



## **Armed Entities in South Kordofan**

### **The Sudan Armed Forces**

The January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended 21 years of civil war between Northern and Southern Sudan requires the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) to reduce their troops in South Kordofan to prewar levels—one battalion of approximately 800 men. (A SAF battalion comprises four infantry companies of 105 men each, plus one administrative company and one ‘support’ company equipped with heavier weapons such as mortars.) In the six years since the CPA, however, SAF troops in South Kordofan have not been downsized. Rather, they have been upsized—including, in the last few months, with tanks that military observers say are intended to control the North–South border, especially around Abyei and the front-line oilfields of Unity state, in the event that January’s self-determination referendum on Southern Sudan leads to hostilities or even, in a worst-case scenario, renewed civil war.

According to these observers, the build-up also appears designed to cut supply lines between the forces of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in Southern Sudan and those in South Kordofan, and to threaten the SPLA forces that have been deployed out of South Kordofan to Jao on Lake Abiad, just across the North–South border.

If Southerners vote for independence on 9 January 2011, South Kordofan will remain within the North despite the fact that many of its non-Arab Nuba communities fought alongside the SPLA in the war.

The national Joint Defence Board, composed of senior officers from SAF and the SPLA, currently has a committee surveying the border forces. An SPLA officer on the committee claims the Sudanese government is ‘preparing for war all the way along the border’, with the deployment of new weapons, including tanks, 40-barrel Katyusha rocket launchers, anti-tank B-10 recoilless rifles, and 120 mm mortars. The build-up reportedly began approximately two months ago.

UN military observers have reported tank and troop movements, but not on the scale claimed by the SPLA.

A reorganization of SAF in South Kordofan last year reduced the number of divisions in the state—on paper—to two: the 14<sup>th</sup> Division in Kadugli (formerly the site of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, now in el Obeid, capital of North Kordofan state) and the 15<sup>th</sup> Division in Muglad, in the former Western Kordofan (which merged into South Kordofan in 2005). SAF also maintains the 53<sup>rd</sup> Brigade in Abu Jebeha, the 54<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Dilling, the 55<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Babanusa, and the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Heglig, a strategic oil centre close to the disputed North–South border.

Senior SPLA officials claim that all four brigades have the strength of divisions, and reports a fifth ‘independent’ brigade deployed in Liri for a total of almost 55,000 men—more forces, they say, than at the height of the jihad in the Nuba Mountains in the 1990s and more than are needed to control the region.

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In some areas, garrisons have been run down (most frequently from companies to platoons) and troops concentrated in fewer, more strategic locations outside towns. In other areas, small garrisons are being reactivated and strengthened. Troops have occupied schools and health clinics in a number of Nuba villages. Senior SPLA officials say Governor Ahmad Haroun has said the troops will be moved out, but has not made good on his word.

Among the documents the Small Arms Survey has acquired is an order, dated 7 January 2009, that confirms the increase in SAF forces. The order approves the immediate recruitment, by the 5<sup>th</sup> Division (then in Kadugli), of 6,000 new troops ‘to target SPLA personnel in the Nuba Mountains’. A second document of the same date says the aim of the recruitment is to strengthen nationalism ‘to defend the country and the legitimate ruling authority’, an apparent reference to the National Congress Party (NCP) of President Omar al Bashir—at the time a partner of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) in a national unity government.

SPLA sources claim that the SAF troops, reportedly divided among more than 100 garrisons, are armed with artillery, 120 mm mortars, D-30s (122 mm howitzers), T-55 tanks, anti-tank guns mounted on Land Cruisers, and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). A document dated 15 January 2009 suggests that SAF has even heavier weaponry. Marked ‘Strictly Confidential’, it requests the following items for the 5<sup>th</sup> Division:

- 2,000 40-barrel rocket launchers.
- 1,000 12-barrel rocket launchers.
- 1,000 howitzer shells.
- 1,000 D-30 shells.
- 1,000 artillery shells (100 mm).
- 600 artillery shells (130 mm).
- 50 SA-7 shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

A separate document, from the same date, confirms dispatch of the seven types of weapons. Accompanying ammunition includes 4,000 12.7 mm rounds, 2,000 RPG shells, and 400 hand grenades.

