Questions

1. Can you provide information on conflicts between the Sebei tribe and the Kenyan Pokot and the Karamonjong tribe?
2. Is there any evidence of these tribal conflicts been played out in Kampala?
3. Do the Ugandan authorities take action in respect to these tribal conflicts?

RESPONSE

1. Can you provide information on conflicts between the Sebei tribe and the Kenyan Pokot and the Karamonjong tribe?

The Sebei, Karamojong and Pokot all inhabit the border region in northeast Uganda and northwest Kenya. The Sebei (also known as the Sabei, Sapei, Sabyni and Sabiny) are a very small ethnic group and live in and around Kapchorwa district in northeast Uganda. They live on both sides of the Uganda-Kenya border. The Karamojong (also called Karamonjong and Karimojong) live to the north of the Sebei in the North Eastern part of Uganda and the Pokot (also called the Upe) live to the east and north of the Sebei in Kenya’s West Pokot district as well as northeast Uganda, especially in Nakapiripirit district which neighbours Kapchorwa district. For more information on each of this group, see the Background on Tribes section below.

Reports indicate that there has been considerable conflict between these three groups on both sides of the Uganda-Kenya border for a considerable period. The nature of the conflict involves raids and theft of cattle and other property and the killing of those who resist. The conflicts have been exacerbated by the increasing availability of guns in the region as well as environmental factors such as drought. The Karamojong have been most often mentioned as
the aggressors and the Sebei as the victims, though Sebei have also been accused of raiding, killing and arms trafficking. The Ugandan government has attempted to disarm the Karamojong and other groups with little success and has been involved in bloody clashes with the Karamojong in recent years. Details of the situation follow.


Raid by armed cattle rustlers of the Karamojong ethnic group continued during the year in Katakwi, Kotido, Kumi, Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Kaberamaido, Pader, Lira, and Kapchorwa districts in the northeast. These raids resulted in the deaths of more than 100 persons and the displacement of thousands. The Government continued its Karamoja disarmament program during the year (see Section 5). UPDF forces killed numerous persons during clashes with armed Karamojong warriors during the year.

... 

Ethnic Pokot warriors killed civilians during the year. On April 10 and 13, Pokot rustlers from Kenya killed two civilians during a cattle raid in Kabei subcountry, Kapchorwa District. In a separate attack, Pokot rustlers from Kenya and the country killed 8 civilians in Namalu sub-country, Nakapiripit District. (Sec. 1a)

The Government's mandatory disarmament program for Karamoja, which has caused confrontations between the UPDF and the Karamojong, continued, and negotiations continued for a Karamojong-led solution. The UPDF and police continued efforts to improve security conditions by arresting cattle rustlers and preventing cross-border incursions. (Sec.5)

The US Department of State (US Department of State 2004, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003 – Uganda*, February - Attachment 5) notes that both Karamojong and Pokot warriors killed and displaced even more people in 2003:

Armed cattle rustlers of the Karamojong ethnic group, pastoralists with a long tradition of raiding cattle, conducted raids during the year in Katakwi, Kotido, Kumi, Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Kaberamaido, Pader, Lira, and Kapchorwa Districts in the northeast. These raids resulted in more than 1,800 deaths, including the deaths of relief workers, and the displacement of 30,000 persons. For example, on May 30, Karamojong warriors killed World Vision Coordinator Davis Chelangat along Moroto-Nakapiripirit Road. In an effort to stop the killing of civilians by Karamojong warriors, the Government continued its Karamoja disarmament program (see Section 5). UPDF forces killed numerous persons during clashes with armed Karamojong warriors during the year. …

During the year, ethnic Pokot warriors from Kenya killed more than 60 civilians. (Sec.1a)

During the year, raids by armed Karamojong warriors in Katakwi, Kotido, and Kapchorwa Districts in the Northeast resulted in more than 1,800 deaths. The raids reportedly exacerbated ethnic tensions in the northeast (see Section 1.a.). The Government's mandatory disarmament program for Karamoja, which has caused confrontations between the UPDF and the Karamojong, continued. However, negotiations began for a Karamojong-led solution involving UPDF officers and politicians from the Karamoja region. Under a new security initiative for Karamoja, the UPDF and police concentrated on improving security conditions by arresting cattle rustlers and preventing cross-border incursions. (Sec.5)


> The Karamojong tribe, one of few African tribes that have continued to live in an 18th century lifestyle have continued with barbaric acts of raiding their neighbors (tribes) and gone on practicing this at the expense of their own clan members….

