign” to refer to Seleka leaders, so as to avoid creating the perception that pressure to disband Seleka is an endorsement of efforts to expel Muslim communities that have been in CAR for generations. Such perceptions could drive Muslim civilians into the ranks of Seleka or other militias; prompt Seleka leaders to cling to power through violence; or create a narrative of Muslim persecution that could reverberate throughout the region.

The relationship between (ex-)Seleka commanders and CAR’s military is unclear. AU and U.N. reports suggest that much of the original army has either deserted or been forcibly disarmed, while some Seleka commanders have reportedly been appointed by Djotodia to head regional military units.¹⁶ Western and African diplomats have also expressed concern over reported plans by Djotodia to integrate thousands of (ex-)Seleka elements into the defense and security forces.¹⁷ The armed forces of CAR, known as the FACA, numbered 7,000 or fewer troops prior to 2013—far too few to secure the countryside. The military, and particularly the Presidential Guard, have been implicated in abuses—notably during a counterinsurgency campaign in the north between 2005 and 2007¹⁸—and have exhibited ethnically biased recruitment under successive regimes. The FACA has also been noted for its internal disarray and neglect. Repeated attempts at supporting security sector reform, including recent efforts by France and South Africa, seem to have had limited impact.

A HISTORY OF POOR GOVERNANCE

CAR’s Government has struggled to assert control over the country’s remote and relatively unpopulated rural areas since independence from France in 1960. The country has long served as terrain for competition over resources and regional influence among neighboring states and national elites, as well as a hinterland for poaching and raiding by nonstate actors.¹⁹ Foreign troops, including from France and neighboring states, have been present for decades in various roles. Chad, Libya, and Sudan have periodically sought to wield influence over CAR governments or rebel movements to gain access to resources and leverage over opponents. In turn, CAR leaders have regularly appealed to outside forces to protect and advance their interests.

Until the early 1990s, CAR had a series of autocratic governments. The most notorious was that of Jean-Bedel Bokassa, who styled himself an Emperor and was implicated in massive embezzlement and human rights abuses. He was deposed in a coup backed by French troops in 1979. In 1993, Ange-Felix Patasse was elected President. A decade of ethnic tension and instability followed, including army mutinies in 1996–1997 that led to high levels of violence and the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping operation. In 2002, Patasse reportedly called on a rebel movement based in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo to help fend off domestic insurgents, leading to large-scale abuses against civilians, for which the leader of that rebel movement is currently on trial before the International Criminal Court.²⁰

Francois Bozize, an army general, rebelled against Patasse and, backed by Chad, ultimately took power in 2003. Bozize’s tenure brought relative stability to CAR for a time, along with modest donor-aided economic improvements. His rule was marked by successive, mostly low-level insurgencies in the north and northeast, however, and as of 2012 he was viewed as increasingly autocratic. His reliance on a Chadian security detail—and related perceptions that armed Chadians enjoyed impunity for abuses against civilians—reportedly contributed to local anger toward Muslims in general, and Chadians in particular. These tensions built on enduring resentment of external plundering of CAR resources. Such dynamics, as well as internal divisions among groups that had supported Bozize’s rise to power, drove successive rebellions and noninclusive peace processes over the past decade.

At its inception, Seleka drew on widespread frustrations with President Bozize. These included the concentration of power among Bozize’s family, close associates, and members of his Gbaya ethnic group; extensive state corruption; and the government’s inability to deliver tangible socioeconomic development outside of Bangui. Growing insecurity amid the deterioration of the army (due to lack of resources, among other factors), and Bozize’s failure to implement peace accords with armed movements, also drove popular grievances.²¹ Reportedly flawed elections in 2011, in which Bozize was returned to office and a number of his family members were voted into Parliament, were arguably a turning point, with donors and Central Africans alike increasingly viewing Bozize as a problem. Significantly, Bozize also angered

the Government of Chad by failing to crack down on Chadian antigovernment rebels who were using northern CAR as a safe haven. The International Crisis Group has pointed to an additional apparent factor in Seleka's rise—disaffected actors in the diamond sector who were reportedly fed up with state extortion under Bozize and may have contributed financing to Seleka leaders.²²

THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ACTORS

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), a subregional body, has played a front-line role in responding to the crisis in CAR.²³ However, regional rivalries, divergent interests, and a lack of capacity may threaten ECCAS's ability to channel international efforts to stabilize CAR. The regional leaders involved in addressing the situation in CAR are among the longest serving on the continent, and for the most part they have cultivated authoritarian regimes focused on protecting their own interests. This is likely to drive their calculations vis-a-vis CAR. The Presidents of Chad and Republic of Congo have each sought to position themselves as key regional mediators on CAR, but they are likely to have divergent security and financial interests there. Chad may also be a problematic actor in CAR given its role in bringing former President Bozize to power, local perceptions that Chad's President Idriss Deby allowed the Seleka to seize power when he became dissatisfied with Bozize, and the fact that some Seleka commanders are reportedly Chadian nationals or have other ties to Chad.²⁴ Cameroon, meanwhile, hosted former President Bozize when he first went into exile, and is now contending with an influx of refugees from CAR into its already fragile north, amid ongoing concerns about instability emanating from Nigeria.

In 2012, South Africa was seen as cultivating growing ties with Bozize's government. This included the deployment of South African troops to CAR, ostensibly for bilateral security cooperation and assistance. Some analysts interpreted South Africa's moves as part of a strategy of protecting potential mineral interests, and more broadly of seeking greater influence in francophone Africa.²⁵ They were therefore seen as a potential challenge to French and Chadian interests. South Africa withdrew its troops amid domestic pressures after 13 of its soldiers were reportedly killed during the Seleka assault on Bangui.

LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY PRESENCE

The LRA presence in CAR reportedly dates to a series of cross-border raids from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in early 2008 and 2009. CAR appears to have been used by LRA commanders as an ideal location for transiting through the region and procuring abductees and supplies, due to its remoteness, lack of an effective military, and location near territory familiar to the LRA in DRC and South Sudan.²⁶ LRA activities in CAR have generally been concentrated in the remote southeast, an area that has not historically been considered of strategic importance to the central government in Bangui. However, the region has received increased international aid and attention since Ugandan troops deployed to the area to pursue LRA leaders in mid-2009. (The population of southeastern CAR, as in much of the country, is largely made up of Christian and animist sedentary farmers, with a minority, largely Muslim, population of traders and nomadic herders. The Ugandan-led LRA, while nominally drawing on a messianic Christian ideology, has separate origins from the current ethnoreligious violence in CAR.)

The Ugandan military operation to counter the LRA has recently expanded into a multicountry effort headed by the African Union. Within CAR, the operation remains largely Ugandan-led. Nongovernmental organizations have surmised that LRA senior leaders are currently located in CAR. Recent LRA attacks have been reported west and north of the LRA's previous areas of activities, in the CAR provinces of Haute-Kotto (near Sudan and South Sudan) and Mbomou (near DRC).

OUTLOOK

As Congress probes the situation in CAR, you may examine the immediate crisis, its complex roots, and its longer-term implications. In the short-run, Congress plays a role in determining the appropriate funding levels, duration, and mechanisms of any U.S. international humanitarian assistance to CAR's population and any additional support for French and African military operations to disarm militias and restore stability. Much of the U.S. assistance package for regional military forces in CAR to date has been provided through the State Department's Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account, which is already stretched due to its use as a primary vehicle for crisis response, counterterrorism, and security sector reform efforts elsewhere on the continent. Congress may also consider the degree to which the United States might assist with future elections and other elements of the political transi-

tion in CAR, as well as any future efforts to support national reconciliation and accountability for atrocities.

Beyond questions of cost and duration, these lines of effort are likely to confront significant challenges. These include a complex operating environment for foreign troops, in which the enemy is not clearly defined; a lack of effective state institutions, particularly outside of Bangui; a deeply traumatized and increasingly divided society; and a probable lack of support for the planned political transition among CAR's currently most powerful figures. Newly authorized U.N. sanctions monitoring may provide valuable information on the role of regional actors, but acting on such information may pose difficult dilemmas for international policymakers, for example if partner states in the region are found to be implicated in abuses and/or criminal activities. Such dilemmas have been salient, for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and elsewhere.

French and African military interventions may bring a temporary end to tit-for-tat massacres, and could create the space for national-level discussions on the way forward. However, they are also likely to encounter difficulties in coordinating operations. African troops are likely to exhibit shortfalls of equipment, capacity, and financing, and could provoke local backlashes in some areas due to their nationality (e.g., association with Chad) and/or behavior. Indeed, Congress has restricted U.S. security assistance to several of the African states with troops in CAR, due to human rights concerns.

In the longer term, CAR confronts significant governance and security challenges, and the internal political and military arrangements that could allow for greater future stability may be elusive. States in the region, at times supported by France, the European Union, and U.N. agencies, have attempted multiple iterations of external military intervention, peace negotiations, and security sector reform efforts in CAR. Policymakers may therefore examine various past approaches and their limitations. In Resolution 2121, adopted in October 2013, the U.N. Security Council charged the previously existing U.N. Integrated Peacebuilding Office in CAR (BINUCA)—a political mission, not a peacekeeping operation—with a range of tasks, including support for disarmament efforts. However, U.N. staff face significant security constraints, and the mission's capacity to fulfill its new mandate has yet to be seen.

Ongoing international debates regarding the merits of primarily African-led versus U.N.-conducted multilateral stabilization operations are also at play in CAR. The international response to the security deterioration in CAR has a number of parallels to the debate a year ago over Mali—where the French military also took the lead, with U.S. bilateral support, while a regional stabilization force was deployed, and later incorporated into a U.N. peacekeeping operation. As observers have noted with regard to Mali, there are pros and cons to both African Union-conducted and U.N.-conducted peacekeeping operations. While neighboring states may have greater political commitment to resolving a crisis in their back yard, regional operations in Africa have also frequently been limited by a lack of capacity and handicapped by rivalries and competing interests.

On the other hand, U.N.-conducted peacekeeping operations, while better funded and vetted to a higher standard in terms of capacity and adherence to human rights principles, can be slow to materialize. U.N. troop contributors are also often more cautious in interpreting rules of engagement. With some exceptions (e.g., the U.N. operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo), the U.N. Security Council has also appeared more willing to grant stronger military mandates to AU military interventions than to U.N.-conducted peacekeeping operations. The AU Mission in Somalia, for instance, has repeatedly undertaken robust military action to counter violent extremists, and the West African operation in Mali that predated the current U.N. peacekeeping operation was initially given a wide-ranging mandate that, unlike its U.N. successor, would have included counterterrorism operations. There were reasons specific to the Mali context that influenced this evolution, and it remains to be seen how the Security Council will act in CAR. This debate is therefore likely to continue as donors, including the United States, consider how, and to what extent, to strengthen the AU operation in CAR or support any future U.N. operation there.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I will be pleased to respond to any questions the subcommittee may have.

End Notes

¹Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Robert Jackson, testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, "Crisis in the Central African Republic," November 19, 2013; Dow Jones, "France's Fabius Says Central African Republic on Verge of Genocide," November 21, 2013; and U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(UNOCHA) Director John Ging, quoted in CNN, “‘Seeds of Genocide’ Sown in Central African Republic, U.N. Official Warns,” November 13, 2013.

²See, e.g., Human Rights Watch (HRW), “I Can Still Smell the Dead: The Forgotten Human Crisis in the Central African Republic,” September 2013. As elsewhere in Africa, there have long been latent tensions between majority-Muslim ethnic groups, who are generally seminomadic pastoralists, and majority-Christian or animist groups, who are generally sedentary farmers. However, violence along ethnoreligious lines at the current scale does not appear to have occurred in the past.

³CIA World Factbook, 2013.

⁴USAID, “Central African Republic—Humanitarian Update #8,” December 12, 2013.

⁵HRW, “Central African Republic: Horrific Abuses by New Rulers,” September 18, 2013.

⁶A transition of missions, from the existing Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in CAR (MICOPAX, also referred to as the Central African Multinational Force or FOMAC) operation, which has been present in CAR since 2008—and replaced an earlier regional stabilization operation—to the African Union’s African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic (MISCA, also known as AFISM-CAR) is anticipated on December 19, 2013. U.N. Security Council Resolution 2127 directs the U.N. Secretary General to undertake “contingency operations and planning” for the possible transformation of MISCA into a U.N. peacekeeping operation, and to provide recommendations on such a possible transformation to the Security Council within three months. The resolution also mandates human rights investigations and imposes an arms embargo.

⁷Djotodia appears to have risen to power in CAR by outmaneuvering other would-be leaders within Seleka. Prior to 2013, Djotodia had a minimal public profile. He reportedly studied in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, returning to CAR in the 1980s and obtaining a low-level job in the civil service. After trying and failing to win election to Parliament, he reportedly entered the mining trade in northern CAR, where he pursued connections to a rebel movement known as the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR), a faction of which later became a founding component of Seleka. Djotodia later lived in Nyala, in the Darfur region of Sudan, where he reportedly represented the CAR Government as Consul. The connections he cultivated with Darfuri militia groups in Nyala later apparently became an asset both to Seleka (which leveraged these seasoned fighters to win its military victory in March 2013) and to Djotodia, who managed to sideline potential rivals within Seleka who had more extensive combat credentials. He was appointed First Deputy Prime Minister for National Defense (representing Seleka) in a January 2013 unity government, and subsequently declared himself President after Seleka seized power in March. See Louisa Lombard, “President Michael Djotodia and the Good Little Putschist’s Tool Box,” *African Arguments*, April 2, 2013; Agence France Presse (AFP), “Djotodia: Central Africa’s Rebel Boss-Turned-President,” April 13, 2013; and Scott Sayare, “Mystery Shrouds Rise and Aims of Rebel at Helm of Central African Republic,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2013.

⁸French officials have recently suggested that this timeline could be shortened to mid-2014.

⁹Remarks by French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius before the French Senate on October 16, 2013.

¹⁰Testimony of Human Rights Watch (HRW) U.N. Director Philippe Boloipon, House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, “Crisis in the Central African Republic,” *op. cit.*

¹¹Reuters, “Central African Republic Humanitarian Crisis Mounts Even As Attacks Ease,” December 13, 2013.

¹²Roland Marchal, “Central African Republic: Back to War Again?” *Global Observatory*, September 12, 2013; Boloipon/HRW testimony, *op. cit.*; France24.com, “Crise en Centrafrique: revivez les événements du jeudi 5 décembre,” December 5, 2013; Africa Confidential, “Central African Republic: On the Brink,” December 12, 2013.

