



Southern Sudan News Bulletin

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Highlights:

- Joint force kills three LRA rebels in Nzara
- Over 6,000 returnees expected in Raja
- Gunmen fire on Kenyan de-mining convoy
- JIU issues statement on inflammatory rumours
- Force Protection Unit training begins in Bentiu

Sector I – Juba

Joint force kills three LRA rebels in Nzara

On 28 March, a joint force made up of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Uganda People's Defense Force troops as well as a local self-defense group known as the "Arrow Boys" ambushed Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels at Buremanga *boma* in the Nzara County *payam* of Sangua, Western Equatoria State, killing three LRA insurgents, according to Yambio SPLA headquarters. A woman and her child who had been abducted by the rebels were freed. Buremanga *boma* is located 20 kilometres south of Nzara town and 45 kilometres southwest of Yambio.

UN Police visit LRA escapee in Maridi

A UN Police team visited Maridi Hospital on 29 March to assess the medical condition of a boy who said he had escaped from the LRA and was later admitted to the hospital for treatment. The team found him to be in good condition.

UN Police asked the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) duty officer to advise the chief of crime investigations about

the boy's recorded statements and investigate the circumstances of his abduction as soon as possible. The UN Police notification was acknowledged by the SSPS.

Sector II – Wau

Congolese refugees seek humanitarian support

On 3 March, the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) invited the Western Bahr el Ghazal State Ministry of Social Development, the Wau County Commissioner Col. Anthony Charles Ngberende and a team consisting of staff members from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Food Programme (WFP), UNMIS Recovery, Return and Reintegration (RRR) section and UNICEF to a meeting to verify the presence of 40 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) refugees in the state. The refugees, who consist of 30 men, five women and five children, said they mostly came from Oriental Province in the DRC.

The refugees said they were interested in acquiring proper documentation to receive protection, security and assistance from

humanitarian agencies. The RRR section notified the Protection of Civilians (PoC) unit and recommended that UN High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) officials in Juba determine the status of the group before documentation was issued and humanitarian assistance delivered.

Over 6,000 returnees expected in Raja

Officials of the SSRRC say that 6,180 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Western Bahr el Ghazal State county of Raja who have been living in Khartoum, El Obeid, Babanusa and Nyala are expected to return home this year. The SSRRC will work with aid agencies to ensure an equitable distribution of services to the IDPs. An SSRRC representative said that an UNMIS RRR unit in Raja would help set priorities and facilitate planning, coordination, and monitoring of relief services for the returning population.

Wulu IDPs concerned about relocation sites

IDPs from the Lakes State county of Wulu have expressed concern about security conditions at two of three proposed sites in Wau for their relocation.

During a meeting on 27 February with members of an UNMIS PoC unit, some of the IDPs voiced reluctance to move to one of the sites, a former brewery, as it was outside the city and distant from the main market in Wau.

A second site on the eastern bank of the Jur River was also rejected by the IDPs, who said that its location along the main road to Rumbek would make them vulnerable to any attacks coming from the direction of the Lakes State capital of Rumbek.

The IDPs said they preferred the third site of Jebel Rabah southwest of Wau. State authorities are conducting discussions with the UN and NGOs about acquiring housing materials and identifying a water source for the IDPs before their relocation can take place. The IDPs have no plans to return to Wulu County in the foreseeable future because they say that Lakes State authorities

and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) have not yet taken necessary measures to reconcile the Dinka Agar and Jur Bel communities. SPLA soldiers were recently sent to Wulu to halt inter-ethnic clashes and provide a buffer between the two communities.

Gunmen fire on Kenyan de-mining convoy

On 4 March, gunmen wearing uniforms similar to those of the SPLA opened fire on a Kenyan High Risk De-mining Company (KHRDC) convoy of four vehicles at a site near Najur Bridge. Two KHRDC soldiers were reportedly injured in the attack and admitted to hospital at Sector II headquarters.

The Area Joint Military Committee (AJMC) visited Bussere *payam* and met with Col. Chuol Jany Joak, the commanding officer of the SPLA's 228th Battalion, to discuss the incident. The SPLA colonel told the AJMC members that he had heard the shots when they were fired but could not establish who was responsible. Col. Joak promised to investigate the incident and report back to the AJMC through its senior SPLA member. He also offered to provide protection to the KHRDC.

On 2 March, a group of unidentified gunmen allegedly attempted to rob shops in Wau's Jur market. Police went to the market and fired several warning shots, causing the armed gang to flee the area. No injuries were reported, and the SSPS is investigating the episode.

On 3 March, a group of unidentified gunmen fired shots at employees of the MECHEM Demining Company, who were working under contract for the UN Mine Action Office in an area located 30 kilometres north of Timsah *payam* in Raja County. No casualties were reported, and the motives of the perpetrators are unknown. UN Security is monitoring conditions in the area of the shooting.

Wau Head of Office meets Lakes State governor

On 11 March, Sector II Head of Office Francisco Osler paid a courtesy call on Lakes State Governor Daniel Awet Akot in Rumbek.

The governor assured Mr. Osler and accompanying members of the UNMIS Civil Affairs Division (CAD) that the recent International Criminal Court indictment of Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir (for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur) would have no effect on relations between the Lakes State Government and UNMIS.

He welcomed Mr. Osler's assurances of continued cooperation and support from UNMIS for implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The governor also called for the return of the Chinese Army Engineers company to Rumbek, so that they could assist with some community projects.

Wau County commissioner concerned over criminal incidents

On 9 March, Wau County Commissioner Col. Anthony Charles Ngberende informed UNMIS CAD staff members of three separate criminal incidents in his jurisdiction that were under investigation by the SSPS.