From the year 1970 –1980 during a civil war in the country, the Karamojong acquired guns from disgruntled soldiers, which helped increase their strength and gain the upper hand over their neighbors, whom they ruthlessly attacked; killing, raiding, rustling cattle and destroying crops and property.

Several unsuccessful efforts were made by different government regimes during colonial and postcolonial times to persuade the Karamojong that attacking their neighbors is not beneficial.

This practice continued until 1986 when the government of President Yoweri Museveni came to power. Museveni and Human Rights groups saw the urgent need to quell escalating problem and save the Ateso, Bagisu tribes from south of Karamoja from the pathetic life they had been subjected to by the Karamojong.

The subsequent intervention by the government saw that a disarmament program was initiated to remove all illegal guns from the hands of the Karimojong.

This is one of the several attempts by governments and the civil societies to bring the situation in the region under control. However, this took a long time to be effected.

But in the run up to the 1996 presidential elections, the Karimojong caused so much havoc in the neighboring districts that cattle rustling became a major electoral issue.

…

During the transitional period, immediately before and after the 1996 presidential election, the *Karimojong warriors mobilized and organized massive raids against the Teso and Sebei* because there was 'no government'. …

Between 1997 and 2000, disarmament was high on government's priority list. In December 2000, parliament passed the Disarmament Act.

The raiding started when the Upe who had fled to Kenya during the disarmament returned and raided Pian and Bokora herds. … By the end of 2002, there was total mayhem in the region. Raiding spread to parts of Teso and Acholi.

As a result of these internal and external raids, different Karimojong groups started re-arming, in order to protect themselves, an act that severely undermined the initial successes yielded by the disarmament exercise. State Minister for Defence, Ruth Nankabirwa was quoted to have said at the end of November 2003, that government had conceded failure of the disarmament program and that efforts had began to re-design the program.
The Minority Rights Group produced a report on Ugandan minorities in 2001 (Baker, W.G. 2001, *Uganda: The Marginalization of Minorities*, Minority Rights Group, December – Attachment 9). This lists the Sebei as the group most affected by internal displacement in Kapchorwa district at that time (p.12). The report has a section on the problem of the Karamojong (p.18-20). This notes its attacks on other groups including the Sebei in the 1990s (p.20).

A research paper on arms trafficking in the Kenya-Uganda border indicates that many groups on both sides of the border have become heavily armed in order to raid other tribes and protect themselves from such raids (Security Research And Information Centre (SRIC) Kenya 2001, *Small Arms Trafficking In The Border Regions Of Sudan, Uganda And Kenya: Determining The Issues And Setting The Standards Report Of Research On Proliferation Of Small Arms In The North Rift Region Of Kenya*, November – http://www.passievoorvrede.nl/upload/afkenya/011109_Kenya_report_SRIC.pdf - Accessed 1 February 2006 – Attachment 10). The report paints a picture of a violent and insecure region. This report notes that there is also fighting between the Karamojong and the Pokots and that the Sebei exist on both sides of the Uganda-Kenya border (p.22) and traffic arms across the border. It further notes that, on the Kenyan side of the border:

The communities with guns in the district are Pokots, Sebei and Sabaots. While the Pokots use theirs for cattle rustling, the Sebeis and Sabaots use theirs for robbery and theft. (p.22)

The Karamojong are the main suppliers of guns in West Pokot. Sebeis were also mentioned as selling guns to Pokots albeit on a lesser scale. The selling points are mainly along the Kenya-Uganda boarder. The border is very expansive and crossing over is very easy since it is hardly patrolled by security forces. (p.27)

The 1980 attack on the Pokots by Karamojong and Turkanas prompted the gun culture among the Pokot people. The Pokots were very vulnerable hence had to acquire arms for selfdefense. Many respondents reported that the situation across the region was such that owing to insecurity, each community to The efforts were to ensure that your enemies do not out do you on usage skill and gun numbers.

