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(By Public Information Office)

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Highlights

UN/ Agencies

Ban Ki-moon voices concern over violence in West Darfur between rebel groups, Government

(UN) United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his deep concern today over the resumption of hostilities between a rebel group and Government forces in West Darfur.

He spoke out against a 29 December attack by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on Government positions in Silea, north of El Geneina, "as well as JEM publicly-stated intention to use force to address its concerns in Darfur," according to a statement issued by his spokesperson.

Mr. Ban also voiced concern with the Governments arrest - which took place on the premises of African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) premises - of Major General Bashir, the JEM representative to the Darfur Ceasefire Commission, along with five other JEM members on 30 December in El Fasher.

The Secretary-General said that he "strongly urges all parties to show restraint and cease all military action in order to create a positive atmosphere for political negotiations leading to a definitive and inclusive peace agreement."

UN chief warns of critical gaps in Darfur force

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 31 Dec. UNITED NATIONS) The joint United Nations-African Union force set up to stem the violence in Darfur took the reins today from the existing AU operation in the war-torn Sudanese region, but Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that critical gaps remain in what will be the world body's largest peacekeeping operation at full strength.

In a message to the handover ceremony, Mr. Ban emphasized the need for troop and police contributing countries to deploy their personnel as quickly as possible. "If we are to have a real impact on the situation on the ground within the first half of 2008, these deployments must happen far more swiftly than they have done so far," the

Secretary-General said in a statement read out by Joint UN-AU Special Representative and Head of UNAMID Rodolphe Adada.

Mr. Ban added that critical gaps remained in the UNAMID force as no pledges have been received so far for ground and transportation units and aviation assets, which are essential to the mobility of the force and its ability to adequately protect the civilian population in the vast area of Darfur, where more than 200,000 people have been killed and another 2.2 million forced to flee their homes since fighting began in 2003 between Government forces and rebel groups.

While noting that today marks “a new and profoundly challenging chapter in the history of United Nations peacekeeping,” Mr. Ban stressed that UNAMID’s deployment will only be as effective as the political process it is mandated to support.

He urged all parties to cease violence and come to the negotiating table to settle their differences. “Only after an inclusive peace agreement is reached will the outstanding grievances of all parties be addressed, and the requirements for a lasting solution to the crisis put in place,” he said.

Echoing Mr. Ban’s comments, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Sudan stressed that comprehensive peace can only be achieved when all parts of the country have achieved peace and harmony. “We should all work towards a prosperous, peaceful and united Sudan,” Ashraf Qazi stated, calling on all parties to the Darfur conflict to shun violence and participate in the peace process for the sake of the future generations. *Read more* <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25398>

Sima Samar in Khartoum next month

(*AlSahafa*) Sudan Representative in the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Ibrahim Mirghani, said the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Sudan, Sima Samar, will visit Sudan next month. She will present her visit’s report at the meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in March in Geneva.

Mirghani explained that Sudan will adopt a new approach in dealing with the Council as it is no longer a politicized institution especially after ending the mission of the experts in Sudan. Mirghani said Sudan welcomes the expected visit of Sima Samar.

UN-AU envoy optimistic about situation in Sudan's Darfur

(*SMC* – 1 Jan. EL FASHIR, Sudan) Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and African Union (AU) for Darfur Rodolphe Adada on Monday expressed his optimism over an improvement of situation in the restive western Sudanese region with the help of a UN-AU hybrid peacekeeping force.

Adada made the remarks before a ceremony of handover of the peacekeeping authority from the AU force to the hybrid force is to be held in Fashir, the capital of North Darfur State, later on Monday.

"The situation can not be changed in a night, but we are optimistic that the deployment of the hybrid force will help improve the situation and create a suitable atmosphere for reaching a solution through dialogue and transport the humanitarian assistance to millions of displaced persons," Adada told reporters.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Sudan president pardons opponents accused of plot

(*Sudan Tribune.com* – 31 Dec. KHARTOUM) Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir on Monday pardoned 30 opposition members accused of plotting against the state and ordered their immediate release.

