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**(By Public Information Office)**

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## **HIGHLIGHTS:**

### **UN**

#### **Sudan Denounces Annan's proposal to replace AU forces**

(Sudan Vision, 15 Jan, Khartoum) Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Lam Akol said statements by the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan regarding replacement of African forces by other foreign forces have not aroused worry of the Sudanese government. "Our response was that we did not consult over the issue before making such statements," he added.

Akol affirmed that there were no positive aspects of replacing the African Union adding that Sudan is capable of handling its own affairs. "The African Union Forces involvement has been accepted for certain considerations namely that was the first African experience in peacekeeping in the continent. In addition to the similarity of the Sudanese environment to that of the forces" said the Minister. He noted that above all, the mandate of African forces is confined to defending citizens in regions where government authority does not exist.

Dr. Akol briefed journalists on the last session held by the African Union Peace and Security Council at which the Council heard a report by the Assessment Mission dispatched to Darfur to report on political, security and military aspects there. The Minister added that the Assessment Mission effectively performed its task but was faced with financial problems. According to the Minister the Report of the Mission has extended the mandate of the African Union Forces for another nine (9) months to begin on the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month. The report has recommended provision of (160) million dollars to cover this period.

Dr. Akol expressed Sudan's readiness to subscribe to the provision of this amount calling on the international community and the African Union to make up for the financial and logistical gap to enable these forces to perform their mission efficiently.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning the UN Secretary General's proposal for deployment of forces other than the African ones, adding that this puts into question the ability of the Africans to resolve their own problems. The statement expressed regret for some African states support to the UN Secretary General's proposal.

#### **UN's Pronk calls for new, robust peacekeeping force in Darfur**

Sudan Tribune, Jan 13, 2006 (UNITED NATIONS) — UN Special Representative for Sudan Jan Pronk urged deployment of a new, robust peacekeeping force in Sudan's strife-torn Darfur province, able to deter attacks on civilians and to disarm militias responsible for atrocities.

Briefing the UN Security Council on the latest developments in Sudan, Pronk also called for sanctions against those responsible for the violence that has claimed as many as 300,000 lives and left more than two million displaced in three years of conflict.

Describing the security situation in Darfur as "chaotic," he said: "looking back at three years of killings and cleansing in Darfur we must admit that our peace strategy so far has failed."

"Terror continues. At least once a month groups of 500 to 1000 militia on camel and horseback attack villages, killing dozens of people and terrorizing the others," he added.

While commending the role of African Union peacekeepers in Darfur, he said they had not been provided with adequate resources and needed to be replaced by a bigger, more robust force "able to defend itself, deter attacks on civilians and able to disarm militias and the (pro-Khartoum) Janjaweed which should have been disarmed by the government."

He said the proposed force should stay at least three to four years after the signing of a peace agreement and should have its financing guaranteed.

"It should be an integral element of a unified approach toward Darfur, with humanitarian, political, police, legal, human rights, reconstruction and economic development instruments," Pronk added.

He said the force should be backed by sanctions on unauthorized troop movements, on arms deliveries and on those people responsible for the violence.

UN experts have recommended a freeze on assets and a travel ban on those blocking the peace process and instigating violence in line with measures voted by the UN Security Council 10 months ago but never acted upon.

In a sign of the sense of urgency over the deteriorating situation in Darfur, UN chief Kofi Annan Thursday said the world body was readying contingency plans to deploy a quick-reaction force to take over from cash-strapped African Union peacekeepers there.

"We have started contingency planning to be ready if and when the decision is taken for us to go in," Annan told reporters.

He spoke as the African Union said it may be forced to hand over its peacekeeping mission in Darfur to the UN if international donors fail to plug a funding shortfall.

Annan said AU Commission chairman Alpha Omar Konare indicated to him that the AU force would want to stay for another nine to 12 months "provided the donor community gives them the necessary resources and the logistical support."

In December, the AU said it needed over 130 million dollars in new contributions to meet the 465 million dollars (387 million euros) it needs for AMIS operations in the current financial year that ends in May.

