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UGA102830.E

Uganda: Overview of the police force, including structure, size and division of duties; police militarization; existence of police complaints authority and recourse available to individuals who file complaints against the police
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Uganda police force structure

The Uganda Police Force (UPF), under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is the main security force responsible for law enforcement in Uganda (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 1.d). According to the *World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Correctional Systems*, in addition to "regular" police work, the UPF is also involved in carrying out paramilitary functions, providing security for visiting dignitaries and assisting public prosecutors during criminal proceedings (2006, 920).

The UPF is headed by an inspector general of police (IGP) (Uganda n.d.a; *World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Correctional Systems* 2006, 920). The IGP is appointed by the President on the Public Service Commission's recommendation and reports directly to the President and to the Minister of Internal Affairs (ibid., 920-921). A deputy inspector general of police (DIGP) reports to the IGP (Uganda n.d.a).

According to the UPF website, the police force is divided into five directorates: Administration, Operations, Criminal Investigations, Special Branch and Local Administration Police (LAP) (ibid.). The Administration directorate is responsible for finances, resources (including human resources) and police medical services; the Operations directorate works in the area of crime prevention, "safety assurances" and incident responses; the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) is responsible for detecting, preventing and investigating crime, compiling information on criminals and gathering evidence for use in criminal prosecutions; the Special Branch collects, analyzes and disseminates information on security (Uganda n.d.a); and the Local Administration Police (LAP), composed of locally recruited officers who have knowledge of local languages and customs (ibid. n.d.g; CHRI 2006, 15), is responsible for the enforcement of local bylaws and ordinances (ibid.; Uganda n.d.a). Each of the five directorates is commanded by an assistant inspector general of police (AIGP), who reports to the DIGP (ibid.).

Other branches and units of the Uganda Police Force, include the Legal Department (ibid.; ibid. n.d.c); the Child and Family Protection Unit, which deals with human rights and gender-related issues (ibid. n.d.d); the Police Anti-Terrorism Unit, responsible for such activities as diffusing bombs, rescuing hostages and apprehending "terrorists" (ibid. n.d.e); the Mobile Police Patrol Unit (MPPU), which deals with border crimes, including smuggling (ibid. n.d.f); and the Special Force Unit, a paramilitary branch of the police trained in riot control and border patrol (*World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Correctional Systems* 2006, 921). The *World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Correctional Systems* also lists the following branches and units of the UPF: the Uniform Branch; the Special Constabulary; the Signals Branch; the Railway Police; the Police Air Wing; the Police Tracker Force; the Police Band; the Police Dog Section; and the Public Safety Unit (ibid.).

Between 2006 and 2007, the Uganda Police Force reportedly expanded from approximately 27,000 to 48,000 police officers (Xinhua 1 July 2007). According to official figures, the ratio of police officers to population in Uganda is approximately 1 officer per 1,880 inhabitants (ibid.; Uganda n.d.b). However, there are "significant" variations in the ratio of police officers to population by district, which according to one source, range from 1 officer per 100 inhabitants in the capital city of Kampala to 1 officer per 8,000 inhabitants in certain outlying districts (*World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Correctional Systems* 2006, 920). There are approximately 6,780 LAP officers in Uganda (Uganda n.d.g).

In 2007, Uganda was reportedly undergoing a restructuring of its police force (Xinhua 1 July 2007); however, information on what structural changes have been implemented could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Militarization of the police force

Several sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that there has been a trend towards increased militarization of the Ugandan police force, as shown by the appointment of military officers to senior positions, including the Inspector General of Police (*The Citizen* 21 Apr. 2008; CHRI 2006, 12; HURINET-Uganda 21 Feb. 2008, 20). The UPF has also created such militaristic units as the Rapid Response Unit [formerly known as the Violent Crimes Crack Unit (HRW Jan. 2008)], the Black Mamba (CHRI Spring 2007; HURINET - Uganda 21 Feb. 2008, 20), the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI) (ibid.), the Joint Anti-Terrorist Task Force, the Members of the Kalangala Action Plan and the Presidential Protection Unit (CHRI Spring 2007). Several sources describe the distinction between the military and the civilian police force as "blurred" (CHRI Spring 2007; HURINET - Uganda 21 Feb. 2006, 1; CHRI 2006, 12). This militarization of the police force has led to allegations of "brutal" police tactics and human rights violations (HURINET - Uganda 21 Feb. 2008, 30; CHRI Spring 2007). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in August 2007, the Rapid Response Unit detained forty-one individuals in over-crowded cells and reportedly tortured at least three of them (HRW Jan. 2008).

The militarization of the police force has reportedly enabled "[police] misconduct to go uncountered by police accountability mechanisms" (HURINET - Uganda 21 Feb. 2008, 30; see also CHRI Spring 2007).

Police complaints authority

The UPF has established a Professional Standards Unit to handle complaints from the general public concerning the "misconduct" of police personnel (Uganda n.d.h). According to an article in *The Monitor*, a Kampala-based newspaper, in May 2008, the Police Professional Standards Unit (PPSU) arrested 17 traffic police officers in Kampala for accepting bribes from motorists (*The Monitor* 9 May 2008). The article indicates that between the PPSU's establishment in July 2007 and the article's publication in May 2008, the PPSU uncovered 909 cases of alleged police misconduct and completed investigations into just over half of them (ibid.). Police officers under investigation reportedly receive half their salary until their case is closed and, if found guilty, are dismissed from the service without benefits or pension (ibid.). Information on the number of police officers who have been dismissed since July 2007 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Several sources consulted by the Research Directorate make reference to a Human Rights and Complaints Desk (Uganda n.d.c; CHRI 2006, 32), or a Police Human Rights Desk (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 1.d). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007* indicates that in 2007, the Desk investigated cases of police misconduct, including "mismanagement of case papers; torture and harassment; unlawful arrest and detention; abuse of office; irregular or discreditable conduct; and corrupt practices (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 1.d).

According to the UPF website, the advantages of the Human Rights and Complaints Desk include "quick and easy resolution" of public complaints, promotion of better relations between the police and the public and contribution to improving police services (Uganda n.d.c). However, a 2006 report on police accountability in Uganda by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), "an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth," cites several weaknesses of the Human Rights and Complaints Desk (2006, 31-33). The Desk is located inside police headquarters and is manned by police officers, which may result in a lack of public confidence in registering complaints (CHRI 2006, 32). The report also notes that the Desk is located in Kampala and may not be easily accessible to those in other regions; the Desk is not adequately staffed or resourced to properly investigate complaints; investigations into complaints are internal and not transparent; disciplinary courts are manned by police officers (i.e., the police are policing themselves) and information on whether disciplinary action is taken against accused police officers is not always shared with the public (ibid., 32-33).

Training on human rights standards

The Uganda Police Force has established a training program on human rights standards for its officers (*World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Correctional Systems* 2006, 921; US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 1.d). *Country Reports 2007* indicates that this program is for both police and military officers and is run in conjunction with the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (ibid.). Information on the number of officers trained on human rights standards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

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Internet sites, including: AllAfrica, African Police Resource Network (APRN), Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), United Kingdom Home Office, United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).

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