¹³Testimony of Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jackson, “Crisis in the Central African Republic,” *op. cit.*; similar figures were reported by the AU in July 2013—see U.N. Security Council, Letter dated 9 August 2013 from the Secretary General addressed to the President of the Security Council, August 9, 2013, U.N. doc. S/2013/476.

¹⁴Testimony of Nestor-Desire Nongo Aziagbia, Roman Catholic Bishop of Bossangoa, before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, “Crisis in the Central African Republic,” *op. cit.*

¹⁵See, e.g., Louisa Lombard, “Is the Central African Republic on the Verge of Genocide?” *Africa is a Country*, December 5, 2013. In a recent French TV report, a Muslim resident of Bangui who had sought shelter from anti-balaka assailants stated angrily, “We’re Muslim . . . But this country belongs to all of us. There are idiots who don’t understand this country who think we are foreigners—we’re not foreigners!” France24, “Bangui, la capitale, en état de siège,” December 5, 2013.

¹⁶U.N. Security Council, Letter dated 9 August 2013 from the Secretary General addressed to the President of the Security Council, August 9, 2013, U.N. doc. S/2013/476; and Report of the Secretary General on the Central African Republic Submitted Pursuant to Paragraph 22 of Security Council Resolution 2121 (2013), November 15, 2013, U.N. doc. S/2013/677.

¹⁷Declaration of the 3rd Meeting of the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic, presided by the Republic of Congo and AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Bangui, November 8, 2013; a.k.a. the “Bangui Declaration.”

¹⁸HRW, “State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses Against Civilians,” September 2007.

¹⁹See Louisa Lombard, *Raiding Sovereignty in the Central African Borderlands*, Dissertation, Duke University, 2012.

²⁰See International Criminal Court Pre-Trial Chamber II, Decision Pursuant to Article 61(7)(a) and (b) of the Rome Statute on the Charges of the Prosecutor Against Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, June 15, 2009.

²¹International Crisis Group (ICG), Central African Republic: Priorities of the Transition, Africa Report No. 203, June 11, 2013.

²²ICG, "Priorities of the Transition," op. cit.

²³ECCAS member states are: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome & Principe.

²⁴For example, powerful Seleka figure Nouredine Adam, who was reportedly born in northern CAR and fought in several CAR rebel movements, also reportedly served in the Chadian army in the mid-2000s. See ICG, "Priorities of the Transition," op. cit.

²⁵France24, "South Africa 'Downplayed' Casualties in CAR Fighting," April 4, 2013.

²⁶The Enough Project, "On the Heels of Kony: The Untold Tragedy Unfolding in the Central African Republic, June 2010.

TIMELINE: SELECTED EVENTS

2002. The Economic Community of West African States (ECCAS) deploys a stabilization force to CAR in response to a rebellion by dissident military general-turned-rebel-leader Francois Bozize.

2003. Bozize seizes power with Chadian backing while then-President Ange-Felix Patasse is abroad.

2005. Bozize is elected President in a vote considered free and fair, after promulgating a new constitution.

2007–2008. Peace agreements are signed with three northern rebel groups. A national "political dialogue" is initiated, an amnesty law is promulgated, and preparations are made for rebel disarmament.

2008. A European Union Force (EUFOR), designed to contain regional instability emanating from Darfur, deploys to Chad and northeastern CAR under U.N. Security Council authorization.

2008–2009. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) launches its first known attacks in CAR.

2009. The U.N. peacekeeping operation MINURCAT, authorized in 2007, assumes EUFOR's mandate, deploys troops to northeastern CAR and eastern Chad.

2010. The U.N. Integrated Peacebuilding Office in CAR (BINUCA) opens, replacing a previous U.N. political mission in CAR since 2000. MINURCAT's mandate ends and the mission withdraws.

2011. President Bozize wins reelection and his coalition sweeps parliamentary elections that opposition groups claim are flawed.

Aug. 2012. A remaining northern rebel group signs a peace deal with the government. However, a faction joins with two other rebel groups to form the Seleka ("Alliance") rebellion.

Dec. 2012. Seleka forces advance toward the capital. ECCAS member-states send more troops.

Jan. 2013. The "Libreville Agreements" with Seleka, mediated by regional powers, provide for Bozize to remain in power, a Prime Minister to be appointed from the opposition, and a government of national unity to be established. Human rights activist Nicolas Tiangaye is appointed Prime Minister.

March 2013. Claiming the Libreville Agreements are not being respected, Seleka renews its advance and seizes power. Bozize goes into exile. Obscure Seleka figure Michel Djotodia declares himself President.

July 2013. The AU establishes a stabilization operation, MISCA, to absorb and replace the existing regional force, known as MICOPAX. A formal transition to MISCA is anticipated on December 19, 2013.

August 2013. Djotodia is formally sworn in as President, and an 18-month political transition timeline, agreed to by ECCAS, officially begins—with elections due in February 2015.

Sept. 2013. Djotodia orders Seleka disbanded amid mounting violence. Nominal Seleka commanders are implicated in a series of attacks on Christians and churches in western CAR.

Oct. 2013. U.N. Security Council Resolution 2121 expands BINUCA's mandate and requests options for providing additional international support to MISCA.

December 5, 2013. U.N. Security Council Resolution 2127 authorizes MISCA and French troops "take all necessary measures" to protect civilians and stabilize the country, among other tasks. The Resolution also directs the U.N. Secretary General to undertake "contingency operations and planning" for the possible transformation of MISCA into a U.N. peacekeeping operation, and to report to the Security Council within 3 months on recommendations on such a possible transformation. It also mandates human rights investigations and imposes an arms embargo.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Ms. Arieff. We appreciate CRS for all the great work that you do in providing background for literally all of our hearings.

Ms. ARIEFF. Thank you.

Senator COONS. Ms. Lisabeth List on behalf of Medecins Sans Frontieres.

**STATEMENT OF LISABETH LIST, MEDICAL COORDINATOR,
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERS/DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS,
NEW YORK, NY**

Ms. LIST. Thank you, Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Flake, for the opportunity to share our perspective from MSF. I am a nurse and I have been working for MSF since 1997, and this fall I worked in the Central African Republic as a medical coordinator. I worked in the town of Bossangoa responding to the emergency situation there. I joined a team of more than 100 international and 1,100 local staff working across the country.

We are encouraged that the subcommittee is turning its attention to the CAR, a country long neglected despite an ongoing silent crisis. Today the situation has worsened by added violence demanding immediate engagement by the international community, including the United States.

We regret to report, as we did in an open letter to the United Nations on December 12, that the humanitarian response in CAR has been wholly inadequate. Mr. Chairman, we have two fundamental concerns: first, the lack of assistance to populations displaced by the ongoing violence in different parts of the country; and second, the failure to tackle issues that have long affected CAR and the health of its people. The recent violence comes on top of a state of chronic emergency characterized by a crippled, if not collapsed, health system. These ongoing problems must be addressed.

As a quick overview, MSF has been working in the country since 1997, running seven medical projects. This year MSF opened four new emergency projects, including Bossangoa and Bangui. In Bangui MSF teams are providing lifesaving emergency care in two hospitals and are providing medical services to approximately 70,000 displaced people gathered in three sites.

Sanitary conditions in these sites are, in a word, deplorable. Many other needs remain unfulfilled, including food, shelter, and protection. More than 400,000 people are internally displaced throughout the country, roughly 10 percent of the country's population. Of those, 150,000 are reportedly trapped in the bush without access to food, water, or health care. The large geographic area where these civilians could be hiding, coupled with the overall lack of aid, makes it difficult to assess, let alone meet, the needs.

While immediate humanitarian assistance is required, the chronic crisis in the country also requires a long-term strategy. CAR's health indicators rank among the worst in the world. It has one of the lowest life expectancies at 48 years. 164 out of 1,000 children die before the age of 5, and I could go on.

In 2011, a year before the violence, an MSF retrospective mortality survey revealed mortality rates well in excess of emergency thresholds. Yet, despite consistent advocacy efforts, conditions on the ground were deemed not critical enough to warrant emergency

assistance. Now, around 60 percent of health structures have been looted or destroyed and 80 percent of health workers have fled their posts. Ninety percent of the country's medical structures have run out of drugs. We are facing a crisis on top of a crisis.

MSF's operational goal was to support the Ministry of Health, but since recent events the system has collapsed and now MSF fulfills many of the ministry's functions. In our projects we see a massive prevalence, incidence of mortality, attributed to preventable and treatable diseases. In CAR every individual in the population is infected with malaria at least once a year. It is the country's main killer. People displaced in the bush are at risk of greater exposure to malaria, and in early 2013 we observed an increase for children under 5 of 46 percent.

As well, CAR has the highest HIV prevalence in Central Africa. Approximately 45,000 people require antiretroviral therapy, but only one-third of those receive treatment, and at least 11,000 HIV-positive people have experienced treatment interruption and now risk developing resistance to antiretrovirals.

Of equal alarm is the state of immunization programs, which has always been poor, particularly in rural areas.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to illustrate the humanitarian situation through my experience in Bossangoa. Roughly 40,000 displaced persons are living in the town's Catholic mission compound, too terrified to return to their homes. Sanitary conditions are far below minimum emergency standards and as of last week individuals were provided with only 7.8 liters of water per day, well below the 15 to 20 liter standard in such settings.

Emergency humanitarian response entails risk, but MSF has demonstrated that international staff deployment is indeed feasible. It is also necessary. The lack of skilled medical personnel available in CAR and the need to protect our national staff from complex intercommunal violence has prompted us to increase international staff in the country. Throughout 2013 our teams never fully evacuated project sites. On the contrary, we expanded our presence in six of the most vulnerable areas of the country.

All the humanitarian organizations working in CAR have experienced security incidents, including MSF. Yet the humanitarian imperative should not be subservient to security concerns. In our view, security assessments are disproportionate to field realities.

The levels of funding for humanitarian activities also reflect the lack of attention paid. As of December 6, 2013, the two major donors for humanitarian funding, the European Commission and the United States Government, were individually contributing less than MSF's total 2013 operational budget for CAR, which amounts to \$37 million.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the chronic challenges facing CAR cannot be overcome by humanitarian assistance alone. We wish to recommend the following: First, humanitarian agencies must scale up interventions in remote areas in response to increasing needs, including to displaced populations. U.N. agencies in particular must increase activities since many aid agencies rely on them to provide an operational umbrella.

Second, immediate support must be provided to the severely disrupted public health system.

Finally, humanitarian funds must be raised and adapted to both the short- and long-term needs of the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to take your questions. [The prepared statement of Ms. List follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LISABETH LIST

Thank you Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and other members of the Committee, for providing Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Doctors Without Borders the opportunity to testify at this hearing on the Central African Republic, and to share our field perspective regarding the humanitarian situation there.

I'm a nurse, and I have been working for MSF since 1997. In October and November of this year I worked in CAR for 5 weeks as a medical coordinator. I worked in the town of Bossangoa, responding to the emergency situation facing its population.

We are encouraged that this subcommittee is turning its attention to the Central African Republic, a country long neglected by the international community while facing a silent crisis. Today, the situation in CAR is exacerbated by additional violence demanding urgent and immediate engagement by the international community, including by the United States.

We regret to report, as we did in an open letter to the United Nations on December 12, that the humanitarian response in CAR has been wholly inadequate.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to address two fundamental concerns regarding the disastrous humanitarian crisis affecting the Central African people:

- The lack of humanitarian assistance to populations displaced by the ongoing violence in different parts of the country;
- The lack of engagement and attention from the international community to tackle the issues that have long affected CAR and the health of its people. The recent violence comes on top of a state of chronic emergency, characterized by a crippled, if not collapsed, health system. These ongoing problems must be addressed.

MSF OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW IN CAR

MSF has been working in the CAR since 1997. MSF runs seven regular projects in Batangafo, Boguila, Carnot, Kabo, Ndele, Paoua, and Zemio. This year, MSF opened new emergency projects in response to the increasing humanitarian needs resulting from violence, displacement and the collapse of the health system. MSF opened four emergency projects in Bossangoa, Bouca, Bria and Bangui. A mobile emergency team provides care in Mbaiki and Yaloke zones, and MSF plans to initiate activities in Bangassou and Ouango.

In response to the recent violence in Bangui, MSF teams are providing life saving emergency care in two hospitals in Bangui, and are providing medical care services to approximately 70,000 displaced people gathering in three sites: Bangui airport, Boy-Rabe Monastery, and the Don Bosco Center. At this very moment, sanitary conditions in these sites, are, in a word, deplorable. Many other needs remain unfulfilled, including food, shelter, and protection.

Between December 5 and 12, 2013, MSF teams treated more than 350 wounded people in Bangui Community Hospital and tripled the facility's bed capacity. Between December 7 and 12, MSF teams performed more than 1,700 medical consultations in the three sites, including treating dressing wounds, burns, respiratory tract infections, and malaria. The teams also referred medical and surgical emergency cases to hospital structures in the city, including Castor Maternity, the Community Hospital, and the Pediatric Complex.

I joined a team of more than 100 international and 1,100 local staff working in 7 hospitals, 2 health centers, and 40 health posts across the country.

BACKGROUND

Since the military coup d'etat of March 22, 2013, the political, security, and humanitarian situation in Central African Republic has deteriorated considerably.

Continued political instability in Bangui has led to lawlessness across the country. The health system has collapsed, while medical facilities have been deliberately attacked. The lack of access to medical care has remained a constant challenge for populations in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

The country has experienced a chronic medical emergency for years, with little international attention and few humanitarian organizations operating on the ground, especially outside Bangui. The recent political and military developments

have exacerbated an already desperate situation, producing additional displacements of populations, particularly in isolated rural areas. Medical needs are rising and are far from being covered.

After years of neglect and abandonment, this forgotten country is finally making news headlines because of unprecedented levels of violence exacted on the population since the coup. Civilians, terrified by gruesome targeted killings and made even more vulnerable by forced displacement, are in even greater need of protection and assistance. Aid organizations are failing to deliver basic relief services.

Violence is today greatly impacting the lives of civilians. Immediate humanitarian assistance is required. However, given the chronic nature of CAR's challenges, a long-term perspective and strategy, encompassing funding and programmatic planning, must be adopted.

A CRISIS ON TOP OF A CRISIS

MSF has long sought to mobilize the international humanitarian community in CAR. Since 2011, we have illustrated the chronic medical emergency situation with retrospective mortality surveys in nonconflict areas of the country. In November 2011, we released a report titled "A State of Silent Crisis" that raised the alarm over mortality rates in excess of emergency thresholds in large parts of the country.¹

Based on mortality surveys undertaken by MSF epidemiological teams and other researchers over an 18-month period, the survey highlighted the inadequate levels of assistance provided by various aid actors to respond to this forgotten chronic medical crisis.