AMIS, financed mainly by the European Union, the United Nations and the United States, currently has some 7,800 personnel, including peacekeepers and observers, in Darfur.

Meanwhile, Salim Ahmed Salim, the AU Special Envoy for Darfur, told the council that the worsening crisis between Sudan and neighboring Chad made a Darfur settlement "more problematic".

The Chadian government declared a "state of war" with Sudan last month following a rebel attack on the border town of Adre, and has asked the AU and the world community to head off further escalation of the conflict.

Chadian President Idriss Deby has repeatedly accused Khartoum of backing Chadian rebels in eastern Chad, on the border with Darfur, which has been in the throes of a civil war for three years.

Several new rebel groups have sprung up recently on the Chad side of the border, which houses more than 200,000 refugees who fled Darfur.

### **Sudan condemns UN's "insistence" to deploy military mission in Darfur**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report by Sudanese radio on 15 January-- The government has called upon all parties to support the Abuja peace talks in a bid to achieve its objective, and refrain from sending misleading messages which will complicate the situation.

In a statement issued last evening by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government condemned UN's insistence to send military mission to Darfur.

It further said that instead of bridging the financial difficulties facing the African Union [AU] mission [in Darfur], the issue is now being manipulated through a proposal aimed at changing the AU forces with other different forces.

The government further said that such proposal was belittling the AU's capability to carry out the peacekeeping mission, and was also underrating the capabilities of Africans to resolve their own problems.

The government further expressed its regret over the move by some African countries to support this proposal.

The statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Sudan was the one which requested for assistance from the AU to support the efforts being made to restore stability in Darfur.

However, the statement said, if the AU was unable to play its role in Darfur, the government [of Sudan] has the right to invite anyone from other regional and international powers who would assist.

### **US supports UN troops to Sudan's Darfur**

Sudan Tribune, Jan 13, 2006 (WASHINGTON) — The United States supports augmenting African Union forces in Sudan's western Darfur region with U.N. peacekeepers but has not offered its own troops for such a mission, U.S. officials said on Friday.

The African Union, which has about 7,000 peacekeepers trying to monitor a shaky cease-fire in Darfur, said on Friday it supported "in principle" handing over its mission in Darfur to U.N. peacekeepers because it was running out of money. A final decision would be taken before the end of March.

In addition, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Thursday the United Nations wanted the United States and European countries to help form a tough mobile force to stop the bloodshed, rape and plunder in troubled Darfur.

Jendayi Frazer, the U.S. assistant secretary of state in charge of African affairs, said Washington would support augmenting the African Union, or AU, force with U.N. peacekeepers but stopped short of pledging any U.S. troops.

"(We support) international troops augmenting AU forces and not replacing them. This is what we did in Liberia," Frazer told reporters.

Sudan has said the presence of U.S. forces on its soil would be unwelcome.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack declined to comment directly on whether the United States was prepared to send troops but noted the United Nations had begun contingency planning for a handover from AU forces to U.N. peacekeepers.

"We will work with the U.N. Security Council and other international partners on this issue. Our concern here is to see that there is effective security in Darfur," said McCormack.

Frazer stressed the main U.S. aim was to support AU forces in their job and to ensure they were well-funded, adding that Washington had so far given more than \$170 million for the Darfur mission and had airlifted African troops there.

The State Department has been struggling to get money for AU troops and last month Congress rejected a personal appeal by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to provide \$50 million for the AU mission in Darfur.

## SUDAN AS CHAIR

Complicating the AU mission in Darfur, Sudan could be in line to assume the rotating chairmanship of the 53-nation AU at an upcoming Jan. 23-24 summit in Khartoum. Many nations fear such a move would sink the Darfur peace process.

Asked about Sudan taking over the AU presidency, Frazer said serious consultations were taking place about this across Africa.

"With the situation in Darfur, it obviously makes it very problematic, particularly if he (Sudan's president) were to assume the presidency and the AU has a peacekeeping mission trying to stabilize Darfur. It may be a bit of a conflict of interest there," said Frazer.

She added: "But I think that this is really an internal matter for the African Union at the summit level to address. And I think that they are in those consultations right now."

