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FORCE COMMANDER PRESS CONFERENCE

Below is a near verbatim transcript of the press conference by Force Commander Lt. Gen. Jasbir Lidder held on 22nd March 2006.

CPIO George Somerwill: Ladies and Gentlemen welcome to the UNMIS press briefing and thank you very much for attending. I want to take the opportunity to welcome to the press briefing this time, for the first time, the new Force Commander Lieutenant-General Jasbir Singh Lidder.

Although of course he has already been with us for some time but, until now, there has not been an opportunity; he has been busy traveling outside of Khartoum, in the sectors. This is the first opportunity he has had to meet with you all and we are very pleased to welcome him. I just wanted to mention to you a few highlights of Lt. Gen. Singh Lidder's career.

He has had 36 years in the Indian military; he has had a lot of varied experience commanding different units, formations and commanding staff as well. He has a large experience in all types of operations including counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, disaster management and conventional warfare.

This is his third international posting. He was posted in Bhutan as the Officer in Charge for Training and was the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Mission in Mozambique. He is now here in UNMIS as the Force Commander.

The General is a highly decorated soldier with a number of gallantry and Distinguished Service medals.

So without any further ado, I will hand you over to Lt. Gen. Jasbir Lidder.

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure for me to be here.

I took over as Force Commander about two months back and these last two months I have been traveling around to the countryside as well as sub-chaired a number of Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meetings. In my opening remarks, I would just like to give you my

assessment of the security situation and just flag the issues and then we could have any questions thereafter.

As you know, from the military point of view, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is proceeding on track. There have been slippages in the timelines but by and large, the positive side is that both parties appear to be totally committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the movement is going on – north to south as laid down - though not at the speed and with the resolve that we would like to see. The situation in southern Sudan with the exception of the incidents that are now concentrated around Juba and the unfortunate incident that took place in Abyei, by and large the situation is well under control.

Eastern Sudan, as you know, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) was supposed to pull out as per the Comprehensive Peace Agreement by the 9th of January; that did not happen. Thereafter we have been following it up and we have now been told that they will pull out in the next two to three months. We are waiting for a schedule on that.

I had an emergency Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting today and I was told a schedule will be given and now they are saying it will be given in the next meeting. So hopefully we will have a schedule for the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) pullout.

The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) has stated it has been facing logistics problems for its redeployment to southern Sudan and they have requested Sudan Armed Forces help in this regard. The Sudan Armed Forces has said they will meet a bulk of the requirements and we are hopeful that we will get a schedule soon of the complete redeployment of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) from eastern Sudan.

As far as southern Sudan is concerned, there are two areas which have been of concern. One is the growing insecurity situation in Equatoria. Some of these are Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacks; some of these, we believe, may not be the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) but some other groups taking advantage of the security situation.

In the latest incident, there was an attack in Yei on the UNHCR campus in which one local security officer was killed and we had a critically injured international staff. He was evacuated to Nairobi and is okay now.

We had an incident in Yambio two days back where there was a deliberate firing carried out on our UNICEF campus and there was a platoon of the Bangladesh Contingent that faced this attack with a lot of resolve and we also suffered two wounded but they are both okay now and have been treated.

These attacks which are with a lot of deliberation and a lot of planning are creating an uncertain situation for the humanitarian and other agencies to work. We are taking suitable remedial measures, as far as the military component is concerned, to ensure that a proper security environment is created. But in all the meetings I had with the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), I made it clear to them that finally this Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) thing has to be sorted out by them. It is not the UN mandate to get involved with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). We are here under a Chapter VI [deployment] to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) problem requires a more focused and a more resolved by the Sudan Armed

Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) is needed so that this Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) problem is brought to a halt in Equatoria region.

Besides this, we had a very unfortunate incident in Abyei on the night of 7th and 8th where a convoy of the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) thereafter aligned to the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) was moving down through Abyei. It was an uninformed movement; we only came to know about it after this convoy was ambushed at a place just north of Abyei. It resulted in very heavy casualties. We don't know the exact figures. Officially they reported eleven but thereafter there have been a whole lot of people missing. So we really haven't accounted for those.

Anyway, the UN contingent in Abyei sprung into action; our Joint Monitoring Teams were in action and the next whole day we were evacuating the wounded, attending to the dead and also helping the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces in collecting all the people we could find from the bush.

This matter has been viewed very seriously by us and in the last Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting we decided that there will be a joint investigation carried out on this and the guilty brought to book.