"I have decided to pardon the accused of their attempt at sabotage and I have ordered their immediate release," Beshir told a large crowd gathered in Khartoum to mark the country's 52nd anniversary of independence.

The pardon is aimed at "strengthening national reconciliation and opening a new page," he said.

Members of the Sudanese military are among those pardoned as well as leading opposition figure Ali Mahmud Hussein, vice president of the Democratic Unionist Party headed by Mohammed Othman al-Mirghani.

Renewal of clashes between Ghulfan and Dar Naiema in South Kordofan Diling, PDF: SPLA attacked civilians in South Kordofan with heavy weapons

(*AllIntibaha, Sudan Vision*) The area of rural Diling in South Kordofan witnessed again eruption of clashes between Al-Ghulfan and Dar Naiema tribes. At least two people are reported killed.

Popular Defense Force (PDF) commanders deplored SPLA onslaughts on civilians at Al-Meram area of South Kordofan State, considering it as violation to the peace agreement. PDF General Coordinator, Kamaladdin Ibrahim, noted that SLM accusations were baseless, stating that the incidents were mere assaults on civilians. Moreover, he affirmed that those aggressions occurred north of 1956 border line between South and North Sudan.

"The Movement should not blame others" commented Ibrahim, adding that PDF acts upon Sudan Armed Force (SAF) orders, refuting SAF involvement in the fighting flaring in South Kordofan. He noted that local citizens are capable of defending themselves without PDF support.

PDF General Coordinator considered the incidents as reflecting divergence within the SPLM political and military institutions.

200 cases against press in 2007

(*AlHayat*) The number of cases under criminal law against the Sudanese press in 2007 reached 200. 85% of the cases have been referred to the concerned court. According to the prosecutor there are additional 150 cases under investigation.

AF Accuses Chadian of Backing Darfur Rebels Attack against Silayaa with 65 Military Vehicles

(SMC – 31 Dec. 2007) Armed Forces (AF) accuses Chadian government of backing Darfur rebels attack launched early this week against Silayaa area of western Darfur state. It said attackers were set back after huge material and human losses.

AF spokesman brigadier Dr Osman Mohammed Al Agbash told (smc) that battle lasted for three fierce hours fighting where Armed forces claimed martyrdom of eight soldiers besides 19 others injured. He said the government force which led the counter attack did not exceed more than 75 troops.

Brigadier Al Aghbash explained that rebels who were fully backed by Chadian army had raid the area on board of 65 equipped military vehicles. He said Chadian army vehicles were seen evacuating rebels' casualties from the operation scene, while others have fled away as usual. Meanwhile the spokesman hails the courageous stand of both the army and the citizens of Silayaa area.

AlMahdi: Al-Bashir announcement of pardon of the accused in sabotage attempt important step in the right direction

(SMC – 1 Jan. KHARTOUM) Chairman of the National Ummah Party, Al Sadik Al Mahdi has welcomed President of the Republic Field Marshal Omer Al Bashir's pardoning of the accused in the recent sabotage attempt, calling for their participation in the national building, peace process and the democratic transformation. Taking part in the 52nd anniversary celebrations of Independence Day Monday, Al Mahdi said in a statement to SUNA that the release is an important step in the right direction.

The Conflict in Al Maerim who is pulling the trigger? Analysis

Sudan Safari, After the two days of calm that followed the deadly clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM) and Misarya tribe in Al Maerim area, in West Kordufan, the fierce clashes erupted again in the area. Reporters claim that the two sides suffered great casualties

Analysts think that the conflict started again because the core of the problem was not addressed immediately. Another cause for the renewal of the clashes may be that Misarya think that SPLA forces have attacked their chattels, their source of bride and wealth. Without giving any consideration to the causes of the conflict and who lost more, the clashes deeply jeopardize the peaceful coexistence between the tribes in the area that lasted for decades. This peaceful coexistence led to creation of a unique and solid social fabric in the area. However without breaching the rights of each party, SPLM may be more blamed because it has waged a mere military operation against a local tribe in the area. SPLM did not give any consideration to the fact that it has a political responsibly due to its participation in the National Unity Government and in the whole peace building process in Sudan. SPLM should resort to civil laws and not to guns and military operations.

