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Media Monitoring Report

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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Highlights

Local Arabic and English language press

SPLA reiterates denial of link with arms shipment

Al-Sahafa reports SPLA has reiterated denial of any connection with the tanks shipment hijacked by pirates off Somali shores, saying the arms shipment was not destined for Southern Sudan.

SPLA commander, Maj. Gen. Pior Ajang, told Miraya FM his troops have the right to procure weapons from anywhere in the world without having to coordinate with SAF, adding CPA has granted SPLA wide powers on matters relating to development, armament and training.

Fifth Abyei area arbitrator to be selected shortly

Al-Sahafa reports that the four Abyei area arbitrators have submitted a list of five nominees to NCP and SPLM to select the fifth arbitrator within three weeks. The five nominees are from Canada, Switzerland, France, Britain and Germany. All are ICJ judges.

GoSS Presidency Minister Luka Biong has confirmed NCP and SPLM receipt of the list. He said if NCP and SPLM failed to select the fifth arbitrator from the list then selection would have to be done by the Court's Secretary General in collaboration with the four arbitrators.

Eid holiday from Tuesday

Sudan TV broadcast the Cabinet's General Secretariat announcement that Eid El-Fitr holiday begins tomorrow Tuesday through Thursday. The Cabinet congratulates the Sudanese people and Muslims on the advent of Eid. **Local dailies** report President Bashir will receive Eid congratulations on the first day from judiciary, military, police, political, religious and diplomatic representatives.

Taha and Ocampo shook hands silently

Ray Al-Aam reports ICC Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo said he was introduced to VP Taha in NY by Qatari Prime Minister and that they shook hands silently. Speaking to Al-Jazeera yesterday, Ocampo has denied requesting Sudan's peacekeepers to apprehend any ICC-wanted Sudanese official.

Sudan Ambassador to UN Abdul Mahmoud Abdul Haleem said last Friday's meeting in NY of the Arab committee established to follow up Darfur issue was attended by Ocampo.

20 killed in road accident

Local dailies report 20 passengers killed and 36 others injured when a bus and two minibuses collided near Shaikh Taha village on Khartoum-Medani highway yesterday. The three vehicles caught fire, 12 bodies were burned beyond recognition, including the three drivers.

Minnawi accuses government of derailing DPA

Al-Khartoum reports SLM leader and Senior Presidential Assistant Minni Minnawi has accused the government of sabotaging the DPA. He said SAF attacked the SLA base in Kolgi in Jebel Marra, and he blamed NCP, accusing it of seeking to derail DPA.

Government to cooperate with UNAMID police

Al-Ahdath reports Police DG Gen. Mohamed Najeeb, met with UNAMID Police Commissioner yesterday and reiterated police HQs keenness to cooperate with UNAMID police. The UNAMID police commissioner said they would continue supporting Sudanese police in training, rehabilitation, exchange of expertise and capacity building.

Websites/International News Coverage

At least two dead in Darfur helicopter crash

KHARTOUM (AFP 29/09/08) — A helicopter contracted to UN-led peacekeepers crashed in Sudan's Darfur region this morning, killing two people with two more feared dead, a UN spokesman said. The UNAMID spokesman said the helicopter was contracted to carry food to a force team site in South Darfur state.

"Two of the crew on board the helicopter were killed, and two more are missing in the wreckage," said UNAMID spokesman Kemal Saiki.

The helicopter, carrying two tonnes of supplies, crashed shortly after take-off from Nyala airport, the state capital of South Darfur.

UNAMID is investigating reports the helicopter was fired at. The helicopter is privately owned by a Sudanese company but is painted white as is usual for UN aircraft.

"There are rumours that the helicopter was shot at, but we can neither confirm or deny this at present," added Saiki. "We are investigating now, and we have also sent a rescue team to the site." The helicopter is reported to have crashed close to Kalma camp, a sprawling hut-city outside Nyala for internally displaced people.

Earlier this month the European Union condemned the Sudanese military's use of white aircraft in strife-torn Darfur, calling it a deliberate attempt to create confusion with UN planes. Sudan rejected the claims.

However, rebels have also reported that white painted helicopters and fixed-wing planes have scouted their positions.

They have warned of the potential risks if fighters begin to view white aircraft as a potential threat.

Four UNAMID helicopters have come under fire since the force was set up, with two attacks this month alone.

Kalma camp has been tense since battles with government forces last month left more than 30 people dead, including women and children. Government forces said they were trying to crack down on armed robbers and rebel groups they accused of hiding in the tightly packed camp.