The survey noted decreasing expenditure levels on health by the government, but also a lack of long-term investment by the international community. The report concluded that greater medical assistance was necessary throughout the country. However, despite consistent advocacy and lobbying efforts, conditions on the ground were deemed not critical enough to warrant emergency assistance. The country was also unable to qualify for structural development funds.

CAR's health statistics continue to rank among the worst in the world. It has one of the world's lowest life expectancies at 48 years. All health indicators are beyond alarming, and, disturbingly, figures are certainly underreported.

—There is one doctor for every 55,000 people, and a nurse or midwife for every 7,000;

—164 out of 1,000 children die before the age of five;

—Of men between the ages of 15 and 60, 466 out of 1,000 perish; among women 420 die—a nearly 50-percent death rate.²

The military takeover by Seleka would prove to be the catalyst for further descent toward chaos, as looting and attacks targeting civilians for their meager resources became the norm, including in the capital city of Bangui. State buildings, ministries, schools, hospitals and private homes have been robbed and damaged while most civil servants have fled, and the country's archives have been destroyed. It is estimated that 60 percent of health structures were looted or destroyed since December 2012; 80 percent of health workers fled and took refuge in Bangui; drugs, vaccines, and medical supplies can't be distributed from the capital to the rural areas. Ninety percent of the country's medical structures have run out of medical stocks.

Violence between different armed groups, such as ex-Seleka forces and bush-based civilian militias (also known as "self-defense groups" or "anti-balaka") has fundamentally disrupted crucial aspects of people's lives, including schooling for children, agricultural production, access to functioning markets, and the degradation of essential infrastructure, including the few functioning health centers and hospitals. It is estimated that the country has more than 400,000 internally displaced people, roughly 10 percent of the country's population.

We are now facing a crisis on top of a crisis.

HEALTH SYSTEM ANALYSIS: PRIOR WEAK FUNCTIONING AND 2013 COLLAPSE

Over several years, MSF has witnessed the weaknesses of CAR's health system. Our operational goal was to support the Ministry of Health's provision of medical services. Yet since December 2012, we have only observed the system's collapse. As a result, MSF today fulfills many of the Ministry's functions. The public health system is more a phantom than a reality.

In our projects, we see a massive prevalence, incidence, and mortality attributed to preventable and treatable diseases.

Compounding this dire situation is an unknown number of forcibly displaced people scattered in the bush without any access to basic services.

Malaria

Malaria is holoendemic in CAR, meaning every individual in the population is infected at least once per year. It is the country's main killer and is the principal cause of morbidity and mortality among children.

The country's policy of free malaria treatment for children under 5 is in name only. The system is not functional and is plagued by essential drug stock ruptures and logistical constraints.

Frequent displacement of people into the bush since December 2012 has contributed to increased exposure to malaria. Prevention and treatment measures have been largely absent since the political crisis began. The large-scale mosquito net distribution planned by the Ministry of Health for 2013 was cancelled because of insecurity. The supply of malaria drugs to rural areas has also been disrupted.

In the first quarter of 2013, health facilities supported by MSF treated 74,729 patients for malaria, an increase of 33 percent over the same period in 2012, when 50,442 patients were treated. For children under 5 years of age, there has been an increase of 46 percent, from 23,910 in 2012 to 44,469 in 2013. In Boguila, for example, 61 percent of outpatient consultations of children under 5 were for malaria during the first quarter of the year, compared with 41 percent a year ago. While several factors could explain the increasing numbers in MSF-supported facilities, we believe the disruption of services provided by the Ministry of Health and other aid organizations certainly play a crucial role.

Huge challenges remain to increase access to diagnosis and treatment. Prior plans to decentralize care to primary health structures and to community health workers are now shelved. The objective of ensuring unbroken availability of life-saving artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) and rapid diagnostic tests in health centers and health posts has evaporated.

HIV-AIDS

CAR features the highest HIV prevalence in Central Africa. The epidemic is generalized among the adult population, with most transmission occurring sexually. Nonetheless, before the onset of recent violence, small gains were detected.

A national seroprevalence survey conducted in 2010 found a 5.9-percent infection rate among 15–49-year-olds, a slight decrease from the previous study result of 6.2 percent. While the rate in that age group had risen among men (4.3 percent to 5.4 percent), it had fallen among women (7.8 percent to 6.3 percent).³

The highest geographic concentration is in the capital (10.7 percent) and in areas affected by conflict. UNAIDS estimates that 110,000 adults and 17,000 children are HIV positive, while 11,000 people die each year from HIV-related complications. The Centre National de Lutte contre le Sida (CNLS, or National Centre for the Struggle Against AIDS) has estimated that 45,000 people, including 14,000 children, require antiretroviral (ARV) treatment.

But, at present, only some 15,000 people are receiving ARV treatment, just one-third of those who need it. MSF has 1,700 patients on first-line antiretroviral treatment.

The drug supply system has been disrupted for months. Widespread looting of medical facilities since the March 2013 coup has led the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to cease maintaining drug stocks in the country. These supply problems have had serious consequences on adherence to treatment and have led to the development of drug resistance.

MSF estimates that approximately 11,000 HIV-positive people (73 percent of all people who are on antiretroviral treatment in CAR) have had their treatment interrupted due to drug supply problems during the political upheaval.

This situation poses serious questions about potential risks of resistance to antiretroviral treatment, but also about the continuity of the national HIV program given the collapse of the health system and the lack of international and national actors to implement such a program.

Vaccination / Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI)

Vaccination coverage for childhood illnesses is poor and contributes to high levels of mortality from preventable childhood diseases.

One case of wild polio virus was reported near MSF's Batangafo project in late 2011; the child's father confirmed that their village had not been visited during polio vaccination campaigns in 2008 and 2011, due to permanent insecurity and armed clashes in the zone.

Immunization activities are usually functional at hospital level but, at health centers and in communities, these activities are more or less nonexistent. There are also no programs in place to bring immunization activities to more isolated areas. Furthermore, there have been recurrent stock ruptures of BCG, polio, and tetanus

vaccine, while the majority of health centers no longer have functioning cold chain equipment. There have been a number of ad hoc supplementary immunization activities undertaken, but with questionable coverage and quality.

Routine vaccination is one of the country's health care black holes. It can be safely assumed that most newborns since December 2012 have not had access to the routine vaccination package (EPI). This has increased the risk of outbreaks of diseases like measles, meningitis, and pertussis (whooping cough) over the coming 2 years, and has created a cohort of children particularly susceptible to such diseases.

With the support of the international community, a measles vaccination campaign was carried out in May 2013 by UNICEF and its remaining in-country partners. However, it was conducted in difficult circumstances, and was targeted primarily at children in Bangui and the surrounding area. Nothing has been proposed for the 1.5 million children living outside the capital. The withdrawal of most international assistance organizations leaves a phantom health system in CAR already unable to carry out adequate surveillance and monitoring of rural areas at risk of outbreaks.

Throughout the 2013 crisis, the health system has not been spared. Ministry of Health facilities have been looted of drugs, diagnostic tools, patient records, and even furniture. Most medical staff have fled their posts, especially those working outside the capital. These attacks have deprived an already vulnerable population of access to even basic medical treatment.

In sum, on the medical front, we are facing a chronic emergency situation.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION: DISMAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Humanitarian assistance can help lower deaths caused by endemic and epidemic diseases and by the effects of crisis, conflict, and displacement. But greater recent international attention on CAR, has yet to translate into a substantial humanitarian response.

Every day the situation becomes worse, and rising humanitarian needs go unmet. It has been 9 months since the military coup, a period characterized only by killings, injuries and displacement, and the disruption of basic services. MSF has raised the alarm at local, national, and international levels for months, calling for an immediate and more robust humanitarian response. Our calls have gone largely unanswered.

Today, we continue to witness a limited and slow humanitarian response. Even in Bangui, where most aid agencies are present, there are serious gaps in the humanitarian response to the recent violence.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to illustrate the humanitarian situation through my experience in Bossangoa, which is just one emblematic symbol of the current crisis.

Since early September, MSF has been providing health care and water and sanitation services to the displaced people living in the town. In October we treated 60 wounded people. And in early December we treated 20 people wounded in a new spike of violence.

As you may know, roughly 40,000 displaced people are living in the Catholic Mission's compound, terrified by the prospect of returning to their living quarters only a few hundred meters away or in nearby rural villages east and south of the city.

A full 4 months after they were displaced, the sanitary conditions at the Catholic Mission still do not meet minimum emergency standards. As of December 10, individuals were provided with only 7.8 liters of water per day, well below the 15–20 liter standard in such settings. There was only one latrine for every 166 persons, far below the recommended ratio of one to 20 persons. Not a single shower facility exists in the compound.

People are living in an area 20 times smaller than what would be required to meet emergency standards. Needs are enormous and MSF teams are observing a gradual rise in malnutrition, without an adequate and coherent response from humanitarian organizations, particularly from U.N. agencies.

This is an unacceptable situation for one of the rare IDP camps where populations are concentrated in one specific location, and where there could be an easier scale-up of services.

Populations living in other areas of the country affected by the recent violence, such as Yaloke, Mbaiki, Bangassou, Ouango, Bouca or Bouar, also do not receive the humanitarian assistance they desperately need. In those locations, there is a limited presence of humanitarian organizations.

The instrumentalized religious antagonisms and targeted brutality, which provoked previously unknown faith-based communal hatred, is alarming. This trend, combined with violence targeting civilians since last summer, has forced people into hiding to avoid being killed. People are abandoning their villages, which often end up burned to the ground by armed groups.

There are reports that up to 150,000 civilians could be trapped in the bush without access to food, water, or health care. The extent of the violence in rural areas and the large geographic scope where these civilians could be hiding makes it difficult for aid agencies to assess, let alone meet, their needs. People are constantly on the move to avoid slaughter.

The humanitarian situation is expected to worsen even further.

At the moment this hearing takes place, my MSF colleagues are working around the clock in Bangui in response to violence in the capital.

More than 350 wounded patients were treated in the Hospital Communautaire over the last few days. Most have wounds caused by gunshots, or by machetes and knives. MSF teams are strengthening hospital services by opening a second operating theater and increasing hospitalization capacity. A second team is working in Castor Health Center, treating patients with minor wounds and providing health services for pregnant women. A third team is carrying out mobile clinics for roughly 14,000 displaced persons gathered in Bangui airport and in Don Bosco Center.

Outside of a few groups responding to the emergency, the scale-up of humanitarian assistance has been dismal, leading to large gaps in aiding civilians fleeing the renewed conflict.

Security

MSF, like other humanitarian organizations, has to work in complex and challenging security environments. CAR is certainly one of those settings. Immediate deployment of relief efforts is both challenging and expensive. But we strongly believe it is possible and urgently required.

Humanitarian emergency response entails risk, but MSF has shown over the last year that an upgrade in capacity through international staff deployment is indeed feasible. Throughout 2013, our teams never fully evacuated from project sites. On the contrary, we expanded our presence in six of the most vulnerable areas of the country.

All the humanitarian organizations working in the country have been affected by security incidents, including MSF. In Bangui, our offices and houses, along with those of United Nations agencies and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have been repeatedly looted.

Yet the humanitarian imperative should not be made subservient to security concerns. It is our responsibility to do our utmost to provide life saving relief.

As you can imagine, given the humanitarian needs, CAR is one of the top ranking operational priorities for MSF. For this reason, MSF is making significant efforts to maintain regular projects and to scale-up assistance, including through the opening of four additional emergency projects and dispatching experienced international staff to the country.

For MSF, it is not only essential to deploy international staff given the lack of skilled medical personnel available in CAR, but also to avoid further exposing our national staff to complex intercommunal violence. In some rural locations, we have observed that the presence of international personnel provides a measure of reassurance for the terrified civilian populations.

Funding and other reported challenges for deployment of humanitarian assistance

The levels of funding for humanitarian activities reflect the lack of attention given to the country.

As of December 6, 2013, the two major donors for humanitarian funding were the European Commission (\$26.9 million) and the United States Government (\$24.6 million).⁴ Notably, MSF's total 2013 operational budget for CAR amounts to \$37 million. All of these figures do not reflect the additional expenditures required to deploy immediate and significantly increased humanitarian assistance.

However, the lack of experienced relief agency staff on the ground, and what in our view are security assessments disproportionate to field realities, present further, yet avoidable, obstacles to deploying much needed aid. As MSF has demonstrated, these are surmountable challenges. There is space to work.

CONCLUSION

The Central African Republic today finds itself in a state of chronic medical emergency compounded by unprecedented levels of violence. While the world has been looking elsewhere, Central Africans are suffering and dying in unacceptable numbers. Today, as the world turns its attention to CAR, longstanding needs should not be forgotten, and acute needs throughout the country must be addressed.

It is imperative to improve humanitarian aid across the areas where fighting has erupted since August 2013. Existing levels of assistance are plainly insufficient given the scale of needs. The country requires more aid organizations conducting

larger operations. We acknowledge the dilemmas faced by humanitarian actors, including over security. Yet these must be balanced against the massive needs observed across the country, which demand action.

Given the chronic challenges facing CAR, a long-term perspective and strategy is required. The basic services of a country cannot be run by humanitarian assistance alone. It is simply not sustainable.

The international community, donors, and major development actors, must double their efforts. The long-term prognosis is bleak, and unacceptable. Without profound external assistance, CAR's health system—among other sectors—will simply not function.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Humanitarian agencies must scale up interventions in remote areas in response to increasing needs

Difficult and volatile security conditions cannot justify a limited humanitarian presence outside the capital and the absence of proper monitoring and response mechanisms to the emergency.

The continuous presence of MSF teams in remote areas demonstrates that it is indeed possible to run regular aid programs, despite the instability. Context and security analyses must be improved. Additionally, a larger presence of emergency teams supported by experienced international staff is required to run operations and to protect national staff in a context of growing intercommunal tensions.

Humanitarian assistance to displaced populations must be enhanced and must respond to the enormous needs throughout the country

The situation for roughly 40,000 IDPs in Bossangoa and tens of thousands of others in Bangui, have rightly caught the attention of the international community. But the broader reality is much worse. All around the country, an estimated 400,000 displaced persons are neglected, most of them exposed to daily violence, deprived of any dignified living conditions. They are exposed to the most common and treatable diseases, yet they have no access to medical assistance.

The public health system is severely disrupted and desperately needs immediate support

Ministry of Health facilities have been robbed and looted of drugs, diagnostic tools, patient records, and even furniture. Most medical staff have fled their posts, especially those working outside the capital. Health surveillance systems have stopped, as well as routine vaccination activities. The risk of epidemics is high, particularly in IDP sites, while the annual malaria peak is ongoing. Moreover, widespread insecurity is preventing the population from accessing the few remaining health facilities. The national health system, already dysfunctional before the crisis, is now severely disrupted.