Frazer said she also hoped the summit would try to resolve Sudan's dispute with neighboring Chad, which accuses Khartoum of backing rebels seeking to overthrow President Idriss Deby.

Earlier this week, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick made clear in a meeting with Chad's foreign minister that the United States was very concerned about the conflict, which posed serious risks to refugees and displaced people. (Reuters)

## **Government of National Unity**

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues press release on African Union Forces in Darfur**

(Akhbar Al-Youm, 15 Jan, Khartoum) **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press release on the African Union Forces in Darfur:** “We came to receive hints of news that emerged following the last session held on 12 January 2006 by the African Union Peace and Security Council at which the Council heard a report by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Darfur. The report implies that the UN is determined, if allowed, to send military monitoring forces to Darfur on the ground that the African union is not be capable of carrying on its assigned military monitoring tasks within the period commencing after the forthcoming month of March, 2006 for financial and logistical reasons.

The government of the Sudan would hereby like to draw attention to the fact that instead of exerting efforts by the international community and the African Union to address the funding and logistical problems to enable the AU forces continue its mission as well as increase its numbers and armaments, bearing in mind that all parties engaged including the UN came to commend the performance of the AU forces; abruptly the whole matter has been changed to have a new proposal on the replacement of the AU forces by other forces. Such a proposal raises doubts and raises questions in respect to the efficiency of the African Union forces to undertake such a mission as well as the inability of Africans to resolve their own problems and carry out tasks assigned to them properly.

In addition, we regret that there are some African countries which have chosen to stand in support of such a proposal through statements to the medias.

Actually, it was the Government of Sudan who called on the African Union to enhance peace building in Darfur. And if the AU fails to do so, which have not been evidenced up until now – except for the complaints in relation to lack of funding from the international community to enable it continue its work. The government of Sudan has the right to call on any regional and international entity to provide help in this connection. The Government of Sudan hereby would like to appreciate and value the efforts exerted by the African Union so far and believes that such a mission must continue its work, but at the same time it would like to call on the international community to assist the AU by providing funds and logistics. Further, the Government of Sudan would like to thank the international community for the great humanitarian assistance it has provided to the citizens of Darfur, by virtue of which they were enabled to overcome the critical situation of acute deficit in food, medications, and shelter and to ask the international community to continue such assistance until peace and stability are brought about in the region. Moreover, the GoS urges all parties to support the peace process in Abuja in order to enable it become a success, and avoid sending mistaken signals that may add more complexity to an already complicated situation”.

Khartoum, 14 January 2006.

### **Sudan’s FM rejects US force in Darfur**

Sudan Tribune, Jan 13, 2006 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese government on Friday rejected a suggestion by U.N. head Kofi Annan that U.S. and European troops be sent to Darfur, saying the international community should give more cash to African forces already on the ground.

"We think that the African Union is doing a good job and so far they have not said they are unable to do that job," Foreign Minister Lam Akol told Reuters.

"Naturally what should happen is to give them the money they want, not to complicate matters by involving another force on the ground," he said.

The United States supports augmenting African Union forces in Sudan's western Darfur region with U.N. peacekeepers but has not offered its own troops for such a mission, U.S. officials said on Friday.

"(We support) international troops augmenting AU forces and not replacing them. This is what we did in Liberia," Jendayi Frazer, the U.S. assistant secretary of state in charge of African affairs, told reporters.

Diplomats said the United States would be hard pushed to find enough troops to send into Darfur given their commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. contribution would likely be to give logistical support to any force sent in.

One of two main Darfur rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), said it would welcome U.S. troops.

"If the Americans came they would be preferable to the African Union who so far have failed in their duties to protect civilians," SLA Vice President al-Raya Mahmoud Juma'a said.

"They (the African Union) have enough forces and equipment, but they still cannot do their job and stop the attacks," he told Reuters from Darfur.

The second rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) said the nationality of the force did not matter, but it was concerned that the AU force needed a stronger mandate and more troops.