Abducted tourists freed

(BBC) A group of Western tourists and their Egyptian guides, who were kidnapped 10 days ago, have been freed. The 11 hostages - five Italians, five Germans and a Romanian - and their guides are said to be in good health. The group, abducted by gunmen in a remote border region of Egypt, are now said to be en route to a military base in the capital, Cairo. During their captivity they were moved around a lawless desert area straddling Egypt, Sudan, Libya and Chad.

The freeing of the Westerners was reported on Egyptian state television and confirmed by Italian officials. "Our compatriots are free, and they are with Egyptian forces," said Italy's Foreign Minister Franco Frattini.

No details were given on the circumstances of their release.

The kidnapers had demanded that Germany take charge of payment of an \$8.8m ransom. It is unclear if any payment was exchanged.

The breakthrough came a day after Sudanese troops clashed with alleged kidnapers in northern Sudan, killing six gunmen. Another two were taken into custody. The two suspects claimed the tourists were in Chad but their exact whereabouts at the time of rescue remains unclear. Chad denied the group was within its borders.

In a statement, the military said the vehicle of the hostage-takers was full of weapons and documents detailing how the ransom should have been paid. Other documents found inside led the army to believe a faction of the Darfur rebel Sudan Liberation Army was involved in the kidnapping. None of Darfur's numerous rebel groups have said they were linked to the kidnappings. Other reports said the abduction, near the Gilf al-Kebir plateau, was carried out by tribesmen or bandits operating in the area.

Sudan desert gunfight kills 6 accused in abduction

KHARTOUM (AP) -- Eight kidnapers of a group of European tourists and their Egyptian guides led soldiers on a high-speed desert chase Sunday, ending in a firefight that killed all but two of the gunmen, Sudan's military spokesman said.

The two surviving kidnapers told Sudanese soldiers that the tourists were being held by 35 more gunmen in Chad, said the spokesman, Sawarmy Khaled. He told The Associated Press that Sudanese soldiers were searching south of the Jebel Oweinat region near the Libyan border when they came upon a white vehicle carrying eight gunmen. "The armed forces called for it to stop, but they did not respond and there was pursuit in which six of the armed men were killed," he said, including the leader of the group, which he identified as a Chadian named Bakhit.

A subsequent statement from Brig. Gen. Mohamed Osman al-Aghbash, the Defense Ministry spokesman, said five soldiers were wounded in the chase, including the unit's second-in-command, a first lieutenant, who was described as in grievous condition.

The statement said a second vehicle, described as a "tourist bus" labeled "Interville" and with Egyptian license plates was confiscated along with assault rifles, ammunition and rocket-propelled grenades. The ministry said documents bearing the logo of a Darfur rebel group, the Sudanese Liberation Movement, were also seized from the bandits.

Mohammed Abdullah, a commander of the rebel group in northern Darfur, denied involvement in the kidnapping, calling it an act of banditry. He accused Sudan of fabricating the news to implicate his movement in the kidnapping and distract from the government's "crimes against the people of Darfur."

Warships surround Somali pirates (BBC)

Somali pirates aboard a ship carrying tanks and weapons that they have seized say they are surrounded by at least three foreign warships.

One is the American US destroyer USS Howard, another is from Russia but the nationality of

the third is not clear.

But one of the pirates said they were not afraid and had enough food to withstand a siege.

A maritime expert said the ship was carrying "dangerous chemicals" and warned against using force.

Andrew Mwangura, of the Kenya-based Seafarers' Programme, also told Reuters news agency that a military helicopter had flown over pirate speedboats heading to reinforce the Ukrainian-operated ship, the Faina, moored near the town of Hobyo.

"With the helicopter and the Howard watching them, the tactic is clearly to scare the pirates."

Pirate Sugule Ali told the AFP news agency by satellite phone that his group wanted a ransom of \$20m (£11m) and were not interested in the weapons. Earlier, the pirates had demanded \$35m.

"It is true we are surrounded by three foreign military vessels and there are some others we can see in the distance," Mr Ali said. "We are not afraid of their presence, that will not make us to abandon the ship or to refrain from asking for money. "There is no shortage of food supply and all the crew members are healthy and well, including ours."

He admitted that one of the kidnapped sailors had died, but said this was from natural causes. Meanwhile, Kenya has insisted that the shipment of 33 72-T tanks on board were destined for its military. Various sources have suggested that they were really bound for the autonomous government of South Sudan, in possible contravention of a UN arms embargo.

