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Sudan's Aspirational Army: A History of the Joint Integrated Units

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Cover photo: SPLA soldiers redeploy to form a new JIU battalion with the SAF, under the terms of the agreement of the Abyei Road Map. UN photo by Tim McKulka.

SUMMARY

Southern Sudan's vote for secession in January 2011 effectively terminates the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between northern and Southern Sudan. A principal objective of the CPA, which ended the civil war between the north and south, was to maintain the government's Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) based in the south, as two independent armies. The CPA also set out the provisions to form jointly managed and integrated armed units that would become the foundation of a new national army — the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs).

There were high hopes for the JIUs, but the goal of having a joint force drawn from two armies previously involved in a long and violent civil war was met with challenges, including serious breaches of the CPA's permanent ceasefire. Now, the JIUs must be disbanded under the CPA, given the result of the referendum vote for independence. The CPA, however, does not include clear directions on how this is to be accomplished, but does state that it should be done by October 2011.

The JIUs, largely considered to be dysfunctional, as well as posing a serious risk to north-south stability, do continue to have a role to play in ensuring Sudan's security, given their continuing responsibilities in volatile border areas between the north and south. This paper reviews the history of the JIUs, including the expectations, the complications, the failures and the dismantling of the JIUs, and suggests steps that should be considered by those overseeing the redeployment of the units: improving communication to affected soldiers and units, making assistance packages a priority and maintaining the Joint Defence Board (JDB), which has earned a level of trust and respect and could play a facilitating role in discussions between the two sides.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Assessment and Evaluation Commission
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
GoNU	Government of National Unity
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
JDB	Joint Defence Board
JIU(s)	Joint Integrated Unit(s)
NCP	National Congress Party
OAG	other armed groups
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SNAF	Sudan National Armed Forces
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSDF	Southern Sudan Defence Force (former OAG)
UN	United Nations
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan

INTRODUCTION

Southern Sudan's vote for independence in January 2011, terminates the interim arrangements agreed to by the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in the 2005 CPA, which ended the long-running civil war between the north and south. Now that the outcome of secession has been declared, a series of steps in preparation for the emergence of two separate Sudanese states has been triggered, in compliance with the CPA.

The CPA set out elaborate provisions for security arrangements between the north and south, addressing the myriad security forces present in Sudan at the end of the civil war, including the government of Sudan's SAF and the Southern Sudan-based SPLA. The agreement also dealt with the so-called other armed groups (OAGs), the various militia and paramilitary forces operating throughout Sudan, some numbering only a few dozen men, others considered significant military powers in their own right, and all of which officially operated outside of SAF and SPLA control prior to the 2005 ceasefire.

At the heart of the CPA was an ambitious agreement to permit the continuation of the SAF and SPLA as two independent armies with separate military command structures, while requiring the formation of jointly managed and integrated armed units — the JIUs — as the future foundation of a new national army that would transcend SAF-SPLA divisions. Numbering approximately 40,000, the JIUs were positioned throughout Southern Sudan, as well as in the contested areas of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei, straddling the north-south boundary.

There shall be formed Joint/Integrated Units consisting of equal numbers from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) during the Interim Period. The Joint/Integrated Units shall constitute a nucleus of a post referendum army of Sudan, should the result of the referendum confirm unity, otherwise they would be dissolved and the component parts integrated into their respective forces. (Government of Sudan [GoS], 2005, Art. 4, Security Arrangements)

Since their formation, the JIUs have been largely dysfunctional. Popularly described as being neither joint nor integrated, the units have been under-resourced in funds and logistical capacity. There have been near-constant disputes over the chain and rotation of command, troop seniority and integration of disparate military elements with varying degrees of experience, training and discipline. The three most serious breaches of the CPA's permanent ceasefire resulted directly from the actions of JIU battalions and brigades. Distrust between the north and south has resulted in the JDB, which provides oversight of the JIUs, struggling to manage these forces.

Since the referendum's secession outcome invokes Article 20.2 of the Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements Implementation Modalities and Appendices, the JIUs must be dissolved, but, despite a history of conflict and tension, addressing this issue competes with the many other priorities for negotiation still outstanding between the NCP and SPLM.¹ With "making unity attractive" the overarching goal of the

1 Article 20.2 of the CPA states that "If the result of the referendum is in favour of secession of the South from the North, the JIUs shall dissolve with each component reverting to its mother Armed Forces to pave the way for the formation of the separate Armed Forces for the emerging states."