Today an emergency Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting was held to finalize the modalities for such an investigation. Unfortunately no consensus could be reached because there were different perceptions between the Sudan Armed Forces and the SPLM on the modalities for such an investigation. While the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) feels, and I support that, that there should be a joint investigation with the UN involvement alongside Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), the Sudan Armed Forces feels that it is a mutual thing between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and they would like to investigate into that.

We had long discussions but we could not reach any conclusion and this issue is now going to be raised to the next Ceasefire Political Committee meeting which is scheduled to meet in Juba on the 30th of March.

As you know, the Ceasefire Political Committee has already had its first meeting about a month back and we decided that all unresolved matters of the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee will be presented by the Chairman of the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee, that is me, to the Ceasefire Political Committee every last Thursday of the month and the Ceasefire Political Committee will be meeting alternatively in Juba and Khartoum. I was hoping for a resolution to this problem today. Unfortunately it did not happen. The UN considers it absolutely a ceasefire violation both by the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA); a violation by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) that there is an unannounced movement of a convoy through the Abyei area and by the Sudan Armed Forces a unilateral action, a violent incident resulting in many casualties.

Be that as it may now, we will refer this case to the Ceasefire Political Committee and hopefully we will have some sort of a decision by the 30th of March.

Our deployment is now nearly 80% in southern Sudan and we hope to complete the deployment by end April. The areas of concern have been the de-mining units which are moving in of Cambodia and China as well as Egyptian – they have now started coming in.

The aviation units from Russia and Pakistan are also due to arrive and by end April we feel we should be nearly 100% of the troops. As of now, there is movement going on of the Kenyans into the Wau Sector and that should be completed by mid April. So as far as deployment is concerned, we should be in before the rains come in.

The structures of Monitoring and Verification are in place but we are finding problems on some of the operational audits which we are carrying out because some of the movements have taken place without our knowledge. We have been requesting both Parties [*to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement*] to give us the baseline figure of where they were deployed initially before signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement so that we are able to correlate and finally carry out an audit as to who has physically moved. In spite of repeated requests, this matter keeps getting delayed in each Ceasefire Joint Military Committee. We are hopeful that the Parties will oblige and give us the final figures so that we can carry out the audit.

Another area of growing concern is the Other Armed Groups alignment with the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). The deadline for this was 9th March and we consider that post 9th March there are only 2 entities operating in Sudan now – the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). There is no other entity and the other entity, if there is, a suitable action has to be taken by the legal system on that.

We are hoping for a list of the alignments in the next Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting. By and large, we have the knowledge of which armed groups have alienated themselves where - mainly the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) – but we haven't got [*indiscernible*] of the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee which is actually going to incorporate these people into the thing. That is one committee which has not been formed so far and that is an area of concern. In the Ceasefire Political Committee also we have said that the Other Armed Groups' Collaborative Committee must be convened at the earliest so that these erstwhile Other Armed Groups are incorporated.

The other point of serious security concern is the delay in forming of the Joint Integrated Units. We have a deadline that by 9th October the Joint Integrated Units should be fully deployed and it will take a six months training period for them. The Joint Integrated Units should have been formed by now. Although the Joint Defense Board has met and has nominated some of the top commanders, the exact allocation of the Joint Integrated Units by the parties has not been done and there are delays in the formation of the Joint Integrated Units. This is one issue we keep telling both parties to hurry up because by and large, if the Joint Integrated Units don't get in position in various places, the security situation continues to be a question mark in those areas.

That is all about what I would like to say in my opening remarks. If you have any question I will be pleased to answer them.

Thank you.

CPIO George Somerwill: Thank you very much Lieutenant-General.

I would like to throw the floor open to any questions to the Force Commander.

Q: First of all I would like to ask if you could not use so many acronyms in the press conference because I am not sure whether everyone knows these; especially UN acronyms – I don't understand what they are. That would be great of you if you would explain what they are.

The question I have is about the Abyei investigation you referred to in the meeting. You said that the government is refusing UN participation in the investigation and didn't say why.

The second question is how significant would you describe the security threat of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the south?

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: As for your first part of the question is concerned, yes. The Sudan Armed Forces representatives today said it is a matter to be resolved between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). Initially they said this should be resolved by the Joint Defense Board – as you know there is a Joint Defense Board which is supposed to cater for both internal and external security of Sudan and also oversee the training and formation of the Joint Integrated Units.

As for us, it is not Joint Defense Board' charter and we consider this a ceasefire violation and, as such, the structure for this investigation to be through the Joint Monitoring and Verification Teams going up to the Area Joint Military Committees (AJMCs) then the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee and then the Ceasefire Political Committee. This is the channel.