### **Joint Integrated Units**

The Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) were established by the CPA to provide the core of a new national army in the event that Southerners vote to remain in a unified Sudan in January. Until then, the JIUs were intended to act as a source of stability, equally divided between SAF and SPLA and deployed close to the cantonments controlled by the SPLA in the civil war—the so-called ‘goose eggs’ around Julud in the west and Kauda in the east.

There are no JIUs in the two areas where government-supported Arab paramilitaries and militias are especially strong—the former Western Kordofan, incorporated into South Kordofan against the wishes of its predominantly Missiriya Arab population, and eastern areas of the state, where there is chronic conflict between farmers and pastoralists.

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The total strength of the JIUs in South Kordofan is 6,000 men—far fewer than the paramilitary and militia forces in the region. Force headquarters are in Kadugli, with units deployed in eight locations—Arit (near Lagawa), Buram, Dilling (Karkaraya village), Heiban, Julud, Kadugli, Talodi, and Um Sirdiba.

Six years after the CPA was signed, the JIUs are neither joint nor integrated. The joint assembly, training, and distribution of arms required by the CPA has not taken place. In most locations the former enemies are not only in separate barracks, but, with a shortage of vehicles, are separated by as much as a 30-minute walk (in Buram and Talodi, for example). Although all elements within the JIUs are supposed to be funded centrally, by the Government of National Unity, there is a disparity in salaries. Senior SAF officers receive benefits not made available to their SPLA counterparts. Some SPLA units (such as in Heiban) say only SAF components receive salaries from the central government.

Monitors of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) have had difficulty accessing the JIUs to verify their size and weaponry but believe that SAF troops in the JIUs have access to all SAF arms—including artillery.

As tensions rise in South Kordofan in advance of the referendum, military sources say SAF is mobilizing regular army forces rather than the JIUs, mistrusting even the SAF components of the JIUs because of their contact with the SPLA. The SAF commander in the Julud unit was replaced, and many of his men discharged, a few months ago after at least half the SAF contingent voted for the SPLM in the April 2010 general elections. UN and SPLA sources say some weapons have been removed from some of the SAF units.

### **Popular Defence Forces**

Since the signing of the CPA, the future of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) has been contested, as has its relationship with SAF. Still described as a force of *mujahideen* (holy warriors), the PDF has continued to exist as a military and civilian network to mobilize militia auxiliaries throughout Sudan, in contravention of the CPA. It was a main vehicle of the jihad in the Nuba Mountains, the heart of South Kordofan state, and today has active units in Darfur and the Transitional Areas—especially in South Kordofan.

The size and strength of the PDF in South Kordofan are impossible to ascertain, with much confusion between the paramilitary PDF force formed as a legal entity by decree in November 1989 and pastoralists armed as irregular militias by the NCP. Figures ranging from 27,000 to 47,000 were cited by Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Mohamed Hussein at a state security meeting in South Kordofan in 2009.

Critically, the PDF, while ethnically mixed during the war years, is today almost exclusively Arab. Many Nuba who fought in the PDF<sup>1</sup> in the war joined the SPLA after the CPA was signed, prompting SAF to collect weapons from non-Arab tribes (primarily Fellata, Hausa, and Nuba). SPLA sources say many of the weapons were re-assigned to the Arab Hawazma tribe, cattle herders competing for land with the

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indigenous Nuba. Since 2005, the SPLA claims the PDF has been reorganized and has expanded, given SAF trucks, motorcycles, and weapons, including G3 and AK-47 rifles, 60 mm and 82 mm mortars, RPGs, and 12.7 mm heavy machine guns.