Humanitarian funds must be raised and adapted to both the short- and long-term needs of the country

For years, the country has been trapped between emergency and chronic needs. While it is urgent to mobilize significant humanitarian funding to save lives today, longer term and resource intensive programs to restore the country's basic services must be implemented.

U.N. agencies must increase their operations

All international agencies and NGOs must increase their activities in CAR. United Nations agencies in particular must increase their capacities on the ground, since many aid agencies rely on them to provide an umbrella under which they operate. Humanitarian and development agencies must scale up and maintain their commitments.

End Notes

¹“Central African Republic: A State of Silent Crisis,” November 2011: <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/reports/2011/A%20State%20of%20Silent%20Crisis%20EN.pdf>.

²“WHO, Central African Republic, Health Profile 2011,” <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/car.pdf>.

³UNFPA (2011), Présentation des principaux résultats de la sérologie VIH prévalence du VIH de la Quatrième Enquête Nationale a Indicateurs Multiples 2010. [Powerpoint presentation.]

⁴Funding figures are as of December 6, 2013. All international figures are according to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service and based on international commitments during the current calendar year, while USG figures are according to the USG and reflect the most recent USG commitments based on the associated fiscal years, which began on October 1 of 2012 and 2013. Figured quoted from USAID, Central African Republic—Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet

#1, FY 2014. (December 6, 2013) http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/car_ce_fs01_09?30?2013.pdf

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Ms. List.

We would now like to turn to Mark Schneider of the International Crisis Group. Mr. Schneider.

**STATEMENT OF MARK SCHNEIDER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me express my appreciation for the Crisis Group to you and to the ranking member and to the subcommittee for focusing attention on the humanitarian and political disaster in the Central African Republic.

Crisis Group analysts have reported regularly on the situation in the Central African Republic and have identified over the years corrupt governance, discriminatory distribution of public services, plundering of mineral wealth, abusive and often brutal security forces as root causes of conflict. Our analysts left this weekend, but will be returning shortly.

I think it is important to recognize that this crisis has been building for decades and unfortunately no one has been paying enough attention. The country's socioeconomic indicators are the worst in Africa. Let me just give you two indicators of the failure of focus of the international community.

You heard the life expectancy last year was estimated at somewhere between 48 and 49 years. In 1990 life expectancy was estimated at 48 years. In 1980 GDP per capita was estimated at \$963. In 2012 GDP per capita was estimated at \$722. That reflects just the failure of development and essentially the corrupt management of governance.

Today the Central African Republic is a collapsed state, with more than, as you have heard, 613,000 internally displaced persons, including almost a quarter of the capital city's population. While you have heard that over recent months you have seen an additional 70,000 refugees going to neighboring countries, in fact there are some 230,000 total refugees from CAR in countries, in neighboring countries.

Virtually all the displaced in the CAR are in hiding or in makeshift camps, with little or no security, water, food, or shelter. They have fled sectarian atrocities and the potential for further killing demands that we ask more can be done, how can it be done faster, and who can do it.

We all can thank the French Government for quickly deploying the Sangaris rescue force of 1,600 troops in recent days. The reality is that the international community was woefully slow to respond to the signs of rising insecurity, growing religious tensions between the Christian and Muslim communities, a stalled political transition, and mounting evidence of armed groups under little control.

The state, rarely seen beyond Bangui, now has also vanished in the capital, with ministries, police stations, and courts looted. As you have heard, the description of the Ministry of Health is the same description of every other ministry, where the buildings themselves have been looted, the ministers and the public servants

have either fled or are in hiding, and they essentially have no state functioning.

In recent days, as you know, Seleka forces have also gone on a door-to-door killing spree, spawning a cycle of retaliation in which civilian Muslims suspected of being close to Seleka have been targeted and some massacred. Residents have fled en masse to churches, mosques, and orphanages that are now sanctuaries for a battered population.

We described in recent days three potential immediate scenarios. First, a continuation of urban war and religious massacres despite the presence of French troops and a fully deployed MISCA. Second is a stalemate in which the bulk of the anti-balaka forces remain outside Bangui and the major threat in the city comes from Seleka forces, and they we believe would be rather quickly neutralized by the French and MISCA.

Third and probably the best scenario would be a decision by the anti-balaka forces to leave Bangui, return to the provinces, and a parallel decision by the Seleka fighters to return to the barracks and to participate in a renewed program of DDR.

Each of these scenarios will affect the prospects for ending the crisis. However, in any case we believe the following three actions are immediately necessary.

First, restore law and order or at the very least stability and order in Bangui, with priority for disarming illegal armed groups and protecting IDP centers and assuring humanitarian access.

Second, to reestablish law and order in the cities where interreligious clashes have already been reported, extending order beyond Bangui to the northwest, and secure the main economic corridors from Bangui to the Cameroon and Chad borders, and again with a priority for humanitarian protection and access.

Third is to ensure that those responsible for international peace enforcement and peacekeeping forces are tightly coordinated, fully resourced, rapidly deployed, and complemented by rapid installation of combined international and CAR police.

The United States, as you know, has begun to support the AU military deployment and U.N. planning. What is critical is that the United States continue to cooperate in order to ensure that the MISCA peacekeeping mission and, if there is ultimately a U.N. peacekeeping mission, reflects the right balance in terms of national troop contributors, religion, and skill sets, particularly police, engineers, and medical units.

I would also emphasize that we would urge the United States to encourage the United Nations to accelerate its current time line for assessing conditions on the ground and the adequacy of the existing peacekeeping force, to make recommendations to the Security Council on the need for a U.N. PKO, its mandate, how it will build and incorporate appropriate MISCA forces, and also to try and maintain an appropriate AU commitment to whatever comes next, even if the troops are blue-helmeted.

Finally, we have to raise questions about the U.N. capacity. There have already been two U.N. peacekeeping forces. MINURCAT ended in 2010 and was criticized for lack of resources. The current political mission, BINUCA, while it has had a recently expanded mandate, is vastly underresourced and, as an example,

has two people working on DDR, it has got four people responsible for doing the human rights monitoring, investigation, and documentation. It is simply inadequate.

There are five additional steps we believe in the mid-term and the United States should support them all: Obviously, the DDR process.

Second, interfaith reconciliation and community-level activities of social cohesion and peace-building.

Third is to investigate and document and hold accountable those responsible for the atrocities that have taken place.

Fourth is to undertake an inquiry, which is called for in the Security Council resolution, into the illegal exploitation of diamonds, gold, and other minerals, for two reasons. That finances the Seleka and other illegal forces; and it also gives you one way to begin to get state resources, revenues back into the government.

Finally, kickstarting the economic recovery.

The United States should support these efforts directly through USAID and the State Department and through the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations. You have heard the United States is considering, I think, additional humanitarian relief. We also think the United States should consider what it would take to open up the Embassy in Bangui once again, what is the protection that it needs, and to provide it. If the United States is going to play a political role you have to be on the ground.

I think that as part of the efforts to prepare for the upcoming donors meeting in the beginning of February there needs to be an honest review of what has failed over the past decade in development, in security, in DDR, in order to begin to build a plan that will have some possibility of success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schneider follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK L. SCHNEIDER

I would like to express my appreciation to the chairman, Senator Christopher Coons, ranking member, Senator Jeff Flake, and members of the Africa Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the opportunity to testify for the International Crisis Group this afternoon and for focusing attention on the humanitarian and political disaster in the Central African Republic.

Crisis Group analysts have reported regularly on the Central African Republic identifying the underlying causes of conflict in that country stemming from corrupt governance, discriminatory distribution of public services, plundering of diamond, gold, and other mines, and abusive and often brutal security forces. Our analyst left Bangui this weekend.

THE SITUATION TODAY IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Central African Republic is a collapsed state today, with more than 613,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), including close to a quarter of the capital city's population, and another 230,000, who also have fled their homes and now are refugees in neighboring countries, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Virtually none of those displaced are in secure or controlled sanctuaries. Instead they are hiding in the bush or in make-shift quarters with no one fully responsible for their safety. In fact, they are easy targets in the still chaotic security situation in Bangui and many other cities as the French Sangaris rescue operation is just being deployed. Sangaris has yet to be tightly coordinated with the African Union peacekeeping operation MISCA, authorized under Chapter VII by the Security Council, which only comes into being this Thursday (19 December).

Despite the best efforts of senior religious figures such as the Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga and Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, the evidence of sec-

tarian atrocities and the potential for further killing demands that we ask what more can be done, how can it be done faster, and who can do it.

While we can thank the French Government for quickly deploying a force of 1,600 into the CAR, the reality is that the international community was woefully slow to respond to the signs of rising insecurity, growing religious tensions between the Christian and Muslim communities, a stalled political transition and mounting evidence of armed groups under little control. In June, Crisis Group raised concerns of a new dangerous turn toward anarchy following last December's Seleka military offensive, the March coup by the same Seleka rebel force that deposed former President Bozizé and installed its new government under President Michel Djotodia, and the clear lack of commitment, control, and capacity of that transitional government to carry out the emergency measures that were required to restore stability and security. We also criticized the failure of the international community to mount a support effort that might prompt the needed actions by that transitional government.

Instead the last 6 months have seen a state collapse of historical proportion. Before this coup, a popular joke in CAR was that the state ends at PK12, the last Bangui suburb. Now the state has also vanished in the capital city with ministries, police stations, and courts looted in the city and across the country. Several Ministers recently fled the crisis in Bangui and some of them were fired last Sunday (Finance, Public Security, and Livestock Ministers). Schools also remain closed and many have been sacked, homes have been trashed and at least several thousand burned to the ground and hospitals and clinics have come under attack. Atrocities have taken place in many communities. In Bangui, Seleka forces have also gone door-to-door in neighbourhoods such as Boeing, Boy Rabe, and PK12 to seize men over the age of 15—often to execute them. A vicious cycle of retaliation has started and civilian Muslims suspected of being close to the Seleka are now targeted and some have been massacred. Residents of Bangui have fled en masse to sites where they hope to find some protection: the airport, the community of Don Bosco, the orphanage Saint Joseph Mukassa in Cattin area, the church St Jean de Gabaladja in Gobongo, the church in the Castor neighbourhood, the monastery of Boy Rabe, the St. Paul parish in Ouango or, for Muslims, the mosque of Ali Baboulo near the neighbourhood of Miskine and the Islamic school, next to PK5 are now sanctuaries for a battered population.

Seleka fighters also have targeted those they suspect of supporting the anti-balaka groups, self defense groups that largely formed in response to the Seleka violence but also were led, in many cases, by former members of the Bozizé security forces. It is clear the objective of the anti-balaka groups coming into Bangui is not self-protection but the ousting of the Seleka fighters and the transitional government. However, recent contacts between a group of anti-balaka and Djotodia indicate that there could be a small room for negotiations. Djotodia said last Sunday that he is willing to release some prisoners and to offer several seats in the government to Gbaya people close to the anti-balaka.

Bangui's residents have been arming themselves on both sides of the religious divide and every day new revenge killings are committed. In the last few weeks, groups of Peul (Fulani) pastoralists, who are generally Muslim and have been targets for the anti-balaka, have killed Christians in Bangui in retaliation.

Three potential immediate security scenarios

First is a continuation of urban war and religious massacres despite the presence of French forces and a fully deployed MISCA. This scenario would be prompted in part by the belief that the French will change the balance of power by disarming the Seleka fighters and provide an avenue for more anti-balaka to come to the capital and help launch a new offensive against the transitional government, hoping for support from many Bangui residents. Even more religiously based massacres would take place with neither the French nor the MISCA able to contain widespread violence.

Second would be a stalemate in which the anti-balaka forces remain outside Bangui and the major threat in the city would come from Seleka forces whom the French and MISCA together would ultimately neutralize allowing for the restoration of peace and security in the city.

Third would be a decision by the anti-balaka forces to leave Bangui and return to the provinces and a parallel decision by the Seleka fighters to return to the barracks and to participate in a renewed program of DDRR.

Each of these scenarios will affect the prospects for ending the current crisis. However, we believe that the following three immediate security actions are required under all three.

Immediate security steps required

First, restore law and order (or initially at least stability and order) in Bangui.

a. French forces, MISCA and the returning CAR police gendarmerie need to carry out joint patrols in Bangui and disarm anyone—Muslim or Christian—in possession of a weapon and require that any armed group return to barracks. Patrols should include judicial police officers able to make arrests. Policing Bangui to prevent revenge attacks is now essential.

b. Along with the street patrols in the center of Bangui, the French and international forces must prioritize the estimated 40 IDP informal centers around Bangui, along with hospitals and medical centers, and ensure humanitarian access in conjunction with OCHA in the city.

c. Immediate control needs to be established along the key roads into and out of Bangui.

Second, reestablish law and order in the tense communities where interreligious clashes have been reported, particularly in Bangui and the northwest and secure the main economic corridors from Bangui to the Cameroon Border and from Bangui to Bossembele-Bossangoa to the Chad border. Again a priority must be to provide security and humanitarian assistance in the hotspots, particularly among IDP camps in the provinces. Opening major roads not only will mean faster, more sustainable relief to those communities but it will permit some economic reactivation along those corridors and seek to prevent further spill-over to neighbouring countries.

Third, steps need to be taken to ensure that those responsible for international peace enforcement and peacekeeping forces are tightly coordinated, fully resourced, rapidly deployed, and complemented by a rapid installation of combined international and CAR police forces. Militarily the French are in the lead and their robust capabilities are the best hope to halt more atrocities in Bangui. However, they cannot be everywhere and do everything and therefore it is essential that the U.S. not only cooperate fully with the French but also speed its own support to the MISCA peacekeeping mission and encourage the right balance of forces in terms of national troop contributors and religious balance and the right skill sets—such as police, engineers, and medical units—in addition to combat troops.

Support needed for AU military deployment and U.N. planning

The U.S. announcements of a \$40 million support package for MISCA, followed by the President's authorizing of an additional \$60 million to support the French and to help provide logistics and lift to the African Union troop contributing countries are extremely welcome. We would hope that those funds are quickly moved through the bureaucratic process so that they can be available as early as the troop contributors are ready to move. We understand that DOD also has moved separately on emergency authority to bring some of the promised 850 Burundian soldiers into the country. It would be essential to use some of the DOD assistance to provide mobility (including armoured vehicles) and communication to the deployed African contingents. We also would urge the U.S. to encourage the U.N. and the AU to make good on the commitment to assure that some 1,000 of the first 3,600 contingent of MISCA forces are a mix of gendarmerie and street cops. It also is clear to all that a far larger peacekeeping force, at least at the level of an additional 2,400 MISCA forces, as agreed by the French, the AU, CAR neighbours, the EU and U.N. representatives in the last summit held in Paris on CAR 2 weeks ago, is going to be required. And at least an equal portion of them should be police, capable of working side by side with suitably trained CAR police in communities across the country.