CPA, little on the future potential prospect of dissolving the JIUs was agreed to in 2005, other than the process should be completed by October 2011.²

Still, as the events in Upper Nile in early February 2011 show, the potential for further violence to arise from the JIUs is a serious risk to the stability of the north-south borderlands, as the CPA's Interim Period draws to a close in July.³ Despite its failings, however, the JIU mechanism has not been abandoned. Following clashes in Abyei during the Southern Sudan referendum in January (no voting happened in Abyei, which is subject to a separate, and so far delayed, referendum process), traditional leaders of the Dinka Ngok and Misseriya, respectively supported by the SPLM and NCP, signed the Kadugli Agreement, calling for the further deployment of JIU forces to the Abyei area. Two additional JIU battalions, drawn from other JIU bases, were deployed to Abyei by early February, joining the existing battalion of 640 men. This reinforced contingent was thus charged with ensuring security in the most volatile part of the north-south border region, while simultaneously required to prepare to dissolve as organized units.

HIGH HOPES FOR A NEW NATIONAL ARMY

Chapter VI of the CPA, Security Arrangements, which describes the character, size and composition of the JIUs, was agreed to in September 2003, almost 16 months before the CPA entered into force in January 2005. In addition to the JIUs' responsibilities to maintain security, the CPA specifically entrusted these units with another highly sensitive responsibility: "the JIUs shall protect the

2 Appendix 2 of the Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements Implementation Modalities and Appendices states the time frame for the "formation of SNAF [Sudan National Armed Forces] in case of unity confirmed or dissolution of JIUs in case of secession" by the point of "post interim [9 July 2011] + 90 days."

3 At least 56 people, including 44 soldiers, were killed in fighting in February 2010. See page 10 for further details.

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He assisted in the establishment of Southern Sudan's first independent newspaper, the *Juba Post*, and was a visiting lecturer in ethics and English at the School of Medicine of the Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman, Sudan. In the last six years, he has helped raise more than US\$10 million in donor grants. As a feature writer, he has undertaken assignments in Kenya, South Africa, Botswana and Ghana.

Aly is an accomplished public speaker and has also served as a media commentator for Al Jazeera, Agence France Press, the Associated Press, Bloomberg, the BBC, the CBC, CNN, Deutsche Welle, *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, IRIN, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Reuters, the South African Broadcasting Corporation and *Tokyo Chunichi*.

oil fields as provided in sub-section 20.14.2 and the oil installations shall be [otherwise] demilitarized. In case of any threat to the oil installations, the JDB shall decide on the appropriate and necessary measures" (GoS, 2005, Art. 20.14.7).

The JIU Act outlined a number of objectives for the JIUs:

"The Units shall endeavour to achieve the following objectives:

- a) to be a symbol of the national unity during the interim period.
- b) to preserve the constitutional and democratic system and respect the supremacy of rule of law, civil rule, human rights and the will of the people.
- c) to undertake the responsibility of the defence of Sudan and its sovereignty against internal and external threats with the [Sudanese] Armed Forces and the [Sudan People's Liberation] Army.
- d) assist in the development of their area of deployment with the view of achieving the support of social peace." (GoNU, 2006, Art. 6)

Delays, however, occurred almost from the start. Due to difficulties in appointing the JDB, the National Assembly was able to approve the legislative act governing the JIUs only in January 2006. As per the CPA, deployment of the JIUs was due to be completed by October 2005. At its peak (November 2008–January 2009), only 84.7 percent of JIU forces were in position (United Nations Mission in Sudan [UNMIS], 2011a). This had fallen to 82.6 percent by April 2009, and had fallen further to 75.2 percent by November 2010, the last month for which figures are available.⁴

The JIU Act established a system of shared, rotating commands, starting at the level of the JDB and continuing down to unit commanders. The objective — to share responsibility and build trust — was admirable: "Chairmanship of the [JDB] shall be divided equally

⁴ Correspondence with UNMIS monitoring sources, Khartoum, January 2011.

in terms of rotation between the [Sudanese] Armed Forces and the [SPLA] through-out the period of work of the Units,” required Article 18.1 of the Act. Article 23 mandated that “[l]eadership of the Units shall be constituted as follows...assumption of the posts of leader and deputy leader of the Units shall be divided equally and by rotation between the [SAF] and the [SPLA].”

For two armies that had fought a brutal and protracted civil war, this integrated command structure was nothing if not ambitious. Former foes were not only being asked to put aside the past, but also to continue working in uniform alongside the old enemy. Efforts were made to bridge the gaps in trust. As the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) — the body charged with monitoring CPA implementation — noted in an October 2007 report, “[a]ll JIU soldiers are paid monthly, now at a rate 65 percent above that of SAF, representing the special nature of the units.” This is particularly remarkable given the chronic delays that soldiers — both SAF and SPLA — serving in Southern Sudan face in receiving their salaries on schedule.