"We need more troops with a clearer mandate to protect civilians," said JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said on Thursday he wanted the United States and European countries to help form a tough mobile force to stop the rape, killing and looting in Darfur, western Sudan, which Washington has termed genocide.

#### FUNDS UNTIL MARCH

The African Union has 7,000 peacekeeping troops in Darfur, a region the size of France, but after an assessment mission there last month, the 53-member African body said it only had enough funds until March.

The AU depends on donor countries to fund its mission to monitor a tentative truce in the region, where violence has driven more than 2 million from their homes.

In a statement seen by Reuters on Friday, the AU said it "expresses its support, in principle, to a transition from (AU) to a UN operation".

It added it planned to meet before the end of March to make a final decision on any future handover to the United Nations.

Annan said the killings and rape were continuing, and the United Nations had started contingency planning to take over the AU mission, although the African Union and U.N. Security Council would have to agree first.

Asked whether that would include rich countries like the United States and European nations, he said, "Those are the kind of countries with the kind of capabilities we will need, so when the time comes, we will be turning to them."

"We will work with the U.N. Security Council and other international partners on this issue. Our concern here is to see that there is effective security in Darfur," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

If there were to be any significant deployment of U.S. troops in Darfur, it would be Washington's first major foray into African peacekeeping since it quit Somalia in 1994.

But Russia and China, whose support would be needed in any Security Council resolution to deploy additional troops, have traditionally opposed sending non-African forces to Darfur.

Akol said the AU was a peace monitoring force and Sudan did not need the military power of the United States in Darfur.

"What would they do other than what the African forces can do?" he said. "We are not looking for a force who is going to fight," he added.

(Reuters)

### **New SSDF commander named, as Paulino defects to SPLA**

(Sudan Vision, 15 Jan, Khartoum) South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF), led by Maj-Gen. Gordon Kong Chol, has affirmed their support to the armed forces and continuation of reintegrating SSDF forces into the latter. He added that the group of SSDF led by Maj-Gen. Paulino Matip that has joined SPLA forces does not exceed 10 percent of South Sudan factions numbering 28.

Maj-Gen. Gordon Kong at a press conference held at SUNA forum yesterday announced SSDF's categorized rejection of allegations made by Maj-Gen. Paulino Matip that SSDF has joined the SPLA. He affirmed the SSDF's unchanging position joining of the Sudan Armed Forces with whom they have allied for 20 years.

## **Darfur:**

### **Darfur rebels object to Sudan hosting AU summit**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report by Sudanese independent newspaper Al-Ayyam on 14 January-- Ahead of the resumption of the Abuja talks, the [Darfur rebel] Sudan Liberation Movement [SLM] has announced its support for Chad's demand that the AU summit should not be held in Khartoum at the end of the month.

Official spokesman for the SLM Mahjub Husayn told Al-Ayyam that his group would present a letter of protest in this regard to the Nigerian president and current head of the AU. At the same time, he pointed out that the SLM categorically rejected that those accused of



perpetrating war crimes in Darfur would be tried by special Sudanese courts and the SLM would not recognize any trial in Darfur other than an international trial in accordance with [Security Council] resolution 1593.

He said the SLM would sign an agreement of cooperation within the next few days with the ICC in The Hague, allowing all international investigation teams and the international prosecutor to visit SLM-controlled areas.

### **Sudanese foreign minister lauds African Union role in Darfur**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report in English by Sudanese news agency Suna website-- Khartoum, 14 January: The foreign affairs minister, Dr Lam Akol, has said that the report which was presented by the UN secretary-general's representative at the African Union [AU] Peace and Security Council session held on 12 January, called on the armed movements to negotiate with seriousness and responsibility so that a comprehensive settlement could be achieved for the Darfur problem.

In a press conference held this evening at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs HQ in Khartoum, he said that the UN representative pointed out that the UN had not yet started studying the proposal of transferring the peacekeeping mission from the AU to the UN because of the weak financial support the AU mission in Sudan was receiving.

He added that the UN secretary-general's statements pointed out the importance of Sudanese government approving any proposal or action which the UN could possibly carry out.