Mr Mwangura said two previous shipment of Ukrainian weapons had already passed through Kenya.

"There have been alarming propaganda by the pirates to media that the weapons are not for the Kenyan military. This is a tactic by the terrorists to try and fend off reprisals against them," Kenya's government spokesman Alfred Mutua said.

The former rebel SPLA which governs South Sudan has denied any links to the tanks, reports the **UN-sponsored Radio Miraya FM**.

However, it also quoted the SPLA's Major General Byor Ajang as saying that the army had the right to import weapons from anywhere in the world without co-ordination with the government in the north.

Earlier, a spokesman for the US Navy's 5th Fleet, Lt Nathan Christensen, said the USS Howard was within 8km (5 miles) of the Ukrainian vessel, but refused to say whether they were preparing to attack the pirates.

He said the ship's cargo of battle tanks made it a particularly worrying situation.

"We're concerned that this might end up in the wrong hands, such as terrorists or violent extremists," he said.

Islamist insurgents, not known to have links to the pirate gangs, are battling government troops, their Ethiopian allies and African Union peacekeepers in the capital, Mogadishu.

Somalia has been without a functioning central government for 17 years and has suffered continual civil strife, with rival armed groups fighting for control.

The waters off the coast of Somalia are considered some of the world's most dangerous.

Even ships carrying food aid are often targeted, hampering the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the estimated three million Somalis in need of aid.

France, which has troops in nearby Djibouti and also participates in a multi-national naval force patrol in the area, has intervened twice to release French sailors kidnapped by pirates.

Authorities in Somalia's semi-autonomous region of Puntland say they are powerless to confront the pirates, who regularly hold ships for ransom at the port of Eyl.

Military, maritime officials say Ukrainian arms destined to South Sudan

September 28, 2008 (KHARTOUM) **Sudan Tribune website** — A Sudanese military source said today that the weapons carried by the seized Ukrainian ship were destined for South Sudan and not Kenya. These allegations were confirmed by a Kenyan maritime official.

Somali pirates hijacked last Thursday a Belize-flagged ship "Faina" as it neared the Kenyan port of Mombasa carrying a cargo of 33 Soviet-type T-72 tanks, grenade launchers and ammunition. They demanded a ransom 20 USD million to release the cargo ship.

The Sudanese official asserted that the cargo was destined to southern Sudan army adding that it was the second cargo to Juba during this year. He further dismissed reports that these weapons are for Kenya saying all its military equipments are from the US and western countries.

In Nairobi, the government spokesperson, Alfred Mutua said Faina cargo ship was carrying an authorized Ukrainian government arms shipment for the Kenyan army

South Sudan government led by the former rebel SPLM, which signed a peace agreement in 2005 with the Khartoum government ending 21 years of war, is not allowed to buy weapons.

Andrew Mwangura, head of the East Africa Seafarers Assistance Program from the Kenyan capital, said the Somali pirates claim they captured confidential documents showing that the arms shipment destined to southern Sudan. They threat to divulgate it if they are not paid.

"The pirates are saying that if they are not going to be paid the ransom, they will spill the beans. Maybe they are going to say what is happening in this region because we understand South Sudan is under a United Nations arms embargo and why Kenya allowing the military equipment to pass through Kenyan waters is not known," Mwangura said.

The Kenyan maritime official further said that the hijacked ship was ferrying the fourth such consignment from Ukrainian to southern Sudan. "One of the cargo arrived at the port of Mombasa in October last year, two in February this year."

Yesterday, Major General Byor Ajang from the SPLA said that the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) did not order any new weapons. "The SPLA did not have Russian weapons shipments that were on its way here through Kenya" Ajang said. (ST)

South Sudan Governors' Forum to discuss peace challenges

September 28, 2008 (JUBA) **Sudan Tribune website** – The 6th Governors' Forum of Southern Sudan will begin on Monday in Juba to review progress achieved and resolve on challenges facing state governments in the context of implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Top in the agenda is expected to be the issue of insecurity in the semi-autonomous region.

In 2006, the Presidency of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) established the Governors Forum involving ten Southern Sudan states governors as a quarterly round-table to share ideas and resolve on common issues.

Other concerned GoSS institutions and international partners including the United Nations, World Bank and Non-governmental organizations also participate in the Forum on invitation.

The theme of the meeting is to operationalize decentralization in Southern Sudan for effective CPA implementation, and will be officially opened by the GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit who will highlight objectives and expected outcome of the meeting.