Yet at the moment, the number of international police is a fraction of what is needed. Nor is there a clear indication that steps have been taken to identify French-speaking police who can make up the difference. We would urge everyone involved to make this a major priority. No one in the AU or the U.N. is able to answer the question of who is ready to provide civilian police or when. Policing Bangui and the other CAR cities is going to be key to avoid further revenge attacks and to reestablish state authority.

There is a separate issue which relates to whether and when MISCA will need to be transformed into a follow-on U.N. peacekeeping mission. MISCA needs to get on the ground at its full size and the French will need to work closely with them to achieve initial military control. It also is clear that the U.N. should accelerate its current timeline for assessing conditions on the ground and the adequacy of the existing peacekeeping force and make recommendations to the Security Council on the need for a UNPKO, the mandate for that PKO, how it will build on and incorporate appropriate MISCA forces and how the strength of the Africa Union commit-

ment can be harnessed even as the troops shift to wearing blue helmets in what could be a new hybrid mission.

Clearly one of those elements is a robust police and justice capacity able to help CAR reestablish its own justice system first in Bangui and at a later stage in the provinces.

The U.N. Secretary General was requested to “undertake expeditiously contingency preparations and planning for the possible transformation of MISCA into a United Nations Peacekeeping operation.” We would urge the committee to press the administration to request that the planning be accelerated and that clear recommendations for that follow-on PKO be available as early as next month so that the detailed planning for Troop Contributing Countries and their financing can be placed on a fast track.

One real doubt about any proposal to establish a new U.N. peacekeeping mission is to recall that there already have been two previous U.N. peacekeeping missions, the last one, MINURCAT, ended in 2010. Much of the criticism of MINURCAT related to its not having the resources to carry out its mandate.

The current U.N. political mission in CAR, BINUCA, has a recently expanded mandate, yet remains vastly underresourced. As one example, despite its role in supporting DDR, it was reported as having only two officials dedicated to defining a DDR strategy. Similarly, to carry out its role in investigating and documenting human rights abuses, BINUCA only has four or five officials for the entire country. Without the promised security as well, BINUCA staff are unable to move beyond their compounds, let alone open the provincial offices as planned.

Medium-term concerns

There are additional steps that need to be taken to maintain security over the medium term and they all have to begin now and the U.S. should support them all:

(1) Disarmament, demobilization, “repatriation,” and reintegration (DDRR). In CAR, the DDR program has to incorporate a significant element of repatriation since a major portion of the Seleka group leaders are foreign fighters, mostly from Chad and Sudan. So in the planning for this fifth DDR process in some 15 years in CAR, new thinking is required. First the diplomatic component needs to be in place for those foreign fighters to be repatriated to their own country. Similarly the Seleka fighters need to be pressed to reenter cantonments and a process begun for their demobilization and access to some form of civilian employment or retraining. Some might be able to qualify for reintegration into community policing in the provinces but simply to incorporate them into a reconstructed army is a bad idea.

Disarmament of the newly armed population also must begin once the Seleka have gone back to barracks and been disarmed. Such disarmament will lessen the likelihood of revenge killings. In Bangui, we already have seen some of those ex-Seleka being lynched.

(2) Interfaith reconciliation, community-level social cohesion, and peacebuilding activities need to be promoted in Bangui first and throughout the country as soon as possible. Radio messaging from interreligious representatives, along with neighborhood-level peacebuilding activities, is essential given the present high level of religious violence in Bangui. Religious youth associations need to be incorporated into these neighbourhood-level mediations and dialogues. International religious leaders also might need to be brought into the effort to help reduce tension between the two religions.

(3) Investigation, documentation of atrocities, and holding accountable those responsible was a role laid out clearly for BINUCA. Yet the capacity of the relevant BINUCA unit is simply inadequate to that task. In other instances, the U.S. has actually funded NGOs to document those atrocities and then to submit that information to local judicial authorities. These kinds of efforts should be considered.

(4) An inquiry into the plunder of natural resources (ivory, gold, diamonds, etc.) is essential as a way to understand who benefits from the present disorder and to reduce financing of illicit militias. The CAR is suspended from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the Kimberley Process. Such an investigation can help formulate a roadmap for the reintegration of CAR into these international bodies. In other instances, the U.S. has also funded NGOs to do this kind of inquiry.

(5) Kick-starting the economic recovery: In a country where near 50 percent live in extreme poverty and the bulk of the militias on either side are young, unemployed, and unhappy, a major focus should be attempted on promoting reconstruction of public infrastructure with labour intensive rebuilding efforts that reach those young people. Also to the extent possible, community based reconstruction should be attempted.

The U.S. can support all of these efforts directly, through the World Bank, the African Development Bank (ADB), and the U.N. as well as bilaterally through USAID and the State Department.

The U.S. also should examine what more humanitarian relief can be made available immediately and respond quickly to OCHA requests in this regard.

Let me suggest one additional step for the U.S. to take immediately: determine what level of protection is needed to permit the reopening of the CAR Embassy and the assignment of a new Ambassador. U.S. political engagement is much more likely to succeed when you are in-country.

The Seleka coup and the subsequent inability of the transitional authorities to function contributed to the final implosion of the CAR state. While there now is a need for emergency response, we also need to avoid the usual quick fixes. The CAR collapse has been 20 years in the making with flawed development, corrupt governance, and constant socioeconomic regression at its root. The country's socioeconomic indicators are among the worst in Africa. Resuscitating CAR will require a focus on economics, particularly prioritizing job creation for the country's large pool of unemployed youth. If we want to break this historical and long-term decline, the USG should urge the donor community to undertake an honest review of the development, statebuilding, and governance failures of the last 10 years. This review should be a mandatory preparation for the donors' conference scheduled for next February. It also is directly relevant to any hopes for a successful political transition. The timeline for the proposed electoral element of that transition also has to be reviewed in light of recent events along with a hard look at security sector reform and a recognition that CAR's major security threat is internal and resides in the failure of economic development to benefit all but a small minority who controlled state power.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

One of the things that has failed, in that broad review of the many things that have failed, as you have described in some detail, is the state, the entire mechanism of the state. Ms. List described how the health ministry has almost completely failed to function. You described how all the other ministries and basic functions of government have largely ceased to exist.

So some observers have suggested that CAR, the state, is so completely broken that external actors will have to perform almost a trusteeship role, whether it is in the treasury functions or security functions or health functions, and that we are a long way from having anything like the basic framework of a state to build upon.

How would you imagine that playing out? You mentioned in passing that the BINUCA office is dramatically underresourced and it is supposed to have a role in the political transition mandate. You referenced MISCA and the French forces and their potentially central role in securing transportation corridors and in providing basic security and policing functions. Exactly how do you see us moving forward in rebuilding the essence of a state and in stabilizing the situation? What is the most important contribution we can make across these?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Right now there is a single most important function and that is to provide security. You cannot begin to build the other elements until you have adequate security and begin the disarmament process of Seleka and the anti-balaka forces both. I think that the French are beginning to do that, and hopefully, together with MISCA, which by the way needs to grow from where it is supposed to—2 days from now MISCA will exist. It does not exist now. And they have committed 3,600, of which 1,000 should be police. They do not have them.

Then they agreed 2 weeks ago in Paris to go to 6,000. They do not have them. You need to get those forces on the ground deployed

and gain physical control over Bangui and the other major cities and the corridors. That has to be done.

Parallel to it, in terms of your question, it does seem to me that the international community at this donors conference needs to begin to look at what a transitional structure would be in terms of assisting in a parallel way provision of services, relief, humanitarian concerns, at the same time begin to build back in each sector the state capacity. And I do mean to begin to build back, because it simply does not exist.

I think if you have security some of those people would come back to each ministry, and if you had it you would have to have a structure that I suspect the United Nations together with international donors will have to put together.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Ms. Arieff, are there individuals, civil society leaders or other religious leaders, that could promote reconciliation, that could move beyond this current crisis domestically in concert with the international effort and forces that Mr. Schneider is speaking to?

Ms. Arieff.

Ms. ARIEFF. Yes, I think there certainly are and I think, as you yourself have identified, as the State Department has identified, there are religious community leaders in CAR who are already on their own initiative attempting to pass messages of reconciliation and peace-building, trying to calm down interreligious tensions.

The leaders with whom you yourself have spoken represent the main three organized religious communities in CAR, the Protestant community, the Catholic community, and the Muslim community. That is already an incredible start. Now, is that enough? Probably it is not enough to reach all of the populations that are affected by the current violence.

In fact, in the last few weeks as violence has increased or as it increased in early December, we saw a very worrying pattern in which mobs were even threatening some of these religious leaders and in one case, according to news reports, French troops had to intervene to sort of protect the country's Muslim community leader. So that is certainly worrying.

I think more broadly civil society groups in CAR have historically been quite weak in terms of capacity and unity. So that is also sort of a larger challenge.

I think as we look forward international policymakers may want to ensure that any national-level reconciliation and accountability efforts that may come in the medium to long term are complemented by reconciliation processes at the very local level. Certainly there are national level contests over state power and national identity and access to resources that are playing out. But as we have seen in other conflicts and in CAR, local level actors are using the national level disorder to settle scores and act at a very local level. So certainly there is that disconnect that may need to be addressed in the long run.

Senator COONS. Ms. List, you described a state of sort of chronic emergency, where the underlying health indicators in CAR are at the very bottom, some of the worst health conditions in the continent, and the widescale infection with malaria, the HIV-AIDS

rates, suggest that there is a significant already unmet medical need before the Ministry of Health largely collapsed.

So first we need to scale up, as you put it, services to those remote areas, those in IDP camps, support the reestablishment of the public health ministry. What lessons are there that we could learn from comparable crises, whether in Somalia or the DRC, in terms of how to rebuild the essential health services that have at this point gone almost to zero?

Ms. LIST. Well, I think first one of the most important aspects is to engage people from all sides within the conflict and make sure that you have everybody on board with that common goal. It will continue to be a tricky situation as we move further along. As I said, before we were trying to support the Ministry of Health and now in the current situation we are basically substituting. At the moment we need more actors, more action, meaningful action, to substitute those services until we can help and support the ministries to get back to a proper or some level of functioning where they can not only participate, but take on more and more responsibility.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

The MSF issued an open letter to the United Nations and that was also reflected in your testimony. It is very critical of the U.N. response and how long it has taken. Last week the interagency standing committee, as was referenced by the Assistant Secretary, elevated the emergency level at CAR to Level 3. Will that in your view trigger the kind of response that has been lacking? Will that move U.N. entities and agencies—in fact, I will ask all three of you if I might. Will that heighten the focus and attention on this enough in order to deliver the resources needed?

Ms. LIST. I hope so. Up to this point there has been some high-level people arriving. But what we need is very quick, immediate action, and we need to kind of relook at how we do security analysis, because I think that has been one of the major hindrances for a lot of actors who rely on funding to be out and active in rural areas and other towns. It has been very disproportionate to the reality.

So yes, I hope so, but it needs to be quick and meaningful action.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

If I might briefly, Ms. Arieff, Mr. Schneider, and then I will turn it over to Senator Flake.

Ms. ARIEFF. Very briefly because I am sure that Ms. List is more of an expert on the humanitarian side than I am, but U.N. humanitarian agencies do have a presence on the ground. Through their strategic planning process, they recently released a new strategic plan for CAR in line with this new designation. While U.N. agencies are likely to bring greater resources and coordination capacity to bear in the coming months, U.N. and other humanitarian workers do face real challenges, including security threats and a very uncertain political environment.

On top of that, as has been mentioned and as U.N. documents mention, the CAR Government is basically incapable of providing any leadership or coordination on the humanitarian response, and that differs even from other similarly poor, weak states in Africa.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. If I could, the amount that was requested last Friday, I guess is when that strategic plan was issued, was \$247 million. Clearly that is a major increase appeal from the United Nations for humanitarian support. I guess I would have one cautionary note. I think that I would argue that in everything that is done with respect to humanitarian assistance that if they are going to do it over a period of a year, fine. If it is a 3- to 5-year program, then I think they need—everything needs to have an element of how do we rebuild functioning public services, how do we assist local government and national government so that at the end of the process there is something there that is sustainable.

I would also add one other point, which is that I think that the determination of how you move from where we are to a functioning state is one that is going to require the continuing full engagement of the international community, the United Nations, European Union, African Union, and the United States.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Schneider. Thank you to the entire panel.

Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Ms. List, you said in your testimony that the humanitarian response has been wholly inadequate. Is it a matter of the amount of resources, the dollar figure, or is it the deployment and what we are doing with it that is more of a problem, or both?

Ms. LIST. I would say it is both. The deployment of people is a problem in that in this type of a crisis you need experienced people who are familiar with conflict situations, who are not afraid to go out and go into the bush in areas that way. So it is not just the number of people deployed, but it is the level of experience of people who are deployed.

And as well the funding has been low. For instance, in Bossangoa we are working really with very few other actors, where we are finding the needs are completely overwhelming. MSF is not normally taking a big lead in water and sanitation, for instance, but there that has been one of our main activities because it has been so urgent to get that addressed.

Senator FLAKE. What is the level of Doctors Without Borders? How many individuals do you have in country?

Ms. LIST. We have over 100 international staff and we are employing over 1,100 national staff. So 100 international staff spread out over seven projects, regular projects, and four new emergency projects, it is a hefty number. And still the needs are still greater than what we can handle at the moment.

Senator FLAKE. I commend you and your organization for being in there. That is a tough, tough situation. So thank you.

Ms. Arieff, you mentioned that Seleka—that they obviously have gone too far, but they had legitimate gripes. What are those legitimate gripes that they have had and how will those need to be addressed with any future government?

Ms. ARIEFF. I think that goes to the heart of the matter of the conflict in CAR, is acknowledging that there are underlying grievances among local populations certainly that in some cases might have led them to support Seleka, whether or not Seleka leaders

themselves are displaying any sense of leadership or political cohesion.

So I think certainly when Seleka arose as a movement in mid-2012 it drew on longstanding division in the country between the mostly Muslim, partly Arabic-speaking northeast, which as I mentioned is culturally distinct from the rest of CAR, and the southern population, a sense that successive governments from the south and from the west of the country had further entrenched the isolation and lack of development on a very comparative level, given the broader lack of development in the country, but a relative lack of development in the northeast, a relative lack of infrastructure even by CAR standards, and as well as this sense among many northerners that they are treated as foreigners within what they see as their own country.