He went on to say that the AU had carried out its role successfully and effectively in the last period, affirming that AU troops were closer to the Sudanese culture than any other [foreign] troops.

He lauded the role the AU was playing in preserving peace and security in the region.

He added that the report recommended that the AU mandate should be extended for nine or six months after it expires on 21 January [2006].

*The Sudanese press (Al-Sahafa, Al-Ayam, Al-Rai Al-Aam, Akhbar Al-Youm) provided similar reports on this issue.*

### **Sudanese Foreign Ministry calls on international community to back AU mission**

BBC Monitoring, Excerpt from report by Sudanese news agency Suna website-- Khartoum, 14 January: The government has expressed its appreciation by the role played by the AU in preserving peace and stability in Darfur.

The government hoped that the AU would continue its mission and at the same time called on the international community to help assist the AU to surpass the financial problem the AU mission in Darfur was facing.

In a statement issued by the foreign ministry this evening the ministry called on all the negotiating parties [in the Darfur peace talks] to support the peace process in Abuja so that its aims can be achieved and to stop sending negative signals which complicate the already complicated situation. [Passage omitted]

### **Sudanese government ready to support African Union troops in Darfur**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report in English by Sudanese news agency Suna website-- Khartoum, 14 January: Sudan is keen on supporting African peacekeeping troops in Darfur to restore peace and stability to the region, said the foreign minister Dr Lam Akol.

Financial problems facing the African Union's [AU] mission can be resolved by the provision of 160m US dollars, if the African member states cooperated to do so, he said Saturday [14 January] at a news conference at the Foreign Ministry. He said that if they want to restore and maintain security in Darfur, they have to resolve the major obstacle, he said.

Lately, Sudan proposed in meetings of the AU's Peace and Security Council formation of an army representing Sudan government, the African Union and the armed groups in Darfur, said the minister.

On the UN plan to take over the peace keeping task from the AU, Dr Akol stated that the AU has not asked UN to get involved by sending international forces, but on the contrary it has called for logistic support.

Dr Akol said that what has happened was that the Peace and Security Council has urged the AU Commission to consult with the UN on the transfer of the mission if logistic support becomes impossible, he said.

The final decision, however, will be reached in a Peace and Security Council meeting scheduled in March, he concluded.

### **Sudanese opposition leader warns of dangerous situation in Darfur**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report by Sudanese newspaper Al-Khartoum on 14 January-- The leader of the National Ummah Party [NUP], Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, has warned of the dangerous situation in Darfur, pointing out the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation.

Speaking to the press yesterday at the end of his visit in Nyala [capital of southern Darfur state] over the Id al-Adha holiday, Al-Mahdi said that the voluntary return of the displaced had so far not occurred. He said the AU troops' performance was below standard, pointing out that the troops were unable to protect themselves leave alone carry out their duties.

Al-Mahdi called for a radical solution for the Darfur problem outside the framework of government policies and the Naivasha [agreement]. He further revealed that his party would be preparing a report on the situation and latest developments in Darfur. He said recommendations made by the recent Al-Fashir conference would not resolve the problem as it was inadequate.

Al-Mahdi called on the government to fulfil the demands of the Darfur people for a united region by securing them representation at the presidential level, and restoring their democratic rights.

He pointed out that his party would carry out a large political mobilization campaign and would contact international sides to convince them of the importance of a national solution to the problem. In addition it would contact the armed groups to persuade them to sign the document for resolving the Darfur problem, signed by political forces.

Regarding developments in the situation between Sudan and Chad, Al-Mahdi said that the population make up in Chad was similar to that of Darfur and that if the Darfur problem was not resolved it would extend to both countries. He further demanded the government to find an immediate solution with the participation of all Sudan's neighbours.

## **Egypt welcomes extension of African Union mission in Darfur**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report in English by Egyptian news agency MENA-- Cairo, 14 January: Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu-al-Ghayt welcomed the African Peace and Security Council's decision to extend the mission of peacekeepers in the troubled Sudanese region of Darfur.

Abu-al-Ghayt said the extension, until March, reflects Africa's interest in taking on its responsibilities in peacekeeping and conflict settlement in the region.