This, by and large, they agreed to after their initial stand was that it should be by the Joint Defense Board – we didn't agree to that. But thereafter somehow, they thought that this is a matter to be mutually resolved between Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) which we don't agree. I feel it is a ceasefire violation and the UN has to be a party to the investigation. That is the stand being taken by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) that it should be a joint investigation with the UN playing the lead role. Then only will the investigation the investigation will be credible, acceptable, transparent and known to both Sudanese and international community that due justice has been done.

Unfortunately we got stuck in that and we will now be referring that to the Ceasefire Political Committee on the 30th.

Q: Why is the government refusing?

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: That is what they stated today that this is a matter which can be resolved between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). Why they are not agreeing to it, they didn't have any reason but as far as the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, these are very clear that if there are any complaints, if there are any violations, the UN is supposed to play a mediatory role in resolving it. So I tried my best to convince them but there was obviously some difference in perception so we had to refer this matter to the Ceasefire Political Committee.

And the second part is regarding the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Well we have been following these incidents which have taken place in the Equatoria region and some, about two to three groups of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), have been known to operate in the

lower reaches – Yei, Meridi, these areas. From the Garamba Park initially we got reports that they were going out; now they are again there.

As I told you, it is very difficult to state whether some of these incidents are actually triggered by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) or not. Some of these incidents could well be local bandit groups taking advantage of the situation but what seems to have happened in Yambio about two days back gives us indications that these were the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) because out of the three bodies that were recovered they had a different type of a hair cut which is not of local southern Sudanese. So this looks like a Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attack.

As I told you our approaches, this matter has of course been raised at the Security Council for more international diplomatic initiatives on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) but from the military point of view, we are requesting the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces to intensify their operations against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

And as far as the UN is concerned and to ensure that our assets and our installations have requisite security, we will be stepping up our presence and our protection duties accordingly.

CPIO Somerwill: Thank you Force Commander. More questions?

Q: In the Muslim faith, when a Muslim commits a crime, he is called *Sheitan* [Satan]. Is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) a *Sheitan* in southern Sudan as some incidents happen in the area and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remains a cover?

You also mentioned that there are some movements that you are not aware of but did not mention what movements or activities these are.

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: Well if they are committing such acts, I wouldn't like to label them as anything - it's up to you; your conclusions are the same as mine. I wouldn't brand anybody; all I know is that they are doing whichever act they are doing whichever act that they are doing. They have no right of being in southern Sudan as a foreign group. We have made it very clear to the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA). They have no business of being in Sudan at all and the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) agree to it. The only thing is we need to intensify operations against them and get them back over the border and into their country.

Your second question, I am sorry ...

Q: You mentioned in your opening remarks that there are some uninformed movements by others and some practices by the Sudan Armed Forces but did not mention what these are.

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: I don't think I get the thrust of your question but I will mention this incident again to you.]

The South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) which has aligned itself with the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) was moving with this convoy towards the south without our knowledge. This convoy was moving without the UN's knowledge otherwise we could have monitored and verified it. And it was moving at night through Abyei which you know is a

disputed sort of an area. This convoy was ambushed by the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) now aligned to the Sudan Armed Forces north of Abyei.

These are both serious ceasefire violations and being a ceasefire violation we feel that they need to be investigated jointly by the two parties and with the UN playing a lead role while the Sudan Armed Forces has got a different view today and did not agree to the UN playing the role. They thought it is to be done jointly between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA).

If there is anything specific, something more that perhaps somebody could translate, I can answer that.

Q: Why is it that there has been an increase of violent incidents in southern Sudan in the last about 6 weeks?

Secondly; do you think the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are getting support somewhere in terms of arms or logistics and do you share the view of many in southern Sudan that that support is coming from elements in the Sudan Armed Forces?

FC Lt. Gen. Liddar: As to why there has been a sudden increase in attacks, I told you we are also analyzing this. Part of it is that it only seems to be driven by getting some resources. Like in the Yei incident, the person that came in demanded some dollars; demanded money. In the last incident that happened in Yambio, there were simultaneous attacks in three other places and some NGOs where a lot of communications equipment has been looted.

Most of these things are related to food, money and other resources like communications equipment and all that. We are also trying to analyze as to what the pattern is of this. As I told you, some of them are Lord's Resistance Army (LRA); some of them I feel are not Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and are purely by some other people taking advantage of the situation.

