

□ **Statele Unite este gata □□ de□ a se aventura intr-una din cele mai sângeroase conflicte din Africa** , prin trimiterea de trupe în Africa Centrală pentru a sprijini o luptă de ani de zile împotriva unui grup de gherilă Acuzat de atrocități oribile.



The Obama administration said the troops will advise, not engage in combat, unless forced to defend themselves.

In a letter to Congress, President Barack Obama said Friday that the troops will assist local forces in a long-running battle against the Lord's Resistance Army, considered one of Africa's most ruthless rebel groups, and help to hunt down its notorious leader, Joseph Kony.

The first of the troops arrived in Uganda on Wednesday, the White House said, and others will be sent to South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the size of the U.S. footprint is small, Obama's announcement represents a highly unusual intervention for the United States. Although some American troops are based in Djibouti and small groups of soldiers have been deployed to Somalia, the U.S. traditionally has been reluctant to commit forces to help African nations put down insurgencies.

It demonstrates the Obama administration's escalating attention to and fears about security risks in Africa, including terror networks, piracy and unstable nations. The move was intended to show some engagement to lessen the impact of one of the worst protracted wars in Africa.

Obama declared his decision to send troops as in keeping with the national security interests of the United States. The White House announced it in a low-key fashion, releasing the Obama notification and justification of the troop deployment that the president sent to congressional leaders.

Pentagon officials said the bulk of the deployment will be of special operations troops, who will provide security and combat training to African units. The move raises the profile of U.S. involvement on the continent — and represents an apparent victory for administration officials who have argued for more robust intervention in humanitarian crises.

The change in policy could reflect the long-standing concerns of a number of high-ranking Obama advisers left scarred by the U.S. failure in the 1990s to intervene to stop the genocide in Rwanda and the belated action to finally halt the violence in Bosnia. For a current parallel, the Lord's Resistance Army's 24-year campaign of rebellion, rape and murder represents one of the world's worst human rights crises today.

Coming off the administration's successful, if limited, intervention in Libya, the Uganda deployment represents a continued effort by Obama to use military force for humanitarian protection in areas where atrocities are occurring. Sending 100 troops may not be significant in terms of military numbers, but the composition of the force gives the United States a new counterterrorism foothold in a region of the world with terrorist networks, pirates and unstable nations.

A special forces unit can be highly effective beyond what the number of soldiers might suggest. They are highly skilled in disrupting insurgency networks by discovering where rebels are based and how they procure guns, money and other logistical support.

The Lord's Resistance Army has been pushing westward since it began its attacks years ago, and the administration and human rights groups say its atrocities have left thousands dead and have put as many as 300,000 Africans to flight. They have charged the group with seizing children to bolster its ranks of soldiers and sometimes forcing them to become sex slaves.

Kony is wanted by the International Criminal Court under a 2005 warrant for crimes against humanity in his native Uganda. A self-styled prophet, who mixes Christian mysticism with politics, he is believed hiding along the Sudan-Congo border.

Most of the troops will deploy to regional capitals to work with government officials and military commanders on countering the rebels and protecting civilians, Pentagon officials said.

In recent months, the administration has stepped up its support for Uganda, which has played a key role in battling extremists in Somalia.

In June, the Pentagon moved to send nearly \$45 million in military equipment to Uganda and Burundi. The aid included four small drones, body armor and night-vision and communications gear and is being used in the fight against al-Shabab, an al-Qaida-linked group that U.S. officials see as an increasing threat and that African peace-keeping troops in Somalia have been battling to suppress.

At the State Department, officials portrayed the new troop deployment as part of a larger anti-LRA strategy that dates to the Bush administration but also includes legislation passed by Congress this year.

Col. Felix Kulayigye, Uganda's military spokesman, said of the troops: "We are aware that they are coming. We are happy about it. We look forward to working with them and eliminating Kony and his fighters."

*** sursa : Associated Press writers Ben Feller, Matthew Lee, Lolita C. Baldor, Erica Werner and Donna Cassata in Washington and Godfrey Olukya in Kampala, Uganda, contributed to this report.