

Central African villagers fear rebels

by UPI

UNITED NATIONS - Tens of thousands of villagers in the Central African Republic are hiding in the bush for fear of attacks by armed rebel groups, a U.N. official said Friday. Toby Lanzer, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in the African country, said international assistance is geared to reach villagers where they are hiding, rather than relocate them. It's estimated a significant portion of the 200,000 internally displaced citizens are near their homes but afraid to return, Lanzer said in a release. "People have fled just 500 yards or 1,000 yards from their villages," Lanzer said. "We're providing them with shelter, access to clean water, healthcare, seeds and tools," in addition to "bush schools" in thatched huts for 75,000 children. He said 100,000 Central African Republic citizens had fled to Chad or Cameroon, primarily because of fighting between the government and rebel factions. Central Africa is "at the heart of a fairly rough neighborhood," caught between the Sudan, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is used by guerrilla organizations as a staging area, Lanzer said. The United Nations sought \$92 million for humanitarian aid, but has only received about 10 percent of that amount so far.

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