We are trying to get our responses right; protection as well as informing the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and we hope there will be some improvement in the security situation. We have also coordinated Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) cell with our mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are operating in the Ituri region - the northern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo - and we hope to find some sort of solution.

Q: What about the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) getting support?

FC Lt. Gen. Liddar: Well I would not like to comment on that because, as you know, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been operating here for fairly long. Some of the support they may be getting is out of threat and coercion of the local population – I would not be able to comment on whether they are getting support from anybody else or not. I can only add that the thing is denied by both. Whenever the subject comes up for discussion, the Sudan Armed Forces denies totally that they are giving any support and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) also says they are not giving any support so the official version of both the parties is that they are not giving support to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Q: The last three days I read in the newspapers that the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) has sentenced to death four Popular Defense Forces members. Do you have any more information on this?

Also earlier today we received a telephone call from Malakal that the security situation is tense. Do you have any information on that?

FC Lt. Gen. Liddar: Regarding this report of the Popular Defense Forces, it was in the papers; we also read it from the papers and I understand that it was denied later on – the next day, if I am not wrong. It was denied that no such incident took place.

The security situation in the Malakal Sector; yes, this is the area where a lot of South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) lords are operating and, as you know, post the Juba Declaration, there have been claims and counter-claims of which South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) group was with whom.

As I told you, on the 9th of March, the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) stands fully aligned either with the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) or with the Sudan Armed Forces and that we are supposed to get the list in the next Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting.

There have been no violent incidents in Malakal. We had earlier some time back – about a month back – in the area of [*indiscernible but names of areas probably in Malakal*] and [*indiscernible but name of place*], the areas which border Unity State on top with the Blue Nile, we had some tensions there but those were resolved.

As of now, there is no specific report of any tensions in the Malakal Sector.

Q: On the Abyei situation, do you think that the situation now in Abyei is the worst in recent times?

You talked of modalities in the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting and did not clarify as to what those modalities are.

FC Lt. Gen. Liddar: Firstly; the situation in Abyei post this incident, we have got around with both the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and we have been given assurances by both the parties that no such incident will ever happen again. And after that we have successfully moved three convoys of the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) now aligned to the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) through Abyei and the Sudan Armed Forces has given full cooperation and nothing has happened. So we have reason to believe that post this incident both parties, the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), and with the UN there, we should not have repetitions of such incidents.

But having said, I must again say that this issue needs to be investigated and the people must be shown as to who did it and why did they do it. Then only will people get satisfied as to no such repetition will take place.

The second part of your question is on the modalities. Modalities in the sense that we want to work out what should be the composition of this investigating team, what should be its terms

of reference and what should be the timeline for this. Those are the three things we wanted to finalize today. Which are the groups and which are the agencies which should form part this investigation, what are the terms of reference of this and we wanted to enlarge the terms of reference to include everything because both parties are having lots allegations - as well as the timeline for this.

But I told you since that we got stuck on the first point on this and we can not even agree on that. On the composition itself, since Sudan Armed Forces did not agree to the UN's involvement we could not proceed further. And the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) did not agree to the joint investigation itself – without the UN playing a major role in this.

Q: On this investigation, you seem very sure that it was the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) and the Sudan Armed Forces who attacked this convoy that was coming down; why if that is the case or because [*indiscernible*].

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: They have already agreed in a way that they were involved. I have written to both the chiefs of the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and I have received a reply from the chief of the Sudan Armed Forces stating that it was one individual who acted on his own and they are taking suitable investigation and they will then take suitable action.

Even today, the Sudan Armed Forces kept insisting that their investigation is already in place and they will court-martial the concerned. So I don't think there is any doubt left on that it was the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) aligned to Sudan Armed Forces which took this action – I mean there doesn't seem to be too much of a doubt.

Q: Who in the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) did it?

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: The commander who did it? Well, I wouldn't like to name him; people have been naming it – everybody knows the SPLM-Sudan Armed Forces but since we have all the indications and I told you that without investigations, it is not proper for any of us to blame anybody.

But there was a local commander on the job who activated this and all indicators seem to be on him and they are investigating and they said they will court-martial him.

Q: The Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) have been trading accusations on the redeployment issue. The spokesperson for the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) says the Sudan Armed Forces has not redeployed and his counterpart in the Sudan Armed Forces accuses the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) of not carrying out the process. Can you give us more detail on this?

You also mentioned that the meeting of the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee saw the Sudan Armed Forces promise assistance to the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) to help it redeploy to the south. The Sudan Armed Forces had earlier given such a promise but nothing happened. What they will happen should the two months elapse and the Sudan Armed Forces fail to fulfill these pledges to assist the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) to withdraw from Hamesh Khoreib?