In 1982, Pokots began to arm themselves in earnest. The Karamojong began to sell the excess guns they had acquired from Amin’s, army during time peace times. In 1984, the Pokot attacked the Karamonjong in Pukwa area in Uganda and stole hundreds of animals. However, most of the stolen animals were confiscated by the Kenyan government security personnel and returned to Uganda. In 1986 Pokots attacked the Turkana and stole cattle, but the government launched an operation where most of the animals were returned to the Turkanas. Guns among the Pokot are in the hands of the male population. We were told that every mature man in Pokot owns a personal gun. (p.27)

Likewise, another report mentions that the Pokot in Kenya are armed and in conflict with their neighbours including the Karamonjong (the Sebei are not mentioned in this report):

In the North-Eastern province [of Kenya], gunlaw rules and insecurity is an on-going hazard. The same can be said for the more remote areas of the Rift Valley province where members of the Turkana, Samburu, Marakwet and Pokot communities routinely acquire guns to protect themselves and their livestock from raiders, infiltrating from neighbouring communities. Other hostile raiders cross the border from neighbouring countries. …

In May this year, after months of internecine inter-tribal feuding in Northern Rift Valley, President Daniel arap Moi ordered all those holding firearms without a
firearm’s certificate, to surrender them. Only one old gun was handed in!
For example, Elders of the Pokot community, people associated with aggression and
livestock theft from their neighbours, retorted defiantly that surrendering their
firearms would expose them to attacks by their enemies, the Marakwet, the Turkana
and the Karamojong of north-eastern Uganda.
September - http://ospiti.peacelink.it/anb-bia/nr417/e06.html - Accessed 1 February
2006 – Attachment 11).

Other recent reports indicate that inter-tribal raiding between the Sebei, Karamojong and
Pokot continued in 2004-6 and that Sebei have been involved as raiders as well as the raided:

New Vision (Kampala), 30 January (Attachment 12);

(Kampala), 23 August (Attachment 13);

Obwocha, Beatrice and Chiseremi, Winstone 2005, ‘1,600 Guns Recovered in North Rift
Region’, The East African Standard (Nairobi), 4 July (Attachment 14);

- ‘Moroto Wants Uganda to Pay for Stolen Cattle’ 2005, The Nation (Nairobi), 15 July
(Attachment 15);

(Attachment 16);

Kusimba, Masinde 2005, ‘Kenya And Uganda Start Disarming Communities’, The East
African Standard (Nairobi), 17 May (Attachment 17);

Muzungyo, Rashid 2004, ‘RDC Warns On Kenyan Pokots’, New Vision (Kampala), 24
September (Attachment 18).

Background on Tribes

Sebei
The Sebei are also known as the Sabei, Sapei, Sabyni and Sabiny (and perhaps as Sabaot in
Kenya¹). They are a small tribe from Eastern Uganda and are also present in Western Kenya.
Estimates of their numbers vary from 10,000 (Attachment 6), 25,000-35,000 (Attachment 1),
110,000 (CX26168), to 156,000 (Attachment 20).

A seminar paper dated May 2004 by a Santa Clara University law student provides
information on the Sebei of Uganda including demographics, daily life, legal structure,
contracts, offences and sorcery. The following is general information on the Sebei.

The Sebei are a tribal people living on the northern and north-western slopes of Mount Elgon,
and on the plains below, in eastern Uganda.

¹ Sometimes Sebei and Sabaot are listed together and sometimes as separate groups.
Population statistics are a bit confusing. One source, from 1971 cites 35,000 Sebei, but another source in 1994 cites 120,000. This latter number is quoted to be to 0.6% of the Uganda population, which corresponds to a 2003 population quote of 25,632,794. Regardless, the Sebei are a small percentage of the Ugandan population.

