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## Terror Persists as Congolese Await U.N. Force

By SOMINI SENGUPTA

BUNIA, Congo, June 3 — As they wait for international troops to land, the people of this town keep getting robbed and raped.

Militia men and women range through Bunia with machine guns strapped to their shoulders. They lounge in the shade of avocado trees, showing off the grenades strapped to their belts.

Night visitors are commonplace. One morning earlier this week, a driver with an aid agency showed up to work with three bloody punctures on the back of his skull, one result of an attack on his family's house the night before by a band of looters, all at least partly attired in military fatigues. Another aid agency worker reported having been the victim of a carjacking. At a camp for displaced people, three armed men showed up last night, hunting for loot.

The tribal enmities that fueled the battle between ethnic Hema and Lendu militias for control of Bunia seem to hardly matter anymore. Only the Hema are left in Bunia now, and only their militia is in control of the town. The Lendu have scattered; their militia is somewhere on the outskirts.

All told, the massacre in Bunia last month took at least 430 lives.

Today, Bunia waits for a new batch of foreign soldiers to come and restore law and order. Exactly when they will arrive remains a mystery. The bigger mystery is whether and how the new international force, authorized by a United Nations Security Council resolution last week, will be able to bring some semblance of security to a city bristling with greed and guns, and for how long.

The new force, with 1,400 troops, does not have an explicit mandate to strip the Hema militia of their weapons. The United Nations force will stay until Sept. 1.

Demilitarizing Bunia — to say nothing of the rest of the northeastern province of Ituri — represents the biggest challenge for the international force.

The leader of the Hema militia, Thomas Lubanga, has given his blessing to the United Nations force, all the while insisting that they would not come to disarm his troops. "We accept the force," he told reporters at a news conference held yesterday afternoon at the Okapi Bar, around the corner from the United Nations compound. "We will collaborate with this force."

Mr. Lubanga, chief of the Congolese Patriotic Union, has promised to station most of his forces at least four miles outside the town, but insisted on keeping 700 soldiers inside Bunia as bodyguards for his senior commanders, according to the spokesman for the United Nations mission here.

Even if he sticks to his promise, keeping an eye on what could be thousands of Hema troops just beyond the city limits will undoubtedly be a tall order. To disarm them altogether would be impossible, said the United Nations military commander, Col. Daniel Vollot, with their Lendu enemies hovering nearby. "It's impossible to ask just one faction to disarm," he said.

The prospect of leaving weapons in the hands of the militias brought little solace to aid workers, many of whom have paid a heavy price for working in a city overrun by 10 militia groups since 1998.

"It was a blunder to announce that they would not be demilitarizing militia groups," said Nigel Pearson, medical coordinator with Medair, an aid agency that runs hospitals here. "Militia groups will take advantage of that. They have already taken advantage of that."

In April, several workers for an Italian aid group were kidnapped by Lendu militiamen for nearly a week; they were accused of helping members of the rival tribe. In the latest fighting last month, two Red Cross workers were killed as they picked up bodies scattered around town.

When the international force will actually get to work is anyone's guess. The first group of French soldiers, who are leading the force, is expected to arrive at the end of the week, while the British are to send a small advance reconnaissance team on Wednesday. Among their first tasks will be to fix the airport here, which is so badly pot-holed that it has to be repaired every night.

Some of the townspeople who fled into the forest have come home to find their houses burned, the tin roofs and mattresses pillaged and crops stolen from the fields.

The other day, a development worker with a local church walked across town bearing a list of his neighbors' misfortunes. He had undertaken a rough census of more than 150 families who had returned home. Nearly all had had their houses stripped bare; some had returned to find only ashes. The church worker brought their names to an aid agency, hoping for help.

For now, though, it is too dangerous for aid groups to venture out of two tiny pockets in Bunia, making it impossible to deliver food, blankets or medicines to most of the needy.

Being home in Bunia is hardly reassuring these days, as the wounded driver for the aid agency testified.

One night this week, shortly after 8 p.m., three men barged into his home and demanded \$1,000 ransom for each of the six people inside.

When the driver did not produce the money, he was beaten with the sharp metal ends of a militiaman's gun. He was made to kneel and was shot at, twice; both times, the gun misfired, and his attackers accused him of being a sorcerer.

His cousin, a 16-year-old girl, was raped. By the time they were through at 3 a.m., seven hours after the ordeal began, the men had gathered up \$300 in cash, two motorcycles, one bicycle, a mattress, clothes, shoes and a pile of plates.

The driver, too terrified to reveal his name or that of his employer, said the men could only have been members of the Hema militia who now control the town.

He shook his head when he heard they would not be disarmed by the international force. "If they don't disarm, they'll do much more outside the town than they've done already," he said.

Reports have trickled in of a new mass killing in a lakeside village 30 miles south of here called Tchomia. The death toll is estimated to be between 150 and 250. The United Nations mission here said it could not confirm what had happened. Its peacekeepers are not allowed to leave Bunia.