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: On your first question relating to accusations between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) on the movement. Well, these accusations do go on. I told you that whenever we get an accusation we told the party to please be specific – a generic accusation has no meaning. And when we get an accusation we move our Joint Monitoring and Verification Team to see it.

There is movement going on – I would not say movement is not going on. There is Sudan Armed Forces movement going on to the north and we have been monitoring it. It is not at the speed and at the level which we want. There are slippages but Sudan Armed Forces is moving to the north and we have been monitoring; some major equipment has also moved and the troops have moved. So these accusations that the two parties do bring in even at the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting we have been resolving it.

As far as the eastern Sudan redeployment is concerned, again and again we get this point from both the Parties that the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) states that their committed to withdraw or redeploy from eastern Sudan. I met the chief of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) about two weeks back and he made no bones about it that they are committed to redeploy from eastern Sudan. He said that they do not have the logistics; they have a large number of people there and they require vehicles and air transportation to move from there.

Initially, the Sudan Armed Forces said they have no such projection and if they are given such a projection they will see it but in the last Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting we decided that both the parties sit together and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) will specifically state what is the logistics support they require in terms of vehicles, in terms of aircraft and Sudan Armed Forces said they will meet it.

As I told you, today they were supposed to give it to us so that we also have knowledge as to who is giving what assistance and when. But they did not give it today and they said they will give it in the next Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting. The next Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting was scheduled on the 28th in Juba but due to the Arab summit meetings which are taking place, the Sudan Armed Forces requested us to advance it and hold it here in Khartoum. So we will be holding the next Ceasefire Joint Military Committee meeting in Khartoum on the 27th and the next Ceasefire Political Committee meeting will be held in Juba on the 30th.

I am hopeful that this time we will get a schedule from them because both parties said that they will give us a schedule for the pullout of redeployment of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) from eastern Sudan.

Q: Paulino Matib, the commander of the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF), after the Abyei incident, accused the Sudan Armed Forces of supporting those people who caused the incident in Abyei and said he would revenge. What do you say about this accusation?

What do you expect if the Sudan Armed Forces insists on its point of view that they don't want a joint investigation of the UN, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces? What are the reasons?

FC Lt. Gen. Lidder: On the first part of your question, after the incident when the tempers were a little high, we did manage to convince the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA)

that they should not do any act which further aggravates the situation. The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) has given us its word that they will not do any act and they have sensitized their people. I have gone and met Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) people in Abyei and have been talking to everybody and we have convinced them that the answer lies in resolving this and not doing anything that aggravates it. I have full reasons to believe the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) will respect this and will not do anything that aggravates the situation.

On the second part of your question about the stand taken today, we are hopeful that this matter is referred to the Ceasefire Political Committee because the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement are quite clear about it, I am sure; we are hopeful that the point will get resolved.

Q: What do you think the situation will be like in eastern Sudan supposing the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) withdrew from Hamesh Khoreib?

FC Lt. Gen. Liddar: Well after the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) withdraws from eastern Sudan, really speaking, the responsibility for security in eastern Sudan is with the government of Sudan - Government of National Unity. We are hopeful that talks with the Eastern Front which broke down in Tripoli are activated and, from our side, we have already put the Joint Monitoring and Verification Teams there until the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) fully withdraws. Since this period will extend to another two to three months, we are hopeful that by then we will have some sort of talks with the Eastern Front. That is an area of much concern.

This is one area of concern because the security situation, if the talks with the Eastern Front don't take place and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) pulls out, this is one area of security which will need to be watched.

CPIO Somerwill: Thank you Force Commander; we have time for one more question.

Q: I am not sure whether the question I am going to ask has already been answered – I am not sure.

I am asking about the Yambio incident in which two of your Bengalis were attacked and three attackers were killed. I am wondering whether you did recognize the attackers.

FC Lt. Gen. Liddar: There is confirmed news that this UNICEF campus which was being guarded by the Bangladesh platoon was attacked on the 9th and you are correct that two of our soldiers got wounded. They were evacuated and they are stable now and are being treated at the Bangladesh hospital in Juba.

Three attackers were killed. They have not been identified but from their features we have reasons to believe that they are Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). We are still carrying out investigations, that is not our final conclusion, but the early indications – indications as of now – are that these may well be the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Investigation is still being carried out on this.

CPIO Somerwill: Force Commander thank you very much for attending the press briefing today. We appreciate the fact that you have been here and taken the time.

Thanks very much for all of you for attending.