Now, there are populations that move among those three countries—Chad, CAR, and Sudan—which does make it very difficult to pin down actual nationality in sort of a western, passport-carrying sense. So that adds to our challenge of the international community looking at this crisis.

There were also just broader grievances against the former government that I think were widely shared even beyond the northeast, that had to do with an increasingly authoritarian style of government, an increasingly narrowly ethnically based government and senior military ranks, and what was seen by many CAR inhabitants as a sort of abusive regime. So I think Seleka came out of the overlapping of that north-south divide plus just a broader sense of disenchantment with the government. On top of that, you had a disenchantment by neighboring states that might have acted accordingly in terms of their willingness or lack thereof to stop Seleka's final seizure of power.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. Schneider, let me carry on with the question I asked the previous panel. What incentive is there—is there sufficient incentive for the interim President and the people around him to create conditions conducive to a democratic process in 2015? Go ahead and answer that and I will follow up.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I think that, first, it is going to be very difficult to follow and implement the transition political roadmap that had been agreed to by all sources as a result of the recent outbreak of violence. You have a national transition council, which is essentially to act as a legislature. Many of those have fled. You have got the President has failed to name the electoral body that has to be put in place.

It is going to take, I think, a substantially longer time. But I think the effort needs to be to continue to press the President to carry out, even slightly delayed, all of those steps.

Now, what are the incentives? It does seem to me here it is both carrot and stick. The stick it seems to me you heard from the Assistant Secretary was to indicate that if he continues to be, if not cooperative, at the very least failing to take action when Seleka forces carry out these atrocities, then he also will be held accountable. I think that there it is clear that, with the French on the ground, with international forces on the ground, that that becomes a real possibility. That is one.

But there also has to be some carrot, and I think there the incentive is that he and those around him who do follow the roadmap will have a significant part of the next government in a fair way that they never had in the past. The northeast and the Muslim community were essentially excluded. And that is really the carrot available to him if he does in fact go along with the roadmap.

I would just make one other point, which is that too many of the Seleka military leadership previously had a role in Chad for that to be disregarded when you look at what kind of military force can help move the process forward and to be clear that there also has to be a diplomatic element to whatever we call DDR, so that those who, in fact, have a Chad national origin and were part of the Chad military need to be repatriated and President Deby in Chad needs to cooperate with that effort.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Flake.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Well, Chairman Coons, let me thank you very much for having this hearing. I am sorry I missed the first panel and I appreciate the witnesses that are here.

The circumstances in the Central African Republic are dire. You have pointed them out. The USAID numbers indicate 15 percent of the population are internally displaced, around a quarter are food insecure, over half are in need of humanitarian aid, and the security situation has led many NGOs to leave.

The first question I have is that, we want to do something. You have all acknowledged the challenge of getting help to the people who need it. There are certainly the political issues that we have to deal with. But in the meantime, people are in desperate circumstances. So if you had to advise our committee as to what you would put on a short list that could effectively help people who are in dire need today, what would you make your top priorities?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I will start at this end. I think the top priority is ensuring protection and humanitarian access so those humanitarian agencies can reach the people in need, both in Bangui and to have protection for every one of the 40 or so centers.

Senator CARDIN. How do you provide that protection?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. You get the MISCA, the African Union forces, with the French on the ground fully deployed, fully equipped, faster. And you also deploy them with the mandate in the other cities to protect those humanitarian centers. That it seems to me is number one.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Anyone else want to add to that list?

Ms. LIST. Well, I agree security is important. If you ask people—when I was on Bossangoa, they would say that that is what they wanted, was security, so they could get back to their life. But the fact is—

Senator CARDIN. That is security for the people. We understand that. We are talking about to get humanitarian aid effectively delivered. I think Mr. Schneider raises a very good point. We know about NGOs that cannot operate because of the security issues. Getting a security force that can effectively protect those who want to deliver aid is very important. Protecting the domestic population

is a separate issue, a very important issue. Do not get me wrong, but that is going to be a more challenging solution.

Ms. LIST. I think that you need more experienced people who have worked in such conflict situations. MSF has never fully evacuated any of their teams before, during, or after the recent conflict. That should not be a precondition to have ideal security for humanitarian aid to be delivered. We have managed that throughout the conflict and throughout the past years.

So yes, that is important, but you need experienced people willing and who understand conflict situations, and funding at a quick pace so that those organizations can scale up.

Senator CARDIN. Ms. Arieff.

Ms. ARIEFF. As a CRS analyst, I hesitate to list priorities for you Senators. But I would note, in addition to what has been said, that you might consider in the medium run the fact that gaps in data collection in CAR and poor infrastructure are going to be major challenges in providing humanitarian relief, obviously in the short run in an emergency situation, but also in the longer run.

Senator CARDIN. Are there any policies that the United States is currently supporting that you believe are counterproductive to fulfilling humanitarian needs?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I think that we are very reluctant, appropriately, to reopen the Embassy until we are confident that we have security. But that can be defined. The French have an embassy that is open. The European Union has an embassy that is open and they have people on the ground. The United Nations has a small political mission on the ground. I think that we should have an embassy, that gives us better information, better ability to assess where it is exactly that we can make a difference.

Senator CARDIN. Let me ask one other question, if I might, about gender violence and the concern for women and children. Do any of you have direct information as to the status of gender violence activities and the vulnerability of children?

Ms. LIST. Well, I do not have any absolute statistics, but from the time I was on Bossangoa we had many stories of especially women and gender violence. There were even several homes where there would be a mama taking care of 10, 15 women who had been raped in a previous period. Women are afraid to move out and they never go alone.

So while we offer services and there is treatment available immediately afterward, people are not always accessing that out of fear, or they do not know about it or they cannot reach. But it is our belief that there is significant gender violence happening that we do not hear about.

Ms. ARIEFF. Just to add to that, certainly again a lack of statistics that we are confronting, but anecdotally certainly there are reports of gender-based violence, which was also a feature of past cycles of CAR violence, particularly during the northern rebellions of 2005 to 2007.

In terms of violence against children, there is also concern, just to flag this, of child recruitment into various insurgent militias or self-defense groups.

Senator CARDIN. I think all that underscores the point that you made about having better information. There are so many issues

around the world and when you do not have good information sometimes you just do not know and do not act. I think knowing what is happening on the ground would help us galvanize more effective international policies that could provide not only safety for the NGO community, but safety for the people in the country.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Senator Cardin.

If I might, just a few more questions. Ms. Arieff, has the instability in CAR affected the long-term counter-LRA mission, and is it possible that MISCA operations could either reinforce or conflict with the counter-LRA mission? At the end of your last answer you referenced child soldiers and the sort of south and southeast portion of CAR has long suffered from aggressive LRA actions. I would just be interested in how you see this affecting the ongoing counter-LRA work.

Ms. ARIEFF. Absolutely. Certainly there was a short-term impact on U.S.-supported, Ugandan-led regional operations against the LRA. Earlier this year there was a cessation of Ugandan operations and of related U.S. support efforts for several months because of the security situation, but also because sort of a political uncertainty about the new government in Bangui after the Seleka takeover and what their approach would be to the presence of foreign troops on CAR soil.

The African Union, as I understood it, led in discussing with the new government, with the current transitional government, how important this mission was, and eventually got a green light from Djotodia on down for the U.S.-supported operations to continue. So certainly from my understanding those operations are ongoing as we speak in southeastern CAR.

On the other hand, we have seen indications from nongovernmental reporting that LRA leaders may be located in CAR or may be transitting through CAR even today. So it remains a safe haven for them in some ways. We have also seen a new pattern where LRA attacks have been reported further north and further west than they traditionally were operating in CAR. So whether that suggests that LRA may be becoming more comfortable operating beyond the bounds of where Ugandan troops can operate and what that would mean in the long run is somewhat uncertain.

In terms of coordination with other African Union troops, you raise a very important point. I think there is now attention being paid to the need to coordinate between MISCA, which, as Mr. Schneider mentioned, will not be operational until Thursday, but between MISCA troops and what is called the African Union Regional Task Force, i.e., the Ugandan-led counter-LRA operation. So I think that is something of a work in progress, but certainly international experts are looking at that question.

Senator COONS. Did not Djotodia recently float the idea that somehow he was negotiating with Kone for his surrender? Did that prove out to have any substance to it?

Ms. ARIEFF. It is very hard to evaluate what was exactly happening during that period. The State Department publicly stated that they could not or would not confirm that Kone was actually in communication with Djotodia. It seemed more likely that a band of LRA combatants had gotten into contact with Djotodia or others

in the CAR Government and eventually with the United Nations, but that they were not necessarily the group that Kone is currently located with.

Certainly it raised questions about whether Kone or other elements of the LRA could use this line of communications to negotiate greater space or resources that could allow them to prolong their existence or re-up their ranks, as they had done during previous peace talks during the Juba process prior to 2008. I have not seen reports that indicate that that has been the case, but certainly they did reportedly receive some aid through that communication.

At the same time, there was a major Ugandan operation that netted a number of defections of key LRA leaders and that is considered quite significant in CAR as well.

Senator COONS. What is Djotodia's relationship with Nouredine—I think it is Nouredine Adam if I am not mistaken—who is former Security Minister and has been widely implicated in running torture centers, engaging in murders and killings? Is he a figure we should be particularly focused on and concerned about? And are there other strongmen or regional leaders who have the potential to really accelerate the violence and mobilize mass atrocities?

Ms. ARIEFF. I think you are right to focus on Nouredine Adam. He is one of the individuals that Mr. Schneider mentioned are associated with Chadian rebel groups, but also, according to ICG, he served in the Chadian army at one point. He was in a number of northern CAR rebel movements prior to his current involvement in Seleka and in the transitional government.

He is seen in the region as a strongman and, as you mentioned, as responsible reportedly for parallel detention systems or other abuses associated with the transitional government. So he certainly is of concern. I think he is one of several Seleka-linked figures that are likely involved in those kinds of activities, and we can only hope that future human rights reporting by U.N. agencies and others, but also monitoring by the new sanctions committee, might shed greater light on the role that Adam and other actors are playing.

Senator COONS. You mentioned at the outset one of the real challenges is both Seleka and the anti-balaka groups are loosely organized, have no clear chains of command. Some of the background I got suggests that the militia fighting the Seleka groups are sometimes portrayed as pro-Bozize forces. Is the former President playing a role here behind the scenes with some groups? How do you see the political trajectory here in terms of pulling apart the forces and continuing with some stabilization?

As Mr. Schneider mentioned, we have got sort of three outcomes here and only one of them seems vaguely appealing, and it requires all these various murky political figures to reduce their engagement in accelerating the violence.

Ms. ARIEFF. That is correct. I think that the anti-balaka groups emerged within the last several months, really since mid-2013, seemingly initially as a semispontaneous and decentralized reaction to Seleka factional violence against civilians, and particularly in reaction to a perception among Christian communities that Seleka commanders in the field were targeting Christian commu-

nities disproportionately and perhaps reportedly or allegedly protecting Muslim communities as they did so.

Even though the origin of this loose network—individual anti-balaka groups may have very little to do with one another—at the same time, especially during the anti-balaka assault on Bangui on December 5, it seemed from news reports and reports on the ground that some anti-balaka factions who attacked the capital on December 5 were deploying relatively sophisticated armaments and were acting in a relatively strategically communicated fashion. That, along with other developments, has raised suspicions that some anti-balaka factions may be coordinating with former military elements who seek the return of deposed President Francois Bozize or even might be receiving support from outside the region among, purely to speculate, among individuals who are angry at Chadian influence or who are seeking leverage through other means.

It is very unclear right now what the status of those chains of coordination are, and it is always possible that anti-balaka groups are posturing support for the former President in the hopes that if he did return he would reward them in some way, not necessarily because there is coordination. I raise that solely because we do not really know enough right now to make a determination.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Could I, Mr. Chairman? I think it goes beyond that. I think some of the groups clearly did have leaders who were former security forces with President Bozize in the past, that were identified.

Senator COONS. If I might, my time has come to an end. I am grateful for the testimony of all three of you. I will ask if Senator Flake has any concluding questions. It seems to me, Ms. Arieff, you suggested there is a north-south divide here. There are several other countries that have also had stability issues, development issues, humanitarian issues, in central Africa and west Africa where there same divide, the same longstanding grievances, ultimately led to a collapse of the government or regional challenges.

My hope is that there are lessons learned here, both by the American Atrocities Prevention Board and by the United Nations. I would like to thank Medecins Sans Frontieres for really raising this issue. I would also like to thank Tony Lake, the leader of UNICEF, for bringing to my personal attention the ongoing crisis in CAR. I would like to thank each of you for your hard work on this.

Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you. Just a couple of questions.

Mr. Schneider, the countries in the region—I know there are Chadian forces and extragovernmental actors in play. But the governments themselves, are they universally playing a constructive role, the governments in the region? Or as things have broken down in the past year have we seen certain governments wishing for an outcome that we do not want? I will put it that way.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I think the problem is that several governments have conflicting interests, both political and economic.

Senator FLAKE. That is my question. Are there some who figure that they benefit from ongoing chaos?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I think that we have identified that Chad particularly has been engaged in different ways that have not fully

been cooperative or constructive, and that is why the effort has been to ensure that the Chadian Government understand that they are going to be viewed over the next several months in terms of how they respond to the current crisis, and they are expecting—both ECAS and the AU and the U.N. are expecting them to play a much more positive role in the future.

I should also mention that some of the governments—Cameroon, for example, they have already had deaths of several of their citizens in border clashes in the area where the Seleka has gone across the border. So they are quite concerned as well. Similarly Sudan.

Senator FLAKE. I assume there is a great deal of concern about South Sudan, just the events of the past couple of days and the impact of that.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Exactly.

Senator FLAKE. One last question. In terms of disarming some of the groups, the Seleka and the anti-balaka—I understand that means “anti-machete”—a lot of the weapons used in a lot of these massacres are machetes or things like this. How far does disarmament go? I mean, are they disarming groups of machetes or just rifles, or what?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I think that initially the effort is to ensure that groups of men, that armed groups cannot move through the streets of Bangui or other cities, whether they are carrying AK-47s or machetes, and that whatever weapons they have, to take away from them. After that, I think the effort will be to go after the guns that are stockpiled in different places. I suspect the last step will be the effort to try and ensure that populations which have acquired weapons, that they are given some incentive to give them up.