The current clashes will have negative political effects in the long run and may lead to revenge attempts that will last for a long time. This conflict will add nothing to the SPLM whether it wins or lose the clashes. If SPLM lose then it will lost it's respect in the eyes of others and if it wins it will add nothing to it's image because it is a regular army fighting a tribal warriors. The attempts to involve the Sudanese Armed forces ,

that worked to calm the tension, in the conflict is not a wise idea because that will enlarge the range of the conflict to become a real war between north and south.

GoSS

South Sudan legislators go on 3 months recess without passing vital bills

(*Sudan Tribune.com* – 31 Dec. JUBA) The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly has today adjourns for three months recess without passing important draft bill of the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development Organization Bill 2007.

The bill presented by Arop Deng, chairperson of legal affairs sparked heated debate on condition the draft bill places on recruitment and promotion in GoSS legal institutions was delayed because the minister in charge was not available for vital explanation demanded by lawmakers.

The debate was chaired by Lawrence Lual Lual, Deputy Speaker who urges MPs while on recess to help improve the image of Goss authorities by explaining about the unfolding crises between the GoSS and government of national unity that resulted by GoSS suspending its participation in the central government in Khartoum and the northern states. *Read more* <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25395>

Darfur

Adada to contact with all Darfurian parties

(*Sudan Vision*) The UN/AU Joint Special Representative for Darfur, Rodolphe Adada, is expected to conduct wide contacts with Darfurian armed movements, civil society organizations and IDPs to ensure their cooperation with UNAMID, the Mission's spokesman Nouredine Mezni, told Sudan Vision yesterday.

Mezni tied the success of the Mission to that of the political process, stressing on meeting the needs of the Mission to enable it to carry out its peacekeeping role. He underlined provision of land transport units and helicopters as taking positions among these needs. He added that helicopters are indispensably necessary for movement in a region the size of France.

The spokesman further called on countries contributing to troops to expedite their contribution in order for UNAMID to be present all over Darfur.

Replying to a question on the potential targeting of UNAMID troops, Mezni said personnel wearing the hats of AU or UN are soldiers of peace, expressing hope that they will be looked on as such.

Rebel leader welcomes Darfur hybrid force

(*Sudan Tribune.com* – 1 Jan. PARIS) The leader of Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) welcomed the start of the peacekeeping mission by a hybrid force of the United

Nations and the African Union (AU) in Darfur. He further urged to provide it with the necessary planes.

Abdelwahid al-Nur, hailed the take over of the hybrid peacekeeping force from the ill-equipped African troops. He also called upon the international community to provide the necessary planes and equipments saying such shortage will paralyze the 26000 troops from fulfilling its mandate.

The SLM founder told Sudan Tribune that this force should create the necessary conditions to "make peace not to keep peace".

Read more <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25408>

AMIS transfers authority to UNAMID in celebration held in Al-Fashir

(SUNA) A celebration was held at Al-Fashir town, capital of North Darfur State, Monday on the occasion of transferring the authorities of the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to the United Nations and African Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in implementation of the agreement concluded between the Government of Sudan, UN and the African Union and the Security Council resolution issued in July 2007.

The flags of the United Nations and the African Union were hoisted in official military ceremony at the headquarters of UNAMID in the western part of Al-Fashir besides changing the green berets of the AU with the blue ones of the UN, in the presence of Wali (governor) of North Darfur State Osman Mohamed Yousif Kibir, Special Representative of UN Secretary General in Sudan Ashraf Qazi, the UN-AU Joint Special Representative for Darfur Rodolphe Adada and Commander of UNAMID.

