

# World Bank and the Wilson Center Events Feature MDRP-Commissioned Report on Combatants on Foreign Soil

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Armed groups operating outside of their country of origin, known as Combatants on Foreign Soil (COFS), are a significant threat to security in the greater Great Lakes Region.

In 2005, the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) determined that closer examination was required of the situation of COFS in the North and South Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The goal of the study was to, "...provide recommendations to 'enhance the success of the Disarmament & Repatriation (D&R) process for foreign Armed Groups (AGs) in the Democratic Republic of Congo.'"

To that end, an analysis was conducted in the DRC of the opportunities and constraints to disarmament and repatriation faced by foreign combatants and their dependents.



Hans Romkema of Conflict & Transition Consultancies

A team from Conflict & Transition Consultancies led by Hans Romkema examined four specific groups: the Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda (FDLR); the Forces Nationales pour la Libération (FNL); and, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), often referred to as ADF/NALU.

The report, Opportunities and Constraints for the Disarmament & Repatriation of Foreign Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was completed in June 2007. It outlines the prospects of advancing the disarmament and repatriation of COFS in North and South Kivu and provides recommendations for stakeholders in the peacebuilding process – the Government of the DRC, the governments from COFS countries of origin, the United Nations Mission to the DRC (MONUC), the MDRP and the international community as a whole.

On September 12, 2007, Romkema presented key conclusions of the report to staff at World Bank headquarters in Washington DC. This was followed by a similar talk the next day at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars to a diverse audience of NGO and private sector professionals, embassy representatives, university students, and journalists from the Voice of America and other outlets.

Romkema presented a detailed overview of the objectives, force structures, strengths and weaknesses of

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FDLR, FNL and ADF/NALU present in the Kivu provinces and assessed the effectiveness of D&R activities targeting these groups to date.

Throughout the presentations, Romkema stressed the central role of the Government of the DRC in resolving the numerous security, political and economic issues posed by the presence of COFS in its territory. He pointed out that the recently elected permanent government in the DRC provides a particular opportunity for renewed political will and for progress.

The existence of a generation gap within the FDLR may present another occasion for positive change. There seems to be a significant conflict between the older generation that took part in the Rwandan genocide and the younger generation that followed.

“[These ]...internal divisions that weaken the structure could be key to finding a solution,” Romkema explained.

Above all, Romkema made it clear that “...we insist that a non-violent solution is better than any other solution,” emphasizing that the international community must provide firm political, financial and technical support for repatriation.

With regards to the MDRP, the program already operates in all countries concerned, and so has a significant role to play in supporting COFS initiatives.

As MDRP COFS Task Team Leader Ingo Wiederhofer, notes, “COFS are an integral reason for the program having been established as a regional approach. The effective disarmament, repatriation, demobilization and reintegration of the remaining COFS will be critical to consolidating peace in the eastern DRC, and enhancing the prospects for stabilization, cooperation and recovery in the Great Lakes region.”



For more information on MDRP, please visit [www.mdrp.org](http://www.mdrp.org) or contact Bruno Donat, Communications Officer, MDRP Secretariat, World Bank at [info@mdrp.org](mailto:info@mdrp.org).