At the end of October 2010, a force estimated at 4,000–6,000 men, mostly Missiriya Arabs, was reported south of Kharassana, close to the North–South border on the road to Abyei. PDF informants say the force has ‘changed tactics’ in the central Nuba Mountains area, with fighters melting into their villages, in civilian clothes, in the countdown to the expected partition of the country in January. SPLA officers in the Dilling area say the militia is ‘changing policy’ and distributing weapons to Hawazma Arabs *inside* Dilling town, apparently in anticipation of a fight for control of urban centres if the Nuba Mountains ceasefire agreed in 2002 collapses.

The documents obtained by the Small Arms Survey show large arms transfers to the PDF in South Kordofan in 2008–09, during the militia’s reorganization period. A November 2008 order from the chief of the joint staff, Lt. Gen. Mohamed Abdul-Gadir Nasruddin, authorized a shipment of ‘weapons, ammunition and other military equipment’ to PDF command posts. A second shipment followed two months later, on 29 January, upon approval of a request from ‘the Maj. Gen. Commander of the PDF’ for 180,000 firearms—100,000 AKM assault rifles, 50,000 G3 automatic rifles, and 30,000 PKM general-purpose machine guns. Lt. Gen. Nasruddin stressed the need for ‘precautions as to the confidentiality of the information and documents’.

Several of the documents express concern over morale in the PDF. One, signed by Defence Minister Hussein, dated 10 January 2009 and headed ‘Appeal’, ‘instructs’ the ‘PDF commander in the western sector’ to ‘get back all those who joined the SPLM [...] whether in the south, Nuba Mountains or elsewhere [...] to defend their religion and their Arabism’. A second, dated 2 February 2009, refers specifically to the Abu Jebeha barracks and ‘intentions by the PDF to join the SPLA with all their weapons under the leadership of 35 commanders’. It identifies the reason as ‘low morale since some commanders have not been given the officer salaries of those who graduated recently’.

### **Tribal militias**

The SPLA leadership in South Kordofan says tribal militias are today strongest in the western part of South Kordofan—especially in the areas of Abu Junuk, Karko, Mandal, and Sebai—where Nuba and Missiriya live in close proximity and compete for resources, including land.

In the east of the mountains, armed Arabs from White Nile state are reportedly crossing the state border into South Kordofan and occupying the gum arabic-rich lands east of Abu Jebeha. In addition to Arab militias, South Kordofan is home to a small number of militias led by dissident former SPLA commanders who are exploiting anger over the failure to implement the CPA in the Nuba area, especially as regards development:

- Veteran SPLA commander Telefon Kuku, from Buram, reportedly has more than 1,000 men under arms. At the height of the jihad in the Nuba Mountains

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in the 1990s, Kuku disagreed with the decision not to surrender and argued for making peace with the Khartoum government. A decade later, after the death of the Nuba leader Yousif Kuwa, he sought the leadership of the SPLA in South Kordofan and became a fierce critic of Kuwa's eventual successor, Abdel Aziz Adam al Hilu. Kuku is currently under arrest in Juba, Southern Sudan, accused of mobilizing SPLA troops to fight against the CPA.

- Kafi Tayyara, a longtime collaborator of Sudanese Military Intelligence, has a militia estimated at close to 1,000 men who are blamed for the destruction of 50 churches in the south-west of the Nuba Mountains. Kafi Tayyara left his home town of Shatt Dammam and moved to the regional capital, Kadugli, after local people burned down his house and killed his bodyguard and 200 of his cows in 2009. An estimated 500 of his men equipped with new firearms and uniforms marched through the streets of Kadugli in 2009 after the International Criminal Court indicted President Bashir, shouting 'Omar Bashir, oyee!' In November 2010, three trucks loaded with ammunition arrived at the army garrison that supports the militia in Shatt Dammam. The SPLA responded by launching a recruitment drive in the area.
- Al Balola Hamid Abdel Bagi, a Hawazma Arab and former army sergeant, has posed as an SPLA commander since 2008 (and promoted himself to brigadier in 2010), recruiting Nuba and Arabs to an armed group named SPLA-2. The group, which has offices in Khartoum, is accused by the SPLA of being supported by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) to divide and discredit the SPLA—including by ambushing lorries in the east of the Nuba Mountains, Al Balola's home area. Al Balola is currently attempting to organize a force in the far east of South Kordofan, in the predominantly Missiriya Arab area bordering on Darfur.