On 9 March, three unknown gunmen reportedly killed a trader from Darfur and wounded a Balanda resident in Wau, after the victims refused to comply with their demands for money. In the second incident, a student who had denied accusations of having impregnated a girl was allegedly killed by her father when the youth visited the girl and her newborn baby in a local hospital.

In the third incident, a young girl was reportedly raped by two unknown armed men on 7 March in the village of Nyincum about 11 kilometres from Wau. The commissioner expressed his concern over the incidents and said they could foment more tensions between local communities.

Lakes State passes compensation order

Lakes State Legislative Assembly recently approved a provisional order to increase the number of cattle paid in compensation in cases of murder related to cattle raids. UNMIS

CAD has requested a copy of the order and will conduct an in-depth analysis of its legal implications.

The state legislative assembly's constitutional right to amend provisions for compensation dispensed under customary law has been debated within the lawmaking body.

Western Bahr el Ghazal State approves taxation bill

On 11 March, the Western Bahr el Ghazal State Legislative Assembly approved a taxation development bill after the legislation was reviewed and amended by the body's finance committee. On 20 March, UNMIS Civil Affairs Division staff members were informed of the assembly's vote by its deputy clerk Augustino Maurino, who also advised them that the assembly's Finance Committee had recently passed a 2009 budget for the state government.

Peace conference to be held for farmers and pastoralists in Wau

On 16 March, UNMIS CAD staff members met with representatives of the Hope Agency for Relief and Development (HARD) to discuss the Wau-based NGO's peace-building initiatives and explore the possibility of collaborative work in the future.

A peace and reconciliation workshop that will bring together farmers and pastoralists in Western Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes and Warrap states is scheduled to be held in Wau next May. The workshop will seek to bolster prospects for peaceful co-existence between the targeted groups.

In a separate meeting, the Western Bahr el Ghazal State Peace Committee's secretary informed CAD staff members that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) is organizing an integrated workshop for SPLA, SPLM and Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) officers that will be held in early April.

UNMIS and SSRRC discuss qualified return programme

On 17 March, staff members of the RRR section met with SSRRC officials to discuss the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Qualified Sudanese Return Programme. Twenty-five qualified teachers are receiving assistance from the IOM to return to Lakes State, and talks centered on possible Early Return Assistance (ERA) support for the teachers.

The SSRRC asked RRR for help in coordinating with ERA-providing partners for the provision of resettlement packages of food and non-food items to the teachers to facilitate their reintegration into the community. The teachers are scheduled to arrive before the 2009 school calendar begins in April.

UNMIS trains assembly members in human rights

The UNMIS Human Rights office and a language assistant conducted a two-day training exercise for members of the Lakes State Legislative Assembly that focused on basic human rights and the role of lawmakers in monitoring and promoting human rights. Copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Human Rights Provision in the Southern Sudan Interim Constitution and a handout on lessons learned were distributed to participants at the end of the training session.

Sector III – Malakal

JIU issues statement on inflammatory rumours

In accordance with a decision reached during the Upper Nile State Security Committee meeting, the SPLA and SAF Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) commanders made a joint statement on local radio stations on 12 March. The statement warned members of the public not to engage in malicious rumour mongering because such speculation can only foment instability.

The two commanders urged their listeners to reject such rumours and gave assurances that they had no intention of launching any new attacks against each other's forces. While key pending matters such as the relocation of the JIU out of Malakal have yet to be implemented, the joint statement by the JIU Commanders was widely viewed as a positive step.

UNMIS discusses Malakal crisis with deputy governor and SPLM chairman

Sector III Officer-in-Charge Rose Sakala and representatives of UNMIS CAD met with the Upper Nile State deputy governor and SPLM chairman to get his views on the Malakal crisis that erupted in late February.

The deputy governor thanked UNMIS for the important role it played during the crisis, but warned that the local security situation would remain precarious until the JIUs involved is relocated away from Malakal.

Among all outstanding issues facing the Cease-fire Joint Monitoring Committee, relocation of the JIUs was of critical importance in the deputy governor's opinion and should be given top priority. In this regard, he appealed for the presence of "relevant higher bodies" on the ground in Malakal to ensure that parties are pressured to implement relocation of the JIUs as soon as possible. A similar meeting with the National Congress Party leadership in Malakal was scheduled for the following week.

Force Protection Unit training begins in Unity State

The second phase of a six-week Force Protection Unit training for 80 Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) officers started on 9 March in Bentiu, Unity State. A 10-day Training of Trainers workshop for 20 prison officers was completed successfully on 10 March. The official closing ceremony was held at the training venue and attended by the Unity State Director of Prisons, Brig. Kon Kundom Thor. Also on hand were the UNPOL correction coordinator in Sector III and the UNPOL correction officer from the Bentiu Team Site. On 11 March, the Bentiu Team Site kicked off a

community policing training course for 20 male SSPS officers.

Bor gunmen kidnap boy, shoot parents

UNMIS Human Rights section is continuing to receive reports of violence in Jonglei State. On 11 March, unidentified gunmen kidnapped a six-year-old boy and shot dead his parents in the Bor suburb of Cuei-Atem Beny.

The child was sleeping inside a hut with his grandmother when assailants entered the dwelling, robbed the old woman and opened fire on the boy's father and mother, who were outside the hut at the time.

On 13 March, SSPS Deputy Director Lt. Col. Philip Omot said that they were investigating the incident but had no leads on possible suspects yet. On 17 March, SSPS Director Col. Ajang John Jok said that police still had no information on the identities of the perpetrators.

The SSPS initially treated the incident as the work of Murle tribesmen. But after police interviewed the abducted child's grandmother, it became apparent that there was no hard evidence implicating Murle people in the criminal act. The SSPS has been patrolling the Bor suburb every night since the abduction and killings occurred.

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