An agreement on the transfer of authorities from AMIS to UNAMID was signed during the celebrations in implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 1769.

Meanwhile, the Wali of North Darfur State, addressing the celebrations, affirmed the government's commitment to all the agreements it signed with UN, AU and the other concerned bodies for realizing just and sustainable peace in Darfur, pledging cooperation with the joint mission to implement its task.

The UN-AU Joint Special Representative for Darfur, Rodolphe Adada, described the moment as historic, conveying the greetings of the UN Secretary General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission to the personnel of UNAMID and AMIS, pointing out that the joint mission came to help the people of Darfur to reach peace and stability.

Special Representative of UN Secretary General in Sudan Ashraf Qazi, on his part, expressed appreciation for the cooperation of the Sudanese Government with the UN concerning the joint mission. He pointed out that peace in Sudan can not be partial, affirming that they would all work for a prosperous, secure and united Sudan. He called on all the Sudanese parties to work for peace and involving all in the peace process in the country. BT/BT

Darfur war crimes suspect attempted travel on a forged passport

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 1 Jan. KHARTOUM) A Sudanese government minister wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) made a failed attempt last month to travel abroad for the first time since his indictment.

A well placed source in Khartoum told Sudan Tribune that minister of state for humanitarian affairs, Ahmed Mohamed Haroun, wanted to fly to Saudi Arabia in December to perform the annual Islamic pilgrimage.

The source said that Haroun wanted to use a fake passport with a different name for his planned trip in order to apply for a visa to enter Saudi Arabia. However he could not confirm if Haroun actually submitted a visa application to the Saudi consulate in Khartoum.

Haroun ended up cancelling his travel plans after the Sudanese government found out, the source added.

No official at the Saudi consulate in Khartoum was available for comment because of New Years holiday in Sudan. **Read more** <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25412>

Sudan denies rebel capture of western Darfur garrison

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 1 Jan. KHARTOUM) Sudan has denied rebel capture of a military garrison in West Darfur saying the rebel 8 soldiers killed during the clashes

"JEM forces have taken full control of GoS Silaiaa garrison at the outskirts of el-Geneina," the capital of West Darfur state, the rebel Justice and Equality Movement said in a military communiqué, on Saturday December 29.

Spokesperson of the Sudan Armed Forces, Osman Al-Aghbash, said regular army repelled an attack carried out by rebel JEM against Silaiaa garrison in West Darfur. He further said 8 soldiers were killed and other 19 wounded during the clashes.

The assailant forces which attacked the Sudanese army position with 65 vehicles pulled back with their dead and wounded, Osman said.

He underlined that there were 57 officers and soldiers when the attack occurred.

The rebel JEM said that the capture of Silaiaa, is a step towards the control of el-Geneina.

Libyan leader discusses Darfur with Egyptian president

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 1 Jan. CAIRO) Libyan leader Muammer Gadhafi met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday to discuss the situation in Sudan's war-torn western region of Darfur, the official MENA news agency reported.

"The two leaders discussed the situation in Darfur, in particular after the deployment of a joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission," MENA said.

Gadhafi's visit to Cairo comes a day after the new AU-UN force took over peacekeeping in Darfur from an AU mission that has failed to stem nearly five years of violence.

Ethiopia, Egypt pledge more troops for Darfur

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 31 Dec. ADDIS ABABA) Ethiopia and Egypt will each send 850 troops early in the New Year to serve with a joint United Nations-African Union force in Sudan's Darfur region, an AU official told Reuters on Monday.

"Ethiopia and Egypt will send a battalion, numbering 850 troops each, as the first batch of their contribution to the UN-AU Joint African Peacekeeping force in Darfur," Assane Ba, spokesman for the AU Peace and Security Commission told Reuters.