Let me just make one point. One of the concerns we have is that this is the fifth, if it happens, this will be the fifth DDR process in the Central African Republic. What we would argue is that what has occurred in the past is simply the effort to say: OK, you go into a camp, you get identified, “demobilized,” and then you transfer and become part of the army. That would be a big mistake in this situation, to simply try and integrate Seleka forces or anti-balaka en masse into the future army of the Central African Republic.

What has to happen is people need to think through what you are going to do with most of these young men who have no opportunities and to look for, in our view—start with something like community-based labor-intensive construction efforts, reconstruction efforts, as a way to transition them into civilian life, as opposed to thinking that they are going to be the next independent army of the Central African Republic.

Senator FLAKE. Ms. Arieff, did you have anything to add to that? You are nodding your head.

Ms. ARIEFF. I agree with the assessment in terms of some of the challenges. I think your question is very pertinent. French troops have said—French officials have said: Our troops are going to disarm anyone in public spaces who is not part of the African Union force or part of the Central African Republic gendarmerie or police. That is a very tall order and in a lot of areas of this country we are talking about communities that have been armed, either for

hunting or for self-protection or for other activities or just out of a sense of security, for generations, including with artisanal weaponry or even machetes or other forms of weaponry that might not be obvious or easy to find.

So it is certainly an enormous challenge moving forward.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you all.

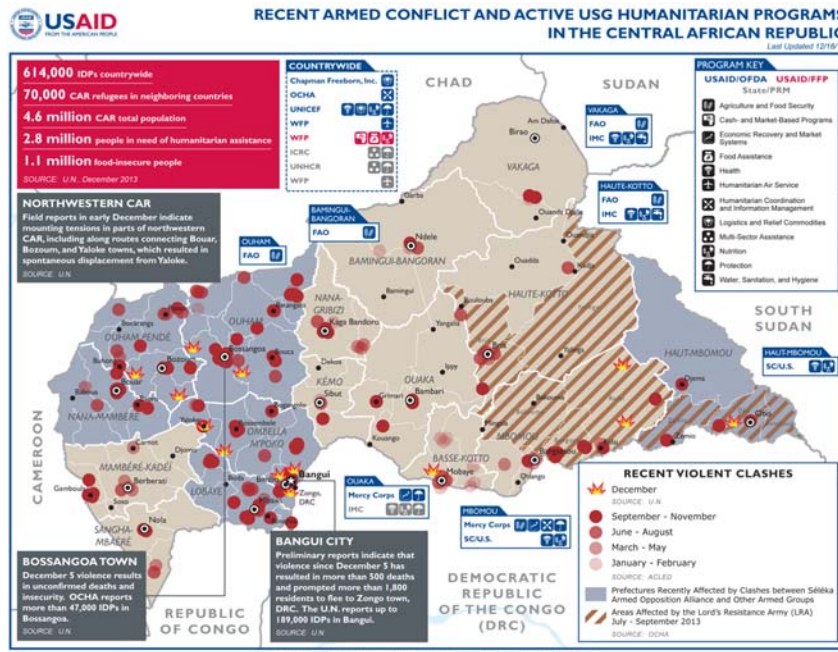
Senator COONS. I want to thank our second panel. I want to thank you for your very hard work broadly in making sure that this committee understands the dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa. I want to thank you in particular for your great testimony today on the evolving humanitarian crisis in CAR, and for your personal work in the area.

We will leave the record of this hearing open until tonight to ensure that it is part of the record for tomorrow. I am grateful for your service and for your testimony here today. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:44 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

USAID MAP SHOWING ARMED CONFLICT AND ACTIVE USG HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMS IN THE CAR SUBMITTED BY EARL GAST



PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Violence is growing in the Central African Republic and has recently spread to the capital of Bangui. An increasing number of people have left their homes to avoid spikes in violence, despite the arrival of additional French troops to disarm fighting groups. Ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka elements continue to threaten lives and livelihoods around the country. Currently, 2.3 million people, or half the country, are in

need of basic humanitarian assistance and 1.1 million are food insecure. One in ten Central Africans has been displaced, living as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees in another country.

Catholic Relief Services has been in Central African Republic since 2007, working closely with the Catholic Church and Caritas/CAR to assist those in need. Our field operations are in Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou, and Lobaye, and our programming portfolio includes peace-building, community-based early warning systems, food security, and agriculture recovery. We continue to run these programs, and are now expanding our services where security permits, especially in those areas where humanitarian needs are not being met. Our program planning also incorporates conflict mapping to ensure that protection and conflict mitigation are part of our response.

Throughout CAR, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are currently staying in spontaneous camps, finding safety in religious compounds and other institutional grounds. Their needs include basic protection, food and nonfood items (such as blankets, soap, cooking supplies, etc). The displaced and families who host them also need water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, and as families move back to their villages, they will need construction materials to rebuild damaged or destroyed homes.

In Bangui, CRS and its partners are identifying new, emerging sites as a result of the December 5th events that have yet to receive assistance. CRS hopes to arrange a rapid distribution of basic food and nonfood items. For example, the Church has identified as many as 8 IDP sites in Bangui that have not received assistance. In anticipation of a coordinated effort between partners, we are approaching humanitarian supply partners (i.e., WFP and UNHCR) and exploring other sources for food and nonfood items from local markets. We are also mapping transport needs and options to deliver assistance as fast as possible over roads that are badly degraded.

In Bozoum, where violence is growing by the day, the Pastor of the Catholic Mission is hosting 7,900 displaced people, while an additional 1,100 people are in need of assistance outside the grounds. In Bohong and its surrounding villages, 2,500 houses were burned down by Seleka, and 3,500 people fled into the bush and 5,000 fled to Bouar. Aid workers report continued displacement in the northwest of CAR affecting populations along the roads to Yaloke, Boali and Bouar as recently as December 3. In response, CRS is leading a Bouar Working Group composed of people active in Bouar and nearby areas. We are in close communication with the U.N. Crisis Cell to prepare an assessment team for rapid deployment to Bouar and nearby areas (Bozoum, Bocaranga, Bossantele, Bohong) once security permits. CRS will likely focus its response to Bouar and Bozoum.

In Bossongoa, the Catholic Church is sheltering 40,000 Christian IDPs. The nearby Ecole Liberte in Bossangoa is sheltering 6,800 Muslim IDPs, which quadrupled from 1,700 a week earlier. Muslims were escaping increased violence, and seeking the protection offered by the newly arrived Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC). CRS has just committed \$200,000 in private funds to launch a new partnership with Caritas Bossangoa to provide families with basic household needs like pots, pans, blankets, clothing and more. These funds will also provide Caritas with needed equipment, staffing, and material support, along with training for 3 months. CRS/CAR is searching for additional funding to support this response. Pending strengthened security, CRS will be using private funds to support a 4-day Justice and Peace reflection workshop with representatives from each Diocese in the country to discuss conflict mitigation needs and a response strategy.

CRS and Caritas predict two potential scenarios moving forward: (1) IDPs who are currently in the bush may flock to Bossangoa city if a security cordon is established in the city, or (2) IDPs may return to their homes if broader security cordon is established. The second scenario would create additional needs for household items and shelter support to help rebuild and repair homes that were destroyed by militant groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CRS commends the United States for providing funding (\$100 million) to support troops coming from France and the African Union to make up the mission of MISCA, the African Union's Peacekeeping force. We would call upon the USG to support the transition to a robust U.N. peacekeeping operation with the mandate and resources necessary to protect civilians from mass atrocities and to restore immediate stability.

CRS appeals for Congress to ensure robust funding of International Disaster Assistance to adequately meet humanitarian needs. This account has been pressed by so many other crises, and Syria gets more costly every day. Many Central Afri-

cans have lost everything, and as people continue to leave their homes out of fear, their needs for food, water, and shelter will increase, whether they are at IDPs camps or staying with host families.

CRS would like to highlight the importance of conflict sensitive approaches to support humanitarian assistance, as well as recovery efforts down the line. Currently Imam Omar Kobine Layama and other contacts confirm that there are many displaced Muslims. However, these individuals are afraid to gather at mosques and Islamic schools as they would represent a target. Muslims in need will likely be a hidden affected population, and we will need to make extra efforts to find these people, in Bangui and elsewhere. Additionally, supporting certain livelihood activities in the response and recovery, such as agricultural production, and not others, such as small businesses, could create de facto support for certain religious groups and leave out others. Therefore our responses must be acutely aware of these dynamics.

CRS also emphasizes the need for activities to build peace and promote social cohesion to prevent the situation from worsening. CAR civil society, media, and religious entities are essential for supporting violence prevention initiatives, and they must be supported in the same way as the humanitarian needs are. Youth are also an important group in CAR, and can help bridge religious divides that have been created during the conflict. CRS is currently engaged in social cohesion meetings between religious leaders, including youth, and helping to coordinate a Religious Leaders' Platform group, with focal points in each mosque and church, that seeks to engage as many people as possible with a message of peace. CRS urges the Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Initiatives at the State Department to assess the viability and adequate funding of these types of essential peace-building activities to prevent further escalation of the conflict.

We thank the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations for convening a hearing examining the U.S. response to the crisis and look forward to working together to assist those in need in Central African Republic.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SIMON O'CONNELL,
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL DIRECTOR, MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is an Oregon-based humanitarian and development nonprofit organization working in over 40 countries. Our mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities. We greatly appreciate the attention this subcommittee, particularly Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Flake, have paid to the crisis in the Central African Republic.

Mercy Corps has worked in the Central African Republic since 2007 helping communities improve their food security, providing humanitarian assistance and protection, including services for victims of gender-based violence.

Mercy Corps operates across the country, in Bangui, Bangassou, Bambari, Bouar and Rafai, and from our experience on the ground there are three key areas where we believe the U.S. Government can intervene to help support the people of the CAR, including:

1. Increasing support for conflict mitigation to prevent more violence and rebuild social cohesion;
2. Increasing humanitarian assistance to address growing needs; and,
3. Protection of the population.

CONFLICT MITIGATION

While the headlines have focused on the increased violence in the CAR, there is still a window of opportunity to stem the violence. The international community, with leadership from the U.S., needs to invest immediately in conflict mitigation activities to prevent escalation of the violence. Mercy Corps works throughout CAR, particularly in areas most affected by conflict and in the major urban areas, to protect vulnerable civilians, and has built strong ties with local leaders, community members, and humanitarian partners. As local and national religious leaders have stood up against violence in an effort to support social cohesion, Mercy Corps has supported these leaders through capacity-building and training. Given the shallow roots of religious animosity in CAR, there is every reason to believe that effective action now can have a significant impact on curtailing the carnage being affected in the name of religion.

In our experience, conflict mitigation should focus on addressing tensions arising from scarce resources. CAR is one of the poorest countries in the world; prior to the conflict the per capita income was less than \$800 a year and life expectancy is only 48 years. Efforts to reinforce sustainable dispute resolution and generate increased

trust through joint economic and natural resource initiatives benefiting both Christian and Muslim communities can serve the dual purpose of mitigating conflict and helping Central Africans start to rebuild their economy.

While the administration can utilize the Complex Crisis Fund to support conflict mitigation efforts, I would encourage Congress, and particularly this subcommittee, to focus on how to ensure these funds are quickly dispersed so that we can take advantage of this window of opportunity to create the conditions for a longer term peace. Additionally, to ensure the U.S. Government has the tools to stem future crises, I would encourage Congress to support additional funds for the Complex Crisis Fund in FY 2014 and FY 2015.

But we must act now. Failure to act quickly risks a spiralling of conflict which will further polarize communities and result in a situation that is much more complex and expensive to resolve. Additionally, the porousness of the CAR's borders means that further destabilization in the country will imperil not only the CAR but also the already fragile wider region. For example, tensions in the CAR are currently contributing to rising insecurity on the border with Cameroon.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The humanitarian situation in the CAR is dire. The current humanitarian crisis is affecting an estimated 4.6 million people (the entire population of the CAR), including 2.3 million children. More than 633,000 people are internally displaced and a further 43,969 refugees are in neighbouring countries. Hundreds of thousands of children lack access to basic services. The latest figures from WFP indicate that 1.3 million people (28 percent of the population in the CAR and 23 percent outside of Bangui) are at risk of hunger and starvation due to meager harvests and unending violence. Immediate action must be taken by international donors to fill the \$103 million funding gap of the U.N. appeal. OFDA must further respond to this crisis and additional IDA funding is needed in FY 2014 to meet growing needs. To date, OFDA has primarily focused on the South-East and LRA-affected areas, but needs are great in other parts of the country.

The shortage of funds available to address the crisis in the CAR is emblematic of a larger potential shortfall. We encourage the administration to quickly prioritize OFDA funding for CAR, which can be rapidly, effectively, and flexibly programmed, but also ask that Congress ensure in the final FY 2014 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that the International Disaster Assistance Account (IDA), which funds OFDA, receives no less than the Senate proposed level of \$1.6 billion. During the FY 2015 budget process, I hope this subcommittee will continue to fight for sufficient resources to respond to the crisis in CAR, and other crisis throughout the continent.

SECURITY

In most humanitarian crises, food, shelter, and clean water are the most pressing needs. But in the CAR, the number one request of the people we work with is "protection." Insecurity and the threat of violence have terrorized the population. We therefore applaud the leadership of the French to deploy more troops and greatly appreciate the additional logistical funds the U.S. has provided. There's a pressing need to expand the number of peacekeeping forces to address the insecurity in the country, while ensuring they are appropriately mandated to effectively fulfill the multidimensional requirements of such an operation. In particular, emphasis must be placed on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs for Seleka combatants.

Lastly, I would ask that this subcommittee, and Congress as a whole, not forget about the people of the CAR after this immediate crisis is over. In order to support the country and its people, sustained attention and resources must be provided to the CAR, including support for longer term development, with the focus on improving governance, strengthening institutions, private sector development and enhancing the capacity of local organisations to support women and children victims of violence. Eventually, hopefully, we can move beyond crisis response in the CAR, but that will require a longer term commitment. Once the immediate crisis has passed, we should focus on the challenges of political transition, security-sector reform and support for initiatives that improve transparency and governance of resources—notably within the mining sector. Your continued focused attention on the CAR will ensure we can move beyond the crisis and toward a more lasting and stable country, and stability gains in the wider central Africa region.

Thank you again for the attention this committee has paid to the crisis and for your efforts to improve the lives of the people of the Central African Republic.

LETTER SENT TO SENATOR CHRISTOPHER A. COONS BY MOST REVEREND RICHARD E. PATES, BISHOP OF DES MOINES, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE, U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

December 16, 2013

Honorable Senator Chris Coons
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coons:

I write to thank you for holding the Hearing on “*Responding to the Humanitarian, Security and Governance Crisis in the Central African Republic*”. It is timely and will contribute to the response of United States Government to the crisis in CAR.