The Sebei are classified as NiloHamitics and speak a language of the Nandi cluster which is now generally called Kalenjin.

The Sebei live in somewhat of a pie-slice shaped area encompassing both mountain heights and dry plains in the present Kapchorwa district.

Some Sebei communities are primarily pastoralists (cattle-keeping) and others are farmers (hoe-farming), depending on their location.

More significantly, cattle is the primary measure of wealth for the Sebei and many surrounding tribes, and the easiest way to increase the size of a herd is to raid the neighboring tribe’s stock. Thus, Sebei men are on the constant defensive from raiders and are sometimes raiders themselves.

Societally, the Sebei recognize agnatic kin units (clan or aret) and spatial units (tribe or pororyet) and age-sets (pinta). The clan is a patrilineal descent group which is further divided into lineages, or korik (singular, kota). Clans are not named and are occasionally linked together in groups of two to four. Each clan has ancestral spirits (oyik) who monitor the clan’s welfare and its members’ behavior. “These spirits can harm only members of their own clan, except that the spirits of the mother’s clan may also affect the welfare of a person.”

There are about fifteen acephalous tribes, or pororyets. These tribes are not formally organized into a larger entity; however, they share a prophet and a ceremony called ntarastit. A tribe is divided into smaller entities, called songmwek (singular, sangta), similar to a village.

In general, the Sebei have “(1) fear of death, (2) diffuse anxiety, (3) fear of the malignant power of women, (4) profound jealousy and hostility, (5) desire for population increase, and (6) respect for seniority.” The Sebei obsession with death is a fearful dread. They are not necessarily concerned with the means of dying, “it is death itself that terrifies them.” Furthermore, the Sebei are afraid of everything, even their friends and family. Fear and jealousy hinders them to be cooperative with each other. Jealousy is expressed in terms of stealing others’ possessions. Sebei women are to be feared due to “their supernatural power as witches, and their secular power as shrews.” Women encourage this belief (Benintendi, Lori 2004, The Sebei of Uganda, David D. Friedman’s Homepage, May http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Academic/Course_Pages/legal_systems_very_different_05/final_papers_04/benintendi_sebei_04.html – Accessed 23 May 2005 – Attachment 1).


**Karamojong (Karimojong, Karamojong) tribe.**

Wadri gives this overview:

The Karamojong tribe, one of few African tribes that have continued to live in an 18th century lifestyle have continued with barbaric acts of raiding their neighbors (tribes) and gone on practicing this at the expense of their own clan members.
Karamojong from Karamoja located in the North Eastern part of Uganda (small East African country) are a nomadic tribe whose livelihood depends on keeping cattle. Located in a 27,200 square kilometer area of semi-arid savannah, bush and mountains, the region has dominant groups including the Dodoth in the north, the Jie in the central region, and in the south a cluster of closely related ethnic groups known as Bokora, Matheniko, and Pian all of whom are referred to generally as the Karimojong in the Karamoja Region (Wadri, Peter 2005, ‘The Karimojong tribe and proliferation of guns’, Brainstorming.info website, 5 January - http://www.brain-storming.info/article.php?ida=56# - Accessed 1 February 2006 - Attachment 3).

Kenyan Pokot tribe


The US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003- Uganda states “There were approximately 10,000 Sabiny and approximately 20,000 Pokot in the country.”

2. Is there any evidence of these tribal conflicts been played out in Kampala?

No reports were found in the sources consulted of tribal conflicts within Kampala. As noted in question 1 above, the conflicts appear to be mainly driven by theft of cattle and other goods.


Similarly, the situation of tribal people in Kampala is not mentioned in the Minority Rights Group report of 2001. (Baker, W.G. 2001, Uganda: The Marginalization of Minorities, Minority Rights Group, December – Attachment 9.)

3. Do the Ugandan authorities take action in respect to these tribal conflicts?

The Ugandan government has attempted to disarm the Karamojong and other groups with little success and has been involved in bloody clashes with the Karamojong in recent years. Peter Wadri, a journalist living in Uganda, has described attempts by the government to disarm the Karamojong:

Between 1997 and 2000, disarmament was high on government's priority list. In December 2000, parliament passed the Disarmament Act.

