

Kinshasa, 6 February 2009  
Ref.: SRS/97/2009

Reference: MSF Press Release of 4 February 2009

Dear Ms. Gaubert,

Médecins Sans Frontières describes scenes of horror that are all too familiar in the wake of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Haute-Uele, but your organization's Press Release of 4 February 2009 seriously misrepresents MONUC responsibilities and actions to protect civilians in the territory.

Operation Lightning Thunder dispersed bands of LRA fighters who have committed appalling atrocities over a wide area against a great many civilians in Haute-Uele. MONUC was not involved in the planning of that operation and its peacekeepers were not deployed in villages attacked by the LRA.

MONUC operations have been limited to the town of Dungu to ensure logistical support necessary for the Congolese army (FARDC) to meet the Government's primary responsibility to protect its civilians. A joint planned operation, 'Operation Rudia' was launched in 2007 to help the Congolese government contain the LRA and deter attacks on civilians. MONUC has supported the FARDC by transporting its troops to communities at risk. We currently sustain about 2,200 FARDC troops in the area with aerial reconnaissance, rations, fuel, and medical evacuations. The Government has welcomed this support.

As of January 2009, MONUC had two military companies and an engineering detachment, stationed in Dungu to defend and maintain Haute-Uele's only airstrip capable of handling heavy military and humanitarian shipments. If the airstrip were to be damaged or to fall into LRA hands, humanitarian and civil defense operations for the people of Haute-Uele would be greatly reduced.

Ms. Laurence Gaubert  
Head of Mission  
Médecins Sans Frontières  
Kinshasa

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MONUC also sustains a quick reaction force in Dungu for special operations. A second engineering team was sent to repair the road between Dungu and Duru last week and additional air assets will follow.

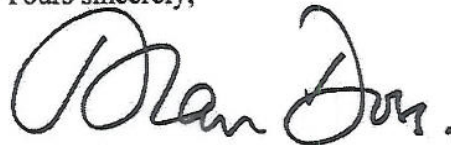
'Operation Rudia' also provides protection for a humanitarian team in Dungu. Whenever possible, MONUC has provided assistance directly to civilians or through non governmental organizations, [although we have never had a request from MSF on humanitarian grounds]. In December 2008, MONUC evacuated two wounded civilians by air from Faradje to Bunia for treatment at its field hospital.

While "denouncing" MONUC efforts in Haute-Uele, the Press Release observes that MSF has a team of six international staff and 25 Congolese nationals based at the hospital in Dungu. It notes that they are also doing their best to support health centers in Doruma, Bangadi, Faradje, Ngilima and Li-May. Haute-Uele covers an area of about 40,000 square kilometers, so with less than one health care worker for every 1,000 square kilometers, this is a Herculean endeavor.

MONUC recognizes that it will never have the capacity to meet emergencies everywhere, at all times. Given our mandated peacekeeping responsibilities in a country the size of Western Europe and limited resources from United Nations Member States to fulfill them, we are obliged to maintain a fluid presence on the ground and to adjust to shifting priorities.

Given its slender resources in Haute-Uele, MSF would understand the challenges and most likely prioritize its mission in much the same way. The goals of MONUC and MSF to support the Congolese people are surely much closer than the Press Release portrays.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Doss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "D".

Alan Doss

Special Representative of the Secretary-General