The five-day Forum, whose sessions will be chaired and facilitated by the Vice President, Riek

Machar Teny, will first listen and react to status report on implementation of recommendations of the 5th Governors' Forum, after which each state will present achievements scored and challenges faced since the last Forum.

On fiscal decentralization, the meeting will reflect on status, progress and challenges for the year 2009 budget.

It will also discuss administrative decentralization and reforms that will include GoSS functions, inter-governmental relations between GoSS and state governments, Civil Service and Public Service reforms.

On Local Government level, the Forum will discuss progress and challenges in the areas of legislation, capacity building, staffing and boundaries.

The meeting will also have an Aid Strategy overview and debate on coordination of foreign development assistance. These will include presentations by representatives of Multi-Donors Trust Fund/World Bank (MDTF/WB), United States Aid for International Development (USAID), Joint Donors Team (JDT), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), among others.

The Forum will finally have an overview on the status of CPA implementation, particularly on North-South demarcation process, challenges and preparations for the coming general elections.

Darfur Janjaweed leader criticizes 2nd VP agreement with Minnawi

September 27, 2008 (KHARTOUM) **Sudan Tribune website** – A suspected Janjaweed leader who was recently appointed in a government post criticized an agreement signed between 2nd Vice President Ali Osman Taha and senior presidential assistant Minni Arcua Minnawi.

“Minnawi got more than he deserves” Musa Hilal, leader of the Darfurian Arab Mahameed clan told the daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper today. However the tribal leader has vowed to exercise “self denial” for the sake of Darfur. Hilal said that Minnawi was ignored by the government after coming in as an official following him signing the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006.

Hilal also complained about being sidelined and described himself as a “decoration” since joining the Sudanese cabinet. He further said that the government will only listen to figures which threaten to boycott their participation.

In January the Sudanese president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir issued a decree appointing Hilal as an adviser for the ministry of federal government.

The 43-year-old was jailed by the Sudanese authorities in 1998 for leading armed robbery of the central bank in the city of Nyala in Darfur. However Ali Osman Taha secured his release in 2002 to lead Arab militias against the Darfur rebels.

The UN Security Council imposed travel and financial sanctions on Hilal and three other individuals in April 2006. The US president George Bush issued an executive order enforcing similar sanctions on them.

SPLM local official killed in Lakes state

September 28, 2008 (YIROL) **Sudan Tribune website** – A local official of the ruling party in Southern Sudan was ambushed by gunmen as he traveled with another local official through

Lakes State, currently in the midst of a forcible disarmament campaign.

SPLM Yirol County Secretary Ater Deng was killed in the attack on Wednesday September 24. Deng was accompanying Yirol East County on his way back to his county headquarters in Nyang Yirol East after paying a visit to Kareer Payam, where SPLA deserters had looted properties and caused havoc.

The deserters, reportedly ethnically Nuer, fired on the vehicle, killing the SPLM secretary on the spot. But the commissioner narrowly escaped death and took to his heels, sustaining a severe wound on his stomach and having his back ripped by bullets.

There were three bodyguards and four civilians in the entourage and they were severely wounded. The commissioner and the wounded are now receiving treatment in Yirol Hospital. One bodyguard reportedly died in a hospital in Juba.

[According to the Sudan Tribune report], the attackers are part of the SPLA Division that caused mayhem in Rumbek town on Sept. 8, when they turned a disarmament exercise into a looting spree and made off with huge amounts of money, estimated at \$1 million taken from residents and the business communities. Most of the guns they collected during this disarmament exercise were actually taken from organized forces including the bodyguards of constitutional post holders. These weapons were not recovered.

Having failed their mission in Lakes State, this Division was ordered to leave Lakes State by the SPLA General Headquarters following a visit by conciliatory officials, led by the GoSS minister of internal affairs and other high-ranking SPLA officials.

However, most of these soldiers have deserted the army unit and Yirol East County is one of the counties bearing the brunt of the brutality of these soldiers, who are said to be looting cattle, killing, raping, maiming and terrorizing the local community.

Observers of the conflict in Lakes state explain that there are unresolved traditional enmities, whereas others point to different political factors, like an alleged concerted campaign by the national government, based in Khartoum, to divide the southerners.

Much of the debate and accusations are polarized around a Nuer-Dinka ethnic divide that was exacerbated during Sudan's decades of civil war as competing insurgencies and government-backed militias fought each other amid an intra-Nuer civil war.

COMMENTARY

Key decisions ahead for US policy on Sudan

By Daniel Van Oudenaren (*Sudan Tribune website*)

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article28770>

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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN

Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200