Egypt effectively took part in the mission of AU [African Union] monitors in Darfur, he said, calling on the international community and donor countries for support to the mission.

He also urged donor countries to meet their pledges to give financial support made in the recent donors' conference in Addis Ababa.

## **East:**

### **Sudanese army withdraws from eastern rebel-held town**

Sudan Tribune, Jan 14, 2006 (KHARTOUM) — Sudan withdrew some 1,000 troops from an eastern rebel-held town, defusing a stand off between the Sudanese army and former southern guerrillas in the first test of a year-old peace deal, ex-rebels said on Saturday.

The troops entered Hamesh Koreb town on Wednesday, threatened to expel the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and set up positions just 200 metres (yards) from SPLM trenches. They later withdrew when a U.N. investigation team arrived, the SPLM said.

"I am now seeing approximately two battalions about 500 metres from the town," SPLM officer Benjamin Wol, a member of the joint U.N.-Sudan army-SPLM team, told Reuters from Hamesh Koreb, which borders Eritrea.

The SPLM fought alongside separate eastern rebel groups in Hamesh Koreb province during the north-south civil war — Africa's longest. A peace deal last January ended that war, set up a new coalition government and created separate armies for north and south.

U.N. envoy Jan Pronk confirmed there had been skirmishes on Wednesday between eastern rebels and the army troops in Hamesh Koreb, but the SPLM was not involved in that fighting.

The SPLM said now the government had mostly withdrawn, with a few dozen troops left in the town, the tensions had been reduced.

"The Sudanese armed forces have withdrawn their forces, and this is what we had requested from them so this is good," said acting SPLM military spokesman Elias Waya Nyipuocs. "The joint U.N. team has remained there and I don't think the army will go back in," he added.

U.N. sources said there were only about 20-30 troops in Hamesh Koreb on Saturday, adding they seemed to be from a pro-government militia rather than regular troops.

Sudan has often armed local tribes to fight regional conflicts because of the toll the long southern civil war took on the regular armed forces. In Darfur, the militia took on the name "Janjaweed", whose campaign of rape, killing and looting is under investigation by the International Criminal Court.

Under the southern deal, the SPLM were supposed to have redeployed from the east to the south within a year, but they said this week they were unable to meet that deadline because of logistical reasons.

Pronk said slow withdrawal was a major problem to the peace deal. On Friday he said: "This is creating a void with a potential for new armed conflict."

The Sudanese army is supposed to occupy SPLM positions once they have withdrawn. But eastern rebels, also in the same areas, say the government will have to fight them first.

"If they want to replace the SPLM they will have to fight and expel the eastern troops first," said Eastern Front spokesman Ali el-Safi. The Eastern Front contains both eastern rebel groups and the main political parties.

Libyan-mediated east Sudan peace talks were due to start after Jan. 17, the rebel said. Safi said the government entered Hamesh Koreb because they wanted a military solution rather than negotiated talks.

(Reuters)

### **Eastern rebels vow to reach political solution with Khartoum**

Sudan Tribune, Jan 14, 2006 (KHARTOUM) — Eastern Sudan rebel group reiterated its commitment to find a peaceful solution to the issue of eastern Sudan through negotiations. Also it accused the government of widening the circle of war by attacking Hamash Koreb town on the second day of Eid-al-Adha.

Deputy Secretary-General of the Beja Congress and member of the leadership office of the Eastern Front Abdallah Musa said that the Front was committed to reaching a peaceful solution through negotiations. He further described the government's attack on Hamash Koreb last Wednesday 11 January as a dangerous escalation which threatened to widen the circle of war.

Musa said that by creating Al-Bitanah Lions militia in Al-Qadarif region in eastern Sudan, the government only wanted to repeat the Darfur scenario in eastern Sudan and urged the parties to the transitional government to put pressure on bellicose elements in the regime.

Musa said that following the intervention by the UN secretary general's special envoy, Jan Pronk, the Eastern Front's leadership had agreed to enter into negotiations with the government in Tripoli. However, he added, "we have not received any new information regarding negotiations after the attack on Hamash Koreb".