"Troops from Asian countries are also expected to be deployed in Darfur early in the new year," he added.

Ethiopia has pledged to deploy up to 5,000 troops to the joint mission.

Darfur hybrid peacekeeping force faces grim prospects

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 31 Dec. EL FASHER) A joint African-United Nations force took over peacekeeping duties in war-torn Darfur Monday, a long awaited step intended to be the strongest effort yet to solve the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

But many are already warning that its prospects are grim, and that if it fails, the 4 1/2-year conflict, which has already killed 200,000 people and driven some 2.5 million from their homes, will only worsen.

The force - at 9,000 soldiers and policemen - is only a little larger than the beleaguered and ineffectual African Union peacekeeping mission it replaces. Even in a best case scenario, it will take months to build up to its planned strength of 26,000.

Western nations haven't come through with equipment like military helicopters and vehicles the U.N. says are vital for the new force to reach hotspots quickly and protect civilians. The Sudanese government, meanwhile, has thrown up numerous obstacles to the deployment. **Read more** <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25396>

US calls for ceasefire to help Darfur peacekeeping force

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 31 Dec. WASHINGTON) The United States called Monday for an immediate and complete ceasefire in Sudan's conflict-riven western Darfur region to help a new hybrid peacekeeping force get up to speed quickly.

"We welcome today's formal transfer of authority from the African Union-led peacekeeping force in Sudan to the hybrid United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)," State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey said in a statement.

"We call on the government of Sudan and on all of the rebel factions to observe a complete and immediate ceasefire to facilitate UNAMID's full and expeditious deployment, and to cooperate fully with UNAMID's efforts to restore peace and security to Darfur," he said.

"The people of Darfur have suffered for much too long," the statement added.

US President George W. Bush also voiced support for the new peacekeeping force, and signed a law on Monday aimed at piling economic pressure on the government in Khartoum to finally end the violence in Darfur.

Read more <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article25375>

Miscellaneous

On assassination of the US diplomat and his driver

A press statement by the US Embassy in Khartoum reads: “Early this morning, January 1, 2008, in Khartoum, Sudan, an American officer with the United States Agency for International Development was shot and wounded. A locally employed Sudanese national was killed in the same incident. This afternoon, the American officer succumbed to his injuries and passed away. We are working closely with local authorities to investigate the incident.”

(Sudan Tribune.com, Sudan Vision, AlWatan, SUNA – 1 Jan. KHARTOUM) An American diplomat shot in the Sudanese capital today got into an argument during the new years party according to press reports.

The daily Al-Hayat newspaper published in London quoted unidentified officials as saying that the John Granville quarreled with some of the people at the party before he left.

Granville was shot and killed along with his driver early Tuesday by gunmen in a passing car who cut him off as he was being driven home in Sudan’s capital.

The US official was being driven home at about 4 a.m. when another vehicle cut off his car and opened fire before fleeing the scene, the Sudanese Interior Ministry said.

John Granville, 33, was an official working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sudan. He was working to implement a 2005 peace agreement between Sudan’s north and south that ended more than two decades of civil war, USAID said.

The newspaper said that Granville was gambling at the party with a number of diplomats and officers working at international organizations in Sudan.

One of the officials told Al-Hayat that the US diplomat “won a lot of money after which he got into a disagreement with the other gambling players then left angrily”.

“Some cars carrying diplomatic license plates followed him after he left” the official added.

The newspaper said that Granville was accompanied in the car by two women, an American and Sudanese. Both women were dropped off at their homes before Granville’s car headed to his place.

Granville is the first U.S. diplomat to be killed in Sudan since the 1973 assassination of U.S. Ambassador Cleo Noel, slain along with senior embassy officer George Curtis Moore by the Palestinian Black September militant group.

