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IN THE NEWS TODAY:

- UN Sudan Mission Condemns Murders of African Union Soldiers
- SRSG Pronk holds talks with the communist Party on the forthcoming elections and the situation in Darfur
- Arab call for UN delay on Darfur puzzles key envoy
- Sudan's SPLM says ready for 2008 election
- South Sudanese lay down arms to end clashes
- Sudan wants to use jailed Slovene envoy to warn Intl community
- US urges Sudan to arrest AU killers, accept UN takeover
- Asmara Talks starts negotiation on security arrangements
- Poll conducted by The Citizen in Kampala and Khartoum suggests that the late Vice-President Garang was killed
- Sudan's Kiir says LRA must disclose troops positions for ceasefire

HIGHLIGHTS:

UN Sudan Mission Condemns Murders of African Union Soldiers

In a statement issued in Khartoum on 21st August, the spokesperson for UNMIS extended condolences to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and to the families of the two soldiers killed by an unidentified group of armed men in the Kuma area of North Darfur.

"UNMIS calls on all parties to the Darfur conflict to respect the neutral and impartial status of AMIS," said the statement, which went on to recall that "any attack against the African Union personnel deployed in Darfur is a serious violation of international law, constitutes a breach of existing ceasefire agreements, and contravenes relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council."

The statement added that UNMIS supports the AMIS decision to carry out a thorough investigation to identify the perpetrators of the attack, urging all parties to fully cooperate in bringing those responsible to justice.

Despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May, fierce fighting has continued in the region, and the number of attacks on humanitarian workers has recently soared to unprecedented levels.

SRSG Pronk holds talks with the communist Party on the forthcoming elections and the situation in Darfur

Sources report that a meeting took place recently between SRSG Pronk and the General Secretary of the Communist Party Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud.

The secret meeting focused on the Communist Party's arrangements to for the forthcoming elections, the political alliances program which the Communist Party is working on, and the situation in Darfur, reports *AlHayat* daily.

Sources said that Pronk had asked Nugud to make an assessment of the situation in Darfur after the DPA.

Community Party spokesman Yosif Hussein pointed out that the SRSG had met a number of representatives of political parties so it is no wonder that he meets the General Secretary of the Community Party.

Arab call for UN delay on Darfur puzzles key envoy

A key U.N. Security Council member said on Monday he was puzzled by an Arab League request for an indefinite delay in a planned council meeting on the crisis in Darfur, reports *Reuters*.

Ghanaian U.N. ambassador Nana Effah-Apenteng, the Security Council president for August, said he got a positive response when he asked the Arab League about the meeting last week.

The Sudanese government, African Union and Organization of the Islamic Conference were also approached about the meeting, tentatively set for next Monday and intended to explore the way ahead in Sudan's war-torn Darfur region, he said.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol called on Arab nations to instead support a Sudanese plan, under which the Khartoum government would send 10,500 new government troops to Darfur.

Earlier on Monday, the Arab League's Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Cairo has decided to finance the African Union troops in Darfur for the coming six months starting from 1 October 2006.

The council further urged the Arab States to provide financial and material support to the AU Mission to enable it continue its tasks, calling on the Arab States to enhance its participation in the AU forces and monitors in the region.

The Arab League's Council of Foreign Ministers, in an ordinary meeting in Cairo Sunday, affirmed the importance that the African Union (AU) continues its efforts in Darfur and completes its task in tackling the crisis in the region, particularly with regard to its political mediation and supporting and monitoring of the cease-fire.

At the conclusion of its meeting at the premises of the Arab League Secretariat General, the council affirmed that sending any other forces to Darfur necessitates consent of the Sudanese government.

Sudan's SPLM says ready for 2008 election

SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum says that his party is well prepared for general elections expected to be held in 2008., says the *Sudan Radio Service*.

Speaking at a ceremony to welcome Central Equatoria State governor Clement Wani to the SPLM in Juba last week, Amum said the SPLM will respect the people's decision even if it loses the coming election.

The SPLM Secretary General said the SPLM will combat graft and urged the public in southern Sudan to report suspected cases of corruption to the anti-corruption authorities.

South Sudanese lay down arms to end clashes

More than 1,200 rusted Kalashnikovs and machine guns were laid out on a football pitch in Akobo, southeast Sudan on Monday, raising hopes that clashes that killed hundreds of people earlier this year will end.

The peaceful civilian disarmament was the first of its kind in a former flashpoint of tribal violence in south Sudan where a January 2005 peace deal ended more than two decades of civil war.

And civilians have begun to see the benefits of disarming in the new era of peace, with trade routes opening up the remote outpost on the Sudan-Ethiopia border.

