



Uganda warlord Kony on the move as manhunt steps up -UN envoy

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* U.N. envoy says Kony may have slipped into Sudan's Darfur

* U.S. elite forces advising Ugandan soldiers

By Louis Charbonneau

UNITED NATIONS, May 11 (Reuters) - Fugitive Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony is constantly changing his hideouts as the African Union prepares to expand a U.S.-assisted manhunt for one of Africa's most wanted men, a senior U.N. official said on Friday.

Kony has evaded the region's militaries for nearly three decades, kidnapping tens of thousands of children to fill the ranks of his Lord's Resistance Army and serve as sex slaves as he moves through the bush. Thousands have been killed by his brutal army.

The deployment of U.S. special forces as advisers to help Ugandan soldiers track Kony and his senior commanders in the dense equatorial jungle across a region that spans several countries has raised hopes the sadistic leader's days are numbered.

Three other African countries - the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic - prepare to join an African Union guerrilla coalition to launch an international manhunt to capture Kony and see that he is put on trial. Kony appears to be increasingly nervous as a result.

"The latest we've received so far is that, contrary to what Kony used to do - to stay one month, two months on the ground - he's now moving almost every other day, which means the pressure is mounting on him," said Abou Moussa, head of the U.N. Regional Office for Central Africa.

"They've found traces of where he's settled," Moussa said in an interview with Reuters and one other newswire. "People who've defected have provided information on his state of mind."

"The pressure must continue," he said, adding that this development was "an excellent thing for us."

Kony was thrust back into the spotlight earlier this year when a video, "Kony 2012", highlighting the chilling mutilations, rapes and murders carried out by his spell-bound fighters went viral on the Internet.

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Moussa said that video, which has been criticized for what some have called a misleading and oversimplified portrayal of events in Uganda and for neglecting African initiatives to solve the crisis, has had a positive impact.

"The overall impact has been very positive, since millions of people now are informed about the consequences of what Kony's doing," he said. "I've received letters from school children in Canada, America. It shows you how deep the awareness has gone."

Kony, a self-styled mystic leader who at one time was bent on ruling Uganda by the Ten Commandments, fled his native northern Uganda in 2005, roaming first the lawless expanses of South Sudan and then the isolated northeastern tip of Congo.

In December 2008, after last-ditch peace talks failed, Ugandan paratroopers and fighter jets struck the Lord's Resistance Army's Congo hideouts. Kony slipped through the net, raising suspicions he had been tipped off.

Kony and many of his combatants, estimated to number between 200 and 500, moved north into the Central African Republic, though Moussa said he had information that Kony might have recently slipped over the porous border into Sudan's conflict-torn western Darfur region.

Moussa said he would be urging Khartoum to close its border to Kony. He added that Chad's President Idriss Deby had promised to do try to apprehend Kony if he came into his country.

It was not unclear when the 5,000-strong, four-nation AU manhunt for Kony would be fully under way, Moussa said.

He said the mounting tensions between Sudan and South Sudan and Congo's hunt for renegade General Bosco Ntaganda - who, like Kony, is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes - meant that those two countries have not been able to free up sufficient soldiers yet for the operation.

Moussa said he will present a strategy for dealing with Kony to the U.N. Security Council next month. The strategy will focus not only on the hunt for Kony but also on dealing with the long-term impact his militia's violence has had on the region.

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