

Testimony before the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, Global Human Rights, and
International Organizations

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Subject of Hearing: Central African Republic – State of Affairs: Pre-Genocide or Genocide

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee, I want to thank you for including me on this panel on the situation in the Central Africa Republic (CAR), and issue that I am following very closely. I have lived in and work on Central African regional issues both when I was a Director for Africa at the National Security Council and also when I was U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Congo. The latter time was when former CAR President Bozizé first came to power; this was also a time of great conflict and human suffering in CAR. The question the Committee is seeking views on today, however, is whether or not the Central African Republic is already in the throes of a pre-genocide atmosphere or already embroiled in genocide. My remarks will address this and other elements that might be important to consider as we work together as the international community to try to stem the tide of violence and human suffering in CAR.

I first want to say something about the sheer devastation of the humanitarian crisis, having been up on the border area many times between Central Africa Republic (CAR) and Republic of Congo in years past, and in fact there remain refugees there from earlier CAR conflicts. For more than a decade instability has reigned in CAR caused by internal issues which have never been fully resolved – socially, politically, and ethnically – keeping the country environment unstable, and the people of the CAR at the mercy of the next wave of violence. Because of the continued instability and not being on the radar screen of the international community for more than a decade until the rise of the Seleka in December 2012, the events since then have set in motion two things: revenge killing by the anti-balaka Christian groups, which has now spawned into sectarian violence.

In addition over the last several days we are hearing unconfirmed reports of what I have been calling “reverse revenge killings” reportedly from armed Muslim militias or former Seleka running raids from Muslim enclaves in the North into nearby towns such as attacking two days ago a hospital, and killing Christians, and workers with Medicine San Frontier, near the border with Chad. These enclaves only exist because Muslims have been forced to run from sectarian violence directed at them by the anti-balaka groups. Anit-balaka groups also are preventing those Christians who want to live in peace with their Muslim neighbors from doing so.

Therefore, what we have, as you know, are the following:

- Sectarian violence;

- Segregated country along Christian-Muslim lines;
- Large numbers of displaced person, afraid and facing hunger
- Attacks on convoys evacuating people of either religious groups
- Looming potential for famine and further spread of disease as neither planting or harvesting season has or will take place in the violent environment

These are elements that could possibly lead down the road to something we have not seen before:

- A two-way genocide as each group, Muslim and Christians, impose horrendous revenge and “reverse revenge” killing upon each other.

If we allow this to happen this will be a new challenge for the country and international community on top of the already critical humanitarian crisis with thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP's) already on the umbrella of the airport as it is the only place they feel remotely safe.

Thus, what can be suggested as the way forward? I recognize that the Administration is working full time on the humanitarian crisis with internally displaced person, but other donors also need to step up and fulfill pledges to provide assistance. The 2,000 French troops and the 5,000 African Union troops of MISCA as well as the 150 EU troops who have just arrived should all be commended, but also we need to double down on ensuring that their troops are not seen to support one religious group over another.

Having served in government for many years, I also recognize the time line needed to get the full complement of the 12,000-person UN Peace Keeping Mission in by September 2014 and that every effort is being made to advance this. But, the reality may get ahead of their arrival – and, we can see this now if we are entering a new phase of reverse revenge killings by Muslim militia.

Thus, as we balance this *triplex* of sectarian violence/revenge killings, the IDP humanitarian crisis, and looming famine we may need to jump now to *concurrently* work with the transition government to setup Peace Commission in rural areas and in Bangui because without a release valve for people to vent and articulate both their fear and hatred; stem their desire to revenge kill for atrocities done to them or their families, and address the overall environment of crimes against humanity we are likely at the beginning of seeing the current de facto segregation of CAR move into something worse - such as a two-way genocide the likes of which we have not seen before. The potential is there.

In general peace or reconciliation commissions such as in Sierra Leone, South Africa, and even the communal ones in Rwanda began in after peace – or at least fragile stability - had been restored, or in the case of South Africa when apartheid had been abolished.

I am not sure we can wait for that phase in CAR. The triplex of issues we see today may prohibit reaching an end to violence and atrocities unless some release value for the hatred and disregard for humanity by the militia groups on both sides is addressed concurrently in the present environment.

Although this is not directly part of the Committee's question today, I would be remiss if I didn't mention this issue having served as U.S. Ambassador also in Nigeria when the resurgence of Boko Haram

happened. Events like we see in CAR, although we might think it cannot get worse, it can. They can spirally even more out of control so quickly, so fast. Thus, I think we need to be mindful that there is the potential for untoward groups to come into CAR and take advantage of the environment and the segregated environment of Muslims and Christians – not only fueling more hatred and violence, but also bringing with them more violent method such as terrorist tactics. I am specifically thinking of fundamentalist groups who could come in to provide Al-Qaeda-inspired terrorist training to help advance the mission of revenge and reverse revenge killings. This could happen on either side of the religious divide, not just within the Muslim segregated enclaves but also within segregated Christian segregated communities that now exist since the negative atmosphere of hatred and violent pay-back is the order of the day. We need to pay attention to this and seek to work as much as possible within these enclaves to not only distribute much-needed food, but find ways with these groups to create the space for the revenge killings to end on both sides.

Again, I want to thank the Subcommittee for Again for allowing me to share these views.