It is my pleasure to send the Committee the attached written statement submitted by the Religious Leaders’ Platform in CAR. I trust you and the Subcommittee will find it informative.

As you are aware, the crisis has evolved significantly in the last week in ways that are both hopeful and discouraging. The sudden increase in fighting in the capital, Bangui, has been prominent in the news. What does not appear in the news reports is the courageous work being done by the Religious Leaders’ Platform to quell the violence and mitigate its effects. We received a recent report from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) the highlights of which I would like to share briefly.

Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga, Catholic Archbishop of Bangui, and Emir Oumar Kobine Layama, President of the Islamic Community of CAR, met a large group of young men and women in Bangui on December 11, 2013. The leaders communicated a simple message of Mercy, Peace, Love and Respect that is at the heart of both the Christian and Muslim faiths. Archbishop Nzapalainga opened the meeting by telling the group of youth:

Since December 5th things have changed here and we are seeking a return to normal life. We are hoping to work together with our Muslim brothers. We are looking to hear new ideas from our young leaders. We set upon a path yesterday and now it’s time to let our young leaders talk about the problems we face and how to overcome them.

One young Catholic woman agreed with the Archbishop. It is important, she said, that the two religious groups work together because “sometimes people are willing to do the right thing, but when confronted with hunger, rape and roving gangs attacking them, they will respond with violence often just to survive.”

Another Catholic youth shared his personal experience of how the two faith communities have worked together in his neighborhood to protect each other. He explained that he owed his life to Muslims who had sheltered him from harm.

Letter to The Honorable Senator Chris Coons
December 16, 2013
Page 2

Archbishop Nzapalainga urged the youth to build on the word “peace” that exists in the lexicon of both Muslims and Christians and to challenge their peers. He also urged them to find working radio stations to get this message out: “Work off of what brings us (Christians and Muslims) together, not what tears us apart.”

Emir Layama ended the session by encouraging religious leaders to create a focal point in each Catholic parish, Protestant church and Mosque, to share messages of peace to keep the dialogue moving. He said, “This should be a campaign seeking to engage as many people as possible.” The group readily accepted this idea, and CRS and Cordaid (Catholic aid agency from the Netherlands) will assist in the coordination.

Let me close with a story told by Bishop Nestor-Desire NONGO during his last visit to the United States when he testified before the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations. Emir Layama and Archbishop Nzapalainga were traveling up country on their peace mission when they were stopped by an armed group. The militia told the Archbishop to hand over the Muslim leader. The Archbishop refused. The group backed down and allowed them to continue on their way.

This story reminds us that these religious men are leading their communities by their own example and are putting their lives on the line to do so. They are giving personal witness to their deep faith and demonstrating how their respective communities should act to stop the violence.

This story is repeated across the country by many ordinary people who refuse to take up arms against their neighbors just because they are Muslim or Christian. The Religious Leaders’ Platform hopes to encourage people like them and inspire many others to join their numbers.

Our Committee hopes the United States Government will support these religious leaders with the financial, material and technical means to achieve their goals of bridging religious tensions inflamed by the conflict, and bringing peace to these communities. We also encourage close cooperation with organizations like CRS who have the technical resources and the on-the-ground presence to deliver much needed humanitarian assistance.

I wish you a successful and productive hearing.

Sincerely yours,

+ 

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

WRITTEN STATEMENT
RELIGIOUS LEADERS' PLATFORM
Represented by
MOST REVEREND DIEUDONNE NZAPALAINGA,
REV. NICOLAS GUEREKOYAME-GBANGOU,
EMIR OUMAR KOBINE LAYAMA

HEARING ON THE PREVENTION OF CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION
BETWEEN PEOPLE ALREADY IN CONFLICT

Presented to the
FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS
December 17, 2013

I. RELIGIOUS LEADERS PLATFORM (RLP)

1. History and Background

We, the undersigned, Bishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bangui and President of the Central African Episcopal Conference (ECSC), Rev. Nicolas GUEREKOYAME-GBANGOU, President of the Evangelical Alliance in Central Africa (AEC) and Emir Imam Umar Kobine LAYAMA, President of the Central African Islamic Community (CICA), are the leaders of the platform of religious denominations in Central Africa. We want to thank you, Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Flake, for the opportunity to submit a statement to your subcommittee. We ask that our written statement be entered into the record.

The idea of the RLP arose from the recognition that the military-political crisis that began December 10, 2012 in the north-central region could take a dangerous path. The advance by the rebel coalition Seleka was accompanied by atrocities and behaviors that could undermine the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians. Across the country the reports were unanimous. Christians and Church institutions have been particularly affected by these abuses, including rape, assassinations and murder, criminal destruction of property and means of production, burning of houses and villages, buildings and desecration of places of worship, looting and ransacking of Christian radio stations, physical assault and psychological torture imposed on Bishops, priests, religious and Protestant pastors, disruptions of Christian liturgical celebrations.

These behaviors have had a negative impact on the good relations formerly maintained between Christians and Muslims. The two communities have begun to live in fear and distrust of one another. It is now this mutual mistrust that fuels sectarian tensions. Christians who felt betrayed by Muslims plan their revenge almost like children in the neighborhoods of Bangui awaiting the return home match. Revenge is now discussed with the banality of child's play or sports. Emotions have become overheated and tensions have increased by the day.

In order to prevent a looming destruction of the social fabric, we assumed our responsibility as religious leaders, anxious to maintain social cohesion among all daughters and sons of this country. Thus was born the Religious Leaders' Platform.

2. Objectives

How does one maintain social cohesion in an atmosphere that is increasingly deleterious? In response, we decided to launch appeals for calm and dialogue to find solutions to CAR's problems. We also chose to meet with our brothers and sisters, to listen and to agree on ways to mitigate these growing tensions, to calm people's emotions and promote our peaceful unity as was always the case between our two communities. Thus, before the fall of President François Bozize Yangouvonda, we organized two visits to the country's interior. The first visit took us to the center of the country to the city of Mobaye and on the way we stopped at Alindao, Bambari Grimari. During the second visit, we went to the north-central region, which includes Kaga-Bandoro Dekoa, M'Brés, Sibut and Damara.

Meetings with the various communities have helped us to realize the complexity of the situation on the ground. From both sides, people developed suspicions against each other. While the coalition of Seleka rebels is 90% Muslim among whom there are many mercenaries from Chad and Sudan, a shared language creates an affinity that naturally draws these rebels closer to the indigenous Muslim community. The fact that Muslims are largely spared numerous abuses is explained by the fact that Muslims bartered their security against a large sum of money they paid to the rebels as the forces entered the towns they conquered. In view of this reality, it is clear that all people, regardless of their political, philosophical and religious beliefs, were taken hostage by Seleka rebels.

Unfortunately, we find that many gross generalizations have been made in the management of this crisis. However, we have mobilized against all attempts at political manipulation that aims ultimately to antagonize the Central African women and men against each other based on religious affiliations.

II. CONFLICT PREVENTION

A state of crisis in CAR has been a recurrent problem with deep root causes. An uncompromising post mortem of all the ills that plague the country and hamper our full development was done in 1991 by the Bishops of the Central Africa Republic. In a scathing report and an objective analysis, they reviewed the sum total of evils that affect the nation in each of its constituent components:

- a. Unhealthy living conditions
- b. Limited access to health care
- c. Preponderance of unemployment
- d. Salaries do not provide a decent standard of living
- e. Negligence towards farmers and the agricultural sector
- f. Huge deficit in the field of education and vocational training for youth
- g. Non-recognition of women and their full human dignity
- h. Rise of prostitution

- i. General sense of injustice
- j. Loss of confidence in government authorities
- k. Lack of true dialogue
- l. Demagoguery
- m. Strong temptation to use violence
- n. Scapegoating
- o. Corruption
- p. Tribalism
- q. Discrimination
- r. Exclusion

The Bishops' report, it seems, has not been taken seriously. The same problems have persisted for decades and produce the same effects that have taken calamitous proportions in this latest socio-political crisis initiated by the rebellion of the Seleka coalition. This is what appears in the message that the Bishops have addressed to Djotodia Michel, President of the transitional government at the end of their national conference held at the headquarters of the ECSC in Bangui:

"True to its mission to be "salt of the earth and light of the world" (Mt 5 13a.14a), the Church of God in Central Africa, through the voice of us, its pastors, speaking through numerous pastoral letters, has continuously called the attention of political leaders to the degradation of the standard of living of our fellow citizens. We have condemned the evils that hinder our development, destroy our social cohesion and create to conditions for rebellions, nepotism, regionalism, corruption, cronyism, profiteering by government officials, impunity, diversion of funds, hoarding or destruction of public property ... All of which adds up to the institutionalization of bad governance. These evils of yesterday persist in today's world and what is worse, the effects have been amplified by the hostilities initiated by the Seleka coalition."

Everyone was unanimous in condemning the atrocities committed by the rebels, largely composed of Chadian-Sudanese mercenaries. In all ways, religious leaders have embarked on the search for solutions to these repeated crises. Therefore, in order to awaken the conscience of our faithful and fellow citizens, over the past years we have produced a series of messages and pastoral letters (in Annex 1) where we develop our vision for the renewal of social order, social cohesion, unity, economic recovery and development.

All of these statements were disseminated to inspire people to establish mechanisms to prevent social conflicts and to ensure national security and unity among all Central African women and men. The social weaknesses that we deplore have been the nesting ground for discontent that some corrupt politicians of bad faith have shamelessly exploited in their own interests by seeking to plunge the country into chaos and fratricidal war on the pretext of conflict between religions.

III. RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PEOPLE ALREADY IN CONFLICT

We reiterate that reconciliation and unity are possible between all Central African women and men. However, some general principles should be considered and respected:

1. Challenges
 - a. Resist political manipulation
 - b. Establish a safeguard against deviations
 - c. Establish a framework for discipleship
 - d. Hold firm to your convictions
 - e. Respect the principles of unity, namely:
 - Promoting Unity
 - The recognition and appreciation of the qualities of the other
2. Conduct to Follow
 - a. Become a supporter of peace
 - b. Keep the language of peace
 - c. Keep the language of appeasement and reconciliation
 - d. Banish hypocrisy
 - e. Avoid bias
 - f. Avoid hate
 - g. Speak the truth in love
 - h. Banish tribalism
3. Values to pass to the next generation
 - a. Forgiveness
 - b. The acceptance of each other's differences
 - c. Faith

This triptych is the foundation on which reconciliation can be built harmoniously. To curb the current crisis, religious leaders have not dropped their guard. They have been fully engaged and their involvement has helped ease tensions and avoid the worst case scenario in the country. Among the various initiatives taken, we would cite:

- a. Pastoral letters
- b. Calls for calm between Central African men and women of good will
- c. Visits and exhortations to victims of abuses
- d. The establishment of reconciliation units in some localities
- e. Mediation in collaboration with political authorities and the international community to restore conditions of security throughout the territory
- f. Support victims

IV. CONCLUSION

In all modesty, we recognize the important role played by religious leaders at all levels in tempering the passion of our faithful in order to maintain social cohesion and unity and

promote reconciliation in the truth. However, the structure of the Religious Leaders Platform needs to be further strengthened in order to carry out the mission it leads to promote the interests of the Central African people.

Furthermore, we reiterate that the violence and abuses have stripped people of all their resources. A message of reconciliation that is not supported by technical and logistical support for humanitarian relief and reconstruction may not have the desired effects. People who have lost everything also need to be supported physically and financially. We express our helplessness in the face of such extensive damage and needs. We rely on the U.S. government to help us meet this challenge by supporting humanitarian organizations that already have a good reputation for field work such as Catholic Relief Services and Search for Common Ground. The challenge of peace and reconciliation is a major issue that can leave no one indifferent.

May God bless the Central African Republic in its unity.

S. E. Bishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga
Metropolitan Archbishop of Bangui
President of the Episcopal Conference of Central Africa (ECSC)

Rev. Pastor Nicolas GUEREKOYAME-GBANGOU
President of the Alliance of Evangelicals in Central Africa (AEC)

Em Oumar Kobine LAYAMA
President of the Central African Islamic Community (CICA)

ANNEX 1: List of Messages and Pastoral Letters from the Faith Communities of Central Africa

- a. Central Islamic community (CICA)**
- No to Violence (2010)
 - Preserving the Secular State (2013)
- b. Alliance of Evangelicals in Central Africa (AEC)**
- 2 Pastoral Letters to the Head of State of the Transitional Government (2013)
 - 4 Press Releases (2013)
 - 1 Press Conference (2013)
 - Letter of encouragement to Christians and Christians (2013)
 - Letter encouraging FOMAC (Africa Union Forces in CAR) (2013)
 - Personal testimony of divine liberation (2013)
 - Be dynamic despite the crisis (2013)
 - Prophetic Mission of the Church in a Society in Crisis (2013)
 - The Christian Charter (2013)
 - Leadership and Crisis (2013)
 - Patriotic Commitment (2013)
- c. Catholic Church**
- What are We Doing to Our Country? (1991)
 - A Hope for Our Country? (1992)
 - For Catholic Christians and All People of Goodwill - October 28, 1991
 - Do not Let Our Country Die. Enter into Reconciliation (1997).
 - "Do not be afraid, Be Christians in our vote!" (1998)
 - To the Faithful and People of Good Will (2001).
 - Message of the Bishops to the Central African People (2001)
 - To Christians and Men of Good Will (2002)
 - To the Christian Communities, Men and Women of Good Will (2002)
 - Bishops' Message after the events of March 15, 2003
 - A hope has Risen in Our Country (2004)
 - "In Times of trial, Be Strong, Be Brave" (Rom 12: 12) (2005)
 - "You are the Salt of the Earth" (2006)
 - You are the Light of the World, You are the Salt of the Earth (2007)
 - To the Faithful of the Church - Family of God in Central Africa and to all Men of Good Will - Let Youselves be Reconciled ... (2 Cor 5: 20) (2008)
 - Message of the Central African Bishops to National Leaders and Politicians (2008)
 - Never Again ... No to impunity! (2013)
 - Message of the Central African Bishops to Christians and Men of Good Will: Show Proof of Our Faith and Our Hope (1 Peter 3: 15) (2013)
 - Message of the Central African Bishops to the Head of State (2013)

- A Call to Calm to the Christian Faithful and the Men and Women of Good Will (2013)
- d. Message from the Religious Leaders' Platform
 - Pastoral Letter (2013)
 - Day of Reflection on Peace (2013)
 - Conference debate on "The Contribution of Religious Leaders in the Process of Restoring Peace in CAR" (2013)
- e. Joint Message Catholics / Protestants
 - Defeat Indifference: The Bangui Declaration