In a statement to Sudan Vision, Maj. Gen. Abdin El-Tahir, Director of Criminal Investigation, confirmed the death of the American USAID staff who was shot yesterday. He affirmed that material evidence leading to the crime could not be detected due to traffic jam at the time the incident took place. He however added that some eye-witnesses have given information that could help police to put their hands on the criminals.

The incident to which USAID staff, John Michel Granville (33), and his driver

Abdulrahman Abbas (40), were yesterday subjected was isolated and did not have any political motivation, the Sudanese government said, revealing that a joint committee has been formed out of police and security forces to investigate the incident in order to apprehend the perpetrators.

The Sudanese Foreign Ministry meanwhile issued a statement affirming its full commitment to catering for and protecting foreign residents in Sudan, particularly diplomats, by availing maximum degrees of safety and security for them.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Interior issued a statement at 03:57 AM yesterday narrating that a land-cruiser bearing diplomatic plates and driven by Abdulrahman Abbas, Sudanese, accompanied by John Michel Granville, a USAID staff in the US Embassy, was heading west along Abdallah al-Tayeb Road in Riyadh when they were intercepted by an unknown car from which a number of bullets were fired on the left side of their car, resulting in the death of the driver while USAID staff sustained five injuries in the hand, left shoulder and stomach, and was hurried to Khartoum Hospital where he underwent surgery. His condition was said to be stable though he was later reported dead. The statement disclosed that a police report was subsequently filed at Khartoum Police Post/ Riyadh Section under No. (3), dated 1/1/2008.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs meanwhile gave a different angle to the same story, stating that a heated argument that had taken place between the Embassy car and another car moving along the same road escalated as one of the occupants of the other car threw shots at the Embassy vehicle, killing the driver and seriously injuring the USAID staff who later died in hospital.

The official spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Ali Al-Sadig, offered his condolences to the families of the USAID staff and the driver and described the incident as regrettable, isolated and not politically motivated, affirming the government's keenness on protecting diplomats residing in the country.

Nimat Malik, an eyewitness who has been interviewed by AlWattan, said “when I arrived at the site of the crime the driver was already dead and the diplomat was bleeding and requesting assistance by saying I am dying, I need help”. Nimat, who is a nurse by profession and a lecturer at the Ahfad University, tried to help the diplomat but the police did not allow her to come closer to the diplomat and his driver.

BREAKING NEWS: US President Bush signs Sudan divestment bill

(*Sudan Tribune.com* — 28 Dec. WASHINGTON) After a long delay US President Bush signed into a law the “Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007” passed by the Congress.

Bush said in a statement that he "share the deep concern of the Congress over the continued violence in Darfur perpetrated by the Government of Sudan and rebel groups".

The bill aims at providing protection from lawsuits to State and local divestment efforts in Sudan to sanction it over the Darfur crisis labeled genocide by the US administration.

The bill also allows asset managers to divest from foreign companies operating in Sudan without being deemed in violation of their fiduciary duty. Also no government

agency shall grant federal contracts to companies believed to be conducting business in Sudan unless they certify otherwise.

However he cautioned that his administration will “enforce this legislation in a manner that does not conflict with that [presidential foreign policy] authority.

Below is the text of Bush statements after signing the bill

Today, I have signed into law S. 2271, the "Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007." I share the deep concern of the Congress over the continued violence in Darfur perpetrated by the Government of Sudan and rebel groups. My Administration will continue its efforts to bring about significant improvements in the conditions in Sudan through sanctions against the Government of Sudan and high level diplomatic engagement and by supporting the deployment of peacekeepers in Darfur.

This Act purports to authorize State and local governments to divest from companies doing business in named sectors in Sudan and thus risks being interpreted as insulating from Federal oversight State and local divestment actions that could interfere with implementation of national foreign policy. However, as the Constitution vests the exclusive authority to conduct foreign relations with the Federal Government, the executive branch shall construe and enforce this legislation in a manner that does not conflict with that authority.

GEORGE W. BUSH

THE WHITE HOUSE,

December 31, 2007