"For the first time since the beginning of the civil war, a barge carrying people and goods from Malakal recently arrived at Akobo opening up this route," a U.N. statement said.

"These guns are used and have been used and if you look around these are the type of guns everyone is carrying," said Nicolas Avril from the PACT non-governmental organisation which specialises in development and will work in Akobo.

That along with militia clashes and tribal fighting killed hundreds of people and 300 SPLA soldiers in April this year. With no U.N. presence in the area it went unnoticed save for the efforts of one small arms expert David Lochhead.

Lochhead realised that local tribes wanted to disarm and embrace peace but were worried that as they laid down their weapons ahead of their neighbours they were vulnerable to attack.

He along with local leaders arranged disarmament and the arrival of around 30 U.N. peacekeepers, which inspired some feeling of safety among the residents.

The deputy head of the U.N. mission in Sudan, Taye Zerihoun, said the peaceful and voluntary nature of the disarmament was unprecedented.

"The example you set needs to be emulated across the region," he told the people of Akobo. It was unclear what would happen to the arms. They would likely be stockpiled, U.N. officials said.

But while Akobo resident Duov said civilians had no more guns, local officials said there were still hundreds more to be collected.

"We hope this is just the beginning," said Lochhead.

AlIntibaha however reports that the UN small arms expert David Lockheed has expressed doubts over the quality of the collected weapons saying "it is old".

The paper goes on to quote him as saying that "either that the tribes have handed over their old weapons and kept the new ones or have been given old weapons by the SPLM" in order to play an act of disarmament.

Still on disarmament, *AlAyaam* reports from Khartoum that the General Commander of the Sudan National Peace Forces, General Al Toum Al Nur Daldoum announced the preparation of a list including 6,000 combatants from his force to be reintegrated into the regular forces and the Civil Services in the South and says the rest of his forces will be demobilized.

He said the measure was taken in response to a request by the Joint Defence Board which asked every armed group to prepare its own list. He also said that they have complained to the UN on the issue of taking them out of the southern Sudan and the United Nations has proposed a general reconciliation and the reintegration of these forces into the regular forces and the civil service.

Sudan wants to use jailed Slovene envoy to warn Intl community

The lawyer of Slovenia's jailed presidential envoy to Darfur, Halil Tukras, is of the opinion that envoy Tomo Kriznar has fallen victim in a political game and alleged that Khartoum wants to use Kriznar's arrest as a warning to the international community not to interfere with Sudanese matters.

Meanwhile, President Janez Drnovsek's special envoy Hamdija Blekic has been allowed permission to visit the jailed envoy in el-Fashir, reports the *Sudan Tribune* website.

US urges Sudan to arrest AU killers, accept UN takeover

The *AFP* reports that the United States has called on Sudan to arrest and prosecute the killers of two African Union peacekeepers in Darfur and to drop its opposition to deployment of a robust UN military force in the war-torn region.

State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said the slaying Saturday of the two Rwandan soldiers in an attack that also wounded several members of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) could not go unpunished.

Gallegos said work was continuing to finalize the UN resolution, which he said "must deploy without delay".

On the other hand and in an article titled "National Congress Party parliamentarians to decide on the UK draft resolution", *AlAyaam* daily says that the National Congress Party caucus at the National Assembly will be briefed tomorrow by the state minister for foreign affairs on the US, UK drafted UNSC resolution on a transition of the AMIS to a United Nations operation.

The head of the parliamentary group, Dr. Ghazi Salahuldeen, said that the committee will decide on the issue after listening to the detailed report by the state minister for foreign affairs.

Asmara Talks starts negotiation on security arrangements

Talks on military and security arrangements, between the Sudan government and the Eastern Sudan Front, opened yesterday in Asmara, reports the *Khartoum Monitor*.

The Eritrean mediator was reported to have expressed satisfaction with what has been achieved by negotiators at the talks and emerged optimistic that the present round of talks would arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

He added that he had drawn up a vision on the talks and would present it to the tow parties.

Poll conducted by *The Citizen* in Kampala and Khartoum suggests that the late Vice-President Garang was killed

The Citizen daily has conducted a recent poll by stringers in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, and Khartoum suggested that late Dr. John Garang was killed. At least 20 out of 30 people said they suspected Ugandans killed Garang in collaboration with Khartoum.

Those among the sample group whose profession is aviation services said the report is biased as it failed to highlight the circumstance that forced the helicopter to crash. Detail of the tow polls will be revealed in the next few weeks.

It is regarded as the first of its kind; however. The Citizen editorial management decided to conduct interviews in a move to campaign for anew investigation.