An offensive in May 2009 by the NCP–SPLA partnership of South Kordofan Governor Ahmad Haroun (indicted by the International Criminal Court in May 2007 for war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur) and his deputy, Abdel Aziz al Hilu, has reportedly removed the armed threat posed in South Kordofan by the Shanabla, landless camel nomads from North Kordofan accused of looting and kidnapping children on their migrations across South Kordofan. Al Hilu claims the joint offensive against the Shanabla 'destroyed' a 'criminal tribal mafia' that had gone as far as to enlist women in coffee shops to inform on the movements of cars and trucks.

### **Central Reserve Police**

A gendarmerie under the Interior Ministry originally set up for riot control, the Central Reserve Police (CRP) has expanded hugely in South Kordofan since the CPA was signed, increasing from a few dozen men in Kadugli, armed only with pistols and AK-47s, to more than 7,000 in 2009, according to a government document dated 21 February 2009. (In 2007, SPLA officers estimated the force's size at 2,000 men, an apparent underestimate.) SPLA monitors assigned to UNMIS say the CRP receives military training and weapons in SAF barracks. They say the weapons include 82 mm mortars, RPGs, 12.7 mm heavy machine guns, light machine guns, Fagot (also known as Spigot and AT-4) anti-tank guided missiles, and artillery up to and including 120 mm. Weapons including 120 mm mortars and 105 mm anti-tank guns can reportedly be obtained from SAF.

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SPLA officers say key locations are Abbassiya and Khor Dilib.

### **The Sudan Police Force**

Before the CPA was signed, the police force in the Nuba Mountains region was armed only with AK-47 assault rifles. Since the CPA, Khartoum's police have acquired a range of weapons, including grenades, 60 mm and 120 mm mortars, and heavy machine guns. Documents issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 3 February 2009 authorize the issue of:

- 5,000 12.7 mm heavy machine guns and 100,000 boxes of ammunition.
- 2,000 PKM general-purpose machine guns and 50,000 boxes of ammunition.
- 500 RPGs and 30,000 boxes of shells.
- 40,000 AK-47 assault rifles and 100,000 boxes of ammunition.
- 2,000 G3 automatic rifles and 50,000 boxes of ammunition.
- 1,000 82 mm mortars and 20,000 boxes of shells.
- 1,000 60 mm and 75 mm mortars<sup>ii</sup> and 20,000 boxes of shells.

In an interview conducted in 2007, the SPLM police chief, Lt. Col. Abdel Hafiz Hussein, told the Small Arms Survey that senior police officers answering to Khartoum had refused to allow joint training with the SPLA, in violation of the CPA. His claim is confirmed in a document dated 18 December 2008 and headed 'Police Integration Process'. Sent by Defence Minister Hussein to the director general of police, it says:

In case of integration of SPLA personnel as officers, [non-commissioned officers] or men, the following must be observed:

1. Do not put integrated forces in decision-making positions.
2. The process of integration must be slow and cumbersome [...] in order to avoid (inculcating) destructive secular ideas into our forces.
3. Training should be carried out in isolation, avoiding mixing them with other new forces.

By the end of 2010, privates and non-commissioned officers from the SPLA police force had been integrated into the national force in South Kordofan, but not a single SPLA officer. The SPLA officers, according to SPLA sources, were sent to Khartoum for training, stripped of a rank, and then distributed among other parts of Northern Sudan.