The Eastern Front has joined forces with the Beja Congress and Free Lions - a smaller rebel group - from the country's Rashaida ethnic group.

The Beja Congress military wing was launched in 1994 and joined four years later in March 2005 by the Free Lions to fight marginalisation by the Sudanese government.

(ST)

### **East Sudan rebels say committed to peace**

BBC Monitoring, Text of report by Sudanese independent newspaper Al-Ayyam on 14 January-- The Eastern Front [an alliance between the Beja Congress and another rebel group, the Free Lions, formed in 2005] has once again stressed its commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the issue of eastern Sudan through negotiations and accused the government of striving to widen the circle of war by attacking Hamashkoreb area on the second day of Id-al-Adha [Wednesday 11 January].

Deputy Secretary-General of the Beja Congress and member of the leadership office of the Eastern Front Abdallah Musa yesterday told Al-Ayyam that the Front was committed to reaching a peaceful solution through negotiations. He further described the government's attack on Hamashkoreb last Wednesday as a dangerous escalation which threatened to widen the circle of war.

Musa said that by creating Al-Bitanah Lions militia in Al-Qadarif area [eastern Sudan], the government only wanted to repeat the Darfur scenario in eastern Sudan and urged the parties to the transitional government to put pressure on those elements in the regime who were attempting to widen the circle of war.

Musa said that following the intervention by the UN secretary general's special envoy, Jan Pronk, the Eastern Front's leadership had agreed to enter into negotiations with the government in Tripoli. However, he added, "we have not received any new information regarding negotiations after the attack on Hamashkoreb".

In this regard, a statement issued by the Beja Congress office in Khartoum, blamed the government for the consequences of the attack. The statement, which was issued yesterday, said the Congress' rejected the idea of involving tribal militias in armed struggles as it occurred in the recent attack on Hamashkoreb.

The statement warned against using militias as human shields and said this would only aggravate tribal conflicts. The statement further called on the international community to stop the government from resorting to military solutions and to enter into negotiations in order to reach a peaceful and just solution to the conflict.

## **Other Developments**

### **Sudan SSDF militia denies merger with the SPLA - Kong**

Sudan Tribune, Jan 14, 2006 (KHARTOUM) — South Sudan Defence Forces militia, led by Maj. Gen. Gordon Kong, has announced its support and the integration of its troops in the Sudanese Armed Forces.

The leader of the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), Maj. Gen Paulino Matip has announced 8 January that his militia will join the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), formerly a rebel group and now a partner in Sudan's national unity government.

Under the agreement, called the Juba Declaration of Unity and Integration, the armed forces of the two groups will merge, reducing the number of disparate armed groups in the south that have caused much insecurity.

But the official SUNA news agency reported that. Kong has denied the claim of Paulino Matip on the absorption of South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) in the army of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

Kong has affirmed their stance to be part of the Armed Forces.

He stressed that SSDF is committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and ready to cooperate with South Sudan Government, which is headed by the First Vice - President, Salva Kiir, toward prevalence of peace and stability in south Sudan.

He congratulated the Sudanese people on the first anniversary for the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Meanwhile, the Commander of Sudan Defence Forces for Bahral-Ghazal States, Maj. Gen. al-Toam al-Nur Daldoum, said that 6,000 troops and 900 officers of SSDF have been absorbed in the Armed Forces.

He explained that SSDF did not take part in Nairobi Conference of the Southern Factions, because the SPLM has refused their agenda, which included the call for participation in power for at least three southern states and absorption of at least 6.000 of SSDF in the Police forces in south Sudan.

Gordon Kong is a Jikany Nuer, he was a militia leader of Thourjikany Forces, based in Nasir, eastern Upper Nile with Jikany Nuer troops. Then he became Major-general in Anya Nya II in 1988, then became commander in SPLM/A, and member of the SPLM/A political-military high command. In 1991 he led breakaway from SPLM/A with Riek Machar and Lam Akol. In 1997, he signed the Khartoum peace agreement with the government, when he was made a commander with the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) under Riek Machar. Since 1998, backed directly by the government.

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