The disarmament program was carried out in two phases.
The first phase involved voluntary disarmament and started on 2nd December 2001 and ended on 2nd January 2002. Forceful disarmament commenced on 15th February 2002. Government offered a number of incentives for the Karimojong to voluntarily disarm, including the provision of iron sheets and ox-ploughs to whoever surrendered their weapons. …

The UPDF (Ugandan Army) launched military operations to recover illegal arms after the expiration of an extended deadline for voluntary disarmament on 15th February 2002. They recovered, by force, only 1,949 guns from Karamoja and 763 from Kapchorwa. 1,378 guns and 40 homemade guns were handed voluntarily during the second phase.

Due to lack of co-operation, trust, commitment, common cause, and sincerity among senior local leadership on Karamoja, it became extremely difficult for the UPDF to mobilize forceful disarmament. This led to violent clashes between the armed Karimojong warriors and the UPDF.

In March 2002, barely a month after forceful disarmament had been launched in Karamoja, government abruptly withdrew the UPDF to contain increased LRA rebel incursions in Northern Uganda. This caused an increase of raiding by sections of the Karimojong that had not disarmed.

State Minister for Defence, Ruth Nankabirwa was quoted to have said at the end of November 2003, that government had conceded failure of the disarmament program and that efforts had begun to re-design the program.

In spite of government's efforts to curb insecurity in the Karamoja region, instability still persists. This has a number of causes such as an increase of unemployment among youths (Karacuna), caused by the lack of economic opportunities that attract the strong, energetic, tough and ready young Karacuna.

Other of the strong consequences derivates for the situation was the abrupt halt on the disarmament program that sparked sporadic raids against the disarmed. The Kenyan Pokot and Turkana, who were not disarmed by their Government, intensified raiding in most parts of the district and are especially to blame.

The instability of the state security forces has affected the efforts to control the insecurity in the area, which at the same time has increased the arms proliferation and as result a continuous instable situation in the area. …

The risky situation is generation important damages in the local community development as the presence of road bandits that are affecting the construction of local infrastructures. It exists difficulties for children to can go to the school due to the conflict situation. Also the mobile populations cannot access social services from government and national programs. The quality of life of the population is decreasing, this fact is related with two main consequences of the conflict as, and the diseases spread through cattle raids and the Inability to travel to the markets due to road ambushes.

All this facts points to a complicate resolution of the conflict related with the continues changes in the Government and a not strong and effective politic plan to normalize the conflict and to stop the corruption practices, and tribes fights that are not only damaging the life of the population but also deteriorating the relationships among the leaderships of both communities and the Government authorities.


A recent IRIN report states:
Uganda and Kenya are due to simultaneously disarm their border communities, which have perpetrated cross-border violence on each other for decades, Ugandan army spokesman Maj Shaban Bantariza told IRIN on Monday…

In 2001, Uganda embarked on the disarmament of the Karimojong, but the attempt stalled in 2002 when an intensification of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army hostilities in the north of the country forced the government to redirect resources being used in the disarmament to the war.

However, more than 10,000 guns had already been surrendered to the army, either voluntarily or forcefully.


Attachments 4-19 also refer.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:
Government Information & Reports
United Nations (UN)
Non-Government Organisations
International News & Politics
Region Specific Links
http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=UG
http://www.kapchorwa.go.ug/background/
Topic Specific Links
Search Engines
Online Subscription Services
www.allafrica.com
Library Networks
University Sites

Databases:
Public    FACTIVA    Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA    BACIS    Country Information
          RENFO    IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT    ISIS    RRT Country Research database, including
              Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch,
              US Department of State Country Reports on Human
              Rights Practices.
RRT Library    FIRST    RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

   (http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Academic/Course_Pages/legal_systems_very_different_05/final_papers_04/benitendi_sebei_04.html – Accessed 23 May 2005)

2. ‘Uganda Districts’ (undated), Uganda Bureau of Statistics website.