Sudan's Kiir says LRA must disclose troops positions for ceasefire

The First Vice-President and president of the GoSS, Salva Kiir Mayardit, yesterday handed down another pre-condition for a cessation of hostilities to rebel leader Joseph Kony, reports Kampala-based *Daily Monitor* newspaper.

"Since LRA control no territory in Uganda, it would be difficult to monitor a cease-fire." Kiir told the *Daily Monitor* on arrival to Juba from Kampala.

He said once the rebels agree to assemble in one area, they would make life easy. The president pledged that once a cease-fire is agreed, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) will act as a buffer force to ensure that Ugandan army doesn't attack the LRA rebels wherever they will be assembled.

Ugandan president Yuweri Museveni says the UPDF will continue to attack the Lord's Resistance Army is the latter does not agree to assemble.

Museveni said on Saturday, that Congo had allowed Ugandan forces to attack Kony's base in the northeast of the country should the ongoing peace talks between the two sides fail.

But sources say DR Congo wants Uganda to first pay up to 10bn dollars in compensation for the plunder of that country's natural resources and loss of life before the UPDF can be allowed in to flush out the rebels.

Meanwhile, the South African government says it has received no formal request for mediation in the peace process, the Department of Foreign Affairs said on Saturday.

"We have been inundated with calls about whether South Africa has been asked to mediate in Uganda," Departmental Spokesperson Ronnie Mamoepa said. "We have received no formal request from the LRA rebels."

COMMENTARIES:

Akhbar Alyaum publishes a statement by leaders of the Nuba people in which they referred to a recent statement issued by prominent SPLM figure from the Nuba Mountains, Major Tilifon Kuku, in which he listed down a number of issues pertaining to relations between the SPLM and other groups and to the agreements on South Kordofan and Blue Nile areas.

The leaders pointed out that the points he raised on the Nuba Mountains agreement is of special interest to them as signatories to the said agreement and they felt they had to list down the following:

1. That the agreement on South Kordofan was only accepted by the Nuba people because it puts an end to bloodshed in the region. they say the Nuba have not reaped any benefits from that agreement.
2. That the CPA is seriously flawed in a number of areas especially with regards to the security arrangements that does not clearly define the fate of the SPLA elements from the Nuba Mountains should the south decide to secede;
3. That the CPA totally disregards the legitimate rights of the Nuba people;
4. That they call upon the people of the Nuba Mountains to support Tilifon Kuku's proposals [*not stated*] on the grounds that the issue of the Nuba mountains has been widely marginalized;

5. That they call upon the parties to the CPA to respect the demands of the Nuba people and calls upon all people of the Nuba Mountains to continue the struggle using all legitimate means at their disposal in order to seize their legitimate demands.

The statement was signed by 32 key figures in the Nuba Mountains community headed by prominent politician, the Rt. Reverend Philip Abas Ghaboush and a number of others who have held government position.

Demarcating the borders ... the start

In his column that carries the title above, AlSadiq Al-Rizeigi of *AllIntibaha* says not much attention has been granted the recent news reports that a technical committee answerable to the Presidency of the Republic has been formed to draw the 1.1.'56 border between north and south of the country [*the news report was also carried in an earlier MMR*] and will start work by visiting Kenya, the UK, Egypt, France and Turkey in a bid to collect as much data as possible to aid in their work before starting the actual surveys on the ground and then preparing a final report to the Presidency.

He describes this as a “dangerous development” for the reasons he thus cites:

1. That demarcation of these boundaries is not only for the sake of determining which part will go north or south should there be a secession or for the sake of a population census for the region but has rather far-fetching connotations that suggest that the issue of the debate over the boundaries will be started all over again and this, he adds, will serve the interest of some elements in the international community that seek to only see conflict in Sudan.
2. That the issue is also on the economy because the south seeks to control the oilfields of the Abyei region.

He goes on to point out that the debate over the borders around the Transitional Areas is mainly for economic gain and warns that northern Sudan will be in big trouble should the south be granted all its demands and secede.

United Nations, agencies send negative signals following signing of the DPA

In this article that appears in *AllIntibaha* daily, the writer starts by pointing out that the international community was pressuring the parties into signing the DPA but the agreement itself, once signed, did not bring in any progress in terms of security on the ground in Darfur.

He takes a roundabout way to say that the international community uses double standards in dealing with the issues in Sudan but the points he makes are really not focused.

Where is the party?

Mohamed Latif writes in *AlSudani* on the recent hike in price of combustible and other essentials.

He argues that the Minister of Finance was left to “face the music” alone as citizens vented their anger over the increases while the party stood watching without a word in support of the minister’s decision.