**On Congo Rapes, Email About Rebels Exposes UN Lies, Security Council's Buzzword “Elements” Must Extend to Probe of UN**

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UNITED NATIONS, August 26 -- Amid the growing scandal of the mass rapes on Congo, 30 kilometers from the UN peacekeepers of MONUSCO, the UN Security Council is belated set to meet on August 26. In advance of the meeting, Inner City Press, which was the first to report the scheduling of the meeting, exclusively obtained the elements of the planned Council press statement that were circulated to members on August 25:

1) Condemnation in the strongest terms and expression of deep concern for these attacks;

2) Demand for complete cessation of all acts of sexual violence;

3) Call on the Government to fight impunity and investigate the matter; and

4) Welcome the dispatching of Assistant Secretary General Atul Khare.

This collection of buzzwords of the UN Security Council was circulated before the leaking, late of August 25, of news of

“an e-mail alert from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security [which] was sent to United Nations staff members on July 30, the day the rapes began. The message warned them to stay away from the area — part of Walikale, in the North Kivu Province of Congo — because it had been taken over by rebels. 'Everyone got that e-mail,' said an officer from a humanitarian organization in the area, who spoke on the condition of anonymity on strict instructions from the organization. 'That rebel elements were active in those specific villages, and humanitarian workers should not go there.'”

 Numerous participants in the August 25 video link up of MONUSCO chief Roger Meece with correspondents at UN headquarters immediately concluded that Meece had “lied through his teeth,” as more than one of them put it. Others said that the UN lying went beyond Meece, to nearly all communications on the rape scandal.

 On August 23 and 24, after Inner City Press first asked about the rapes at that day's UN noon briefing, Spokesman Martin Nesirky claimed that the first MONUSCO and the UN knew of the rebels' incursion and the rapes was on August 12. He repeated this date again and again: “August 12, Matthew, August 12.”

 On August 25, Meece carefully moved away from this account, acknowledging that there was some knowledge -- vague, as he put it -- of rebels in the area. But, according to Meece, when the MONUSCO peacekeepers went out on patrol on August 7, they went the other way, away from the site of the rapes.

With news that they “all” got the e-mail on July 30 saying that rebels were in the specific villages and that humanitarian workers should stay away, both accounts appear in a different light, as does the UN peacekeepers' inaction from July 30 on, and decision to head away from the village with their patrol.

 “Maybe humanitarian workers should run the other way from rebels intent on rape,” one correspondent told Inner City Press. “But if the UN peacekeepers, charged with protecting civilians, won't do so, and lie about what they knew and when, somebody has to get fired. Don't they?”

 This is the UN, so one never knows. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said, through Nesirky and not in person, that he is outraged by the rapes. But will he be outraged by his own officials' lying? What will he do about it?

While NGO representative William Cragin of the International Medical Corps was initially quoted that the UN and aid workers knew about the rebels' presence from July 30 on, when IMC in California was called on August 25, the group's Margaret Aguirre said we work with the UN agencies and want to continue to work with them.

Suddenly, IMC's Ms. Aguirre said, Cragin was traveling and unavailable to speak, for the foreseeable future. As Inner City Press asked Meece in revealing this communication, this smacks of explicit or implicit retaliation and cover up which must going forward be acted on.

Ban belated dispatched ASG Khare and his Sexual Violence and Conflict envoy Margot Wallstrom to the Congo. Khare, previously the UN's top official in Timor Leste, dodged the Press on August 23.

 Earlier this summer, in a rare media availability beside top UN peacekeeper Alain Le Roy -- not heard from yet on this DPKO scandal -- Khare answered Inner City Press' question about the displacement of tens of thousands of people by fighting in the Congo by insisting the UN had not offered logistical support to the Congolese Army in that case. But isn't the UN supposed to be concerned about the plight of civilians? Or do they run the other way?

 Margot Wallstrom, when asked what she has actually done about the Congo and the issue of rape as a tool of war since assuming her position, offered little more than platitudes. Her lack of action on this incidence of mass rape, since July 30, or August 4, or August 7, or August 12, calls into question the seriousness of the office and mandate, necessitating a full review and changes.

 More pressingly on August 26, how the Security Council members deal with this new information?

While some members may argue that the information is too new, and try to stick to the earlier circulated elements, that would be nearly complicity in MONUSCO's and the presenters' misdeeds.

 The Council nearly always mechanically offers unqualified support to the UN peacekeeping operations it has sent out into the field. When, for example, UN peacekeepers are found to be involved in sexual abuse or exploitation, the Council rarely takes it up, preferring to refer obliquely to this in some future statement.

Here, any credible meeting or Statement purporting to address the mass rapes must address the role of MONUSCO's inaction. One or more elements would have to be added to the above, such as an independent outside investigation of MONUSCO's action and failures to act, and UN officials' statements since July 30.

 As Inner City Press asked Meece about on August 25, Belgium's foreign minister has already called for an investigation. But now the Council, which has only recently ordered investigations into the Gaza flotilla assault, the shoot out between Israel and Lebanon and the violence in Darfur's Kalma Camp, seems required to set in motion an investigation of the UN's own actions. We'll see -- watch this site.

Footnotes: as Inner City Press has repeatedly been told since it began asking about the Congo rapes on August 24, France is the Security Council “lead” on all things DRCongo. Questions to the French charge d'affaires have not, to put it mildly, resulted in response of the seriously seemingly required.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as pointed out by tworecent Madame Secretary blogs, traveled to Goma in the DRC to show the Obama administration's seriously about the issue of rape as a tool of war.

 While US Permanent Representative to the UN Susan Rice has been at the Security Council this week, she has not take any Press questions on the unfolding scandal. Earlier this year, when she declined to go on and skipped both the planned andrescheduled and shortened Council trip to the DR Congo, she did not explain.

 Her office issued a written statement on the night of August 24, followed by tweets from her personal AmbassadorRice Twitter account about a US Mission's basketball win and shout-out to Jason Lang, team MVP.

While it has been argued to Inner City Press that such sports tweets are humanizing, and Inner City Press does not disagree, now that misdeeds and misspeaking by the UN itself have been revealed, what will Susan Rice, Hillary Clinton and the Obama administration do about it? Each Council member state faces a similar moment of decision. This is a test: watch this site.