### **The Popular Police**

A paramilitary reserve force composed largely of Islamist volunteers, the Popular Police decreased in size after the CPA was signed but by 2007 was expanding again. Before the CPA, the Popular Police had no means of transport; since the CPA, it has had bicycles and Land Cruisers. The volunteers get training from SAF, for a period of up to 28 days.

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### **The SPLA**

The CPA requires the SPLA in South Kordofan to move across the (disputed) 1956 North–South border into South Sudan. UNMIS maintains that only 27 per cent of SPLA fighters have left the state, a claim Abdel Aziz al Hilu vigorously disputes. He says the UNMIS percentage was calculated using the highest of several figures given by the SPLA and was based on a single visit to the main relocation site at Jao—ignoring the fact that ‘the SPLA is one army and one command and anyone can be transferred anywhere’. Al Hilu says two Nuba brigades have joined the SPLA’s 4<sup>th</sup> Division in Bentiu, in oil-rich Unity state, and several thousand others have been transferred to SPLA headquarters in Juba. He claims that the remainder—approximately 10,000 men—are at Lake Abiad.

UNMIS officers in South Kordofan at the time of the main redeployment in 2007 said they believed ‘the main backbone’ of the SPLA had moved to Lake Abiad. (One UNMIS commander said there had not, to his knowledge, been any corresponding SAF withdrawal from his team site.) A confidential report from the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division in Kadugli two years later, in February 2009, estimated the size of the force at Lake Abiad then at 8,000, armed only with AK-47s and G3s. The report said morale was ‘low’; the men were poorly supplied by the SPLA in the South and received ‘irregular donations’ in place of salaries.

By the end of 2010, morale was much improved. Salaries were being paid, albeit sometimes late, and services were improved, with clean water available for most of the men most of the time.

Denied access to Jao recently, UNMIS has been unable to confirm the size of the force there. But reliable sources say it has grown significantly in the countdown to the referendum, with many Southern officers present, including from Military Intelligence, and Southern soldiers.

There has always been movement across the 1956 line as the SPLA soldiers visit their families and respond to perceived threats. A letter from the general director of police to Military Intelligence headquarters in Khartoum, also dated February 2009, claims that SPLA troops were causing ‘security instability’ in South Kordofan with ‘weapons and hand grenades and other weapons’. Their movement has reportedly increased in the countdown to the referendum, in response to SAF troop movements and reinforcements.

### **The SPLA Police**

The SPLA Police in South Kordofan suffer both from a lack of support from the Government of Southern Sudan and from the refusal of the Sudanese government to permit joint training. The force is understaffed, underequipped, undertrained, and, in many places, it even lacks uniforms.

### **Darfur militias (North Kordofan)**

In mid-2010, more than 2,000 Darfurians arrived in el Obeid in North Kordofan (and Damazin in Blue Nile). When challenged, Defence Minister Hussein said the Darfurians, mostly members of the Northern Rizeigat tribes that form the core of the

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government-supported ‘janjaweed’ militias, had been sent ‘for training’ and would return to Darfur ‘in time’. Senior SPLA officers say the Darfurians were moved to Kordofan to counter a perceived threat from the Darfur Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), which they say has recruited Kordofan youths ‘in big numbers’. Government documents repeatedly speak of fears that JEM has attempted ‘to transfer its conflict to South Kordofan’.

In the last few months, JEM has been increasing its activity along the northern half of the border between South Kordofan and Darfur, recruiting energetically among Missiriya youths who feel marginalized by international relief organizations and cheated of their rights in Abyei. In an apparent attempt to emphasize its claimed commitment to the rights of all marginalized peoples, JEM appointed a Missiriya to lead a delegation to the Darfur peace talks in Doha in November 2010.

Missiriya elders say those who are joining JEM are moved by ‘anger’ rather than by any vision or ideology, and that they could be deterred from taking up arms if their perception of marginalization were addressed.

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<sup>i</sup> For example, in the PDF garrisons in Mendi and Meiram.

<sup>ii</sup> The Small Arms Survey is not aware of 75 mm mortars.