Hopes for the JIUs were high. As late as 2008, three years into the CPA and well after the incidents in Malakal in November 2006 (described in further detail below), a leaked US embassy cable from London noted that the “UK considers the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) vital to full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the future of security in Sudan” (*The Telegraph*, 2011). Other governments, and the United Nations (UN), concurred.

The AEC itself concluded:

[t]he deployment of militarily effective JIUs is key to the completion of the CPA security arrangements. Not only would they form the core of a future national army, they also have important symbolic

value as an expression of co-operation between the SAF and SPLA. They enable the two parties to maintain a shared military presence in strategic areas where a lack of trust would make it difficult for either to withdraw completely. If properly constituted, trained, equipped and deployed as originally envisaged, the JIUs would also be able to provide support to the organization of the elections and referenda and play a positive role in the detailed implementation of DDR [disarmament, demobilization and reintegration] programmes. More widely, they could provide the vehicle through which to continue to build trust between the parties and a shared vision of the future. (AEC, 2008: 37)

But this optimistic possibility was questioned by the AEC itself, which in the same 2008 report noted that “unless action is taken to remedy these shortcomings, conflict within the JIUs could break out and escalate in the south.” A year earlier, the AEC noted the “flow of operating funds has all but stopped [to the JIUs]” and “[s]uspicion remains on the SPLM side of some activities within the SAF elements of the JIUs following a serious incident in Juba that resulted in the arrest of SAF members of the JIU” (AEC, 2007: 56). Achieving the lofty aspirations of the CPA and the JIU Act was becoming less likely.

Table 1: Structure of the JIUs⁵

Division	Area of Responsibility	Maximum Troop Strength (CPA)	Location of Bases
First Infantry Division	Central, Eastern and Western Equatoria	9,000	Juba, Torit, Maridi, Jabor, Kapoeta,* Yei,* Yambio,* Tambura*
Second Infantry Division	Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei	8,000	Malakal, Bentiu, Nasir, Melut, Bor, Bounj, Panyang
Third Infantry Division	Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes, Warrap	7,000	Wau, Aweil, Gogrial, Raja, Rumbek,* Tonj,* Shambre*
Abyei Battalion (attached to Third Division)	Abyei	640**	Abyei
Fourth Infantry Division	Blue Nile	6,000	Dindir, Takamol, Kurmuk, Qeisan, Ulu, Umma-durfa, Menza, Damazine
Fifth Infantry Division	South Kordofan	6,000	Kadugli, Heiban, Dilling, Buram, Talodi, Jebel Eried, Julud, Umm Serdiba
VIP Brigade	Khartoum	3,000	Khartoum Soba, Jebel Aulia

* indicates unit has yet to become fully operational

** prior to Kadugli Agreement of January 2011

COMPLICATIONS

The CPA outlawed all military forces other than the SPLA and SAF, and required that all OAGs disband or formally integrate into the SPLA or SAF. At the end of the war, scores of autonomous or semi-autonomous militias and proxy forces remained throughout Southern Sudan, often with some affiliation to the SAF. With the CPA also requiring all SAF and SPLA forces to withdraw and redeploy to their respective sides of the 1956 north-south boundary, the JIU mechanism was an obvious and convenient means to deal with SAF-aligned OAGs, who were generally unwanted in Northern Sudan, despite their past service for the SAF cause, and now illegal as independent forces in the south. A significant number of SAF JIU members in Southern Sudan were thus drawn from OAGs, notwithstanding the animosity with which these militias were perceived by their SPLA counterparts, other SAF elements and their host communities.

The largest and most prominent rival to the SPLA, the Southern Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), was subject

⁵ As specified in Article 20.13.2.1 of Chapter VI, Security Arrangements of the CPA.

to separate negotiations with the SPLM/SPLA, well after the CPA had been concluded. The resulting Juba Declaration of January 2006 spoke of “[c]omplete and unconditional unity between the SPLA and SSDF,” and pledged that there be “[i]ntegration of SSDF into the SPLA and its command structures and all its component units including the Joint Integrat[ed] Units” (UNMIS, 2006).⁶ But the SSDF — and its rival leaders — were far from a cohesive and unified force, and a “rump SSDF,” led by Maj. Gen. Gabriel Tanginya, aligned with the SAF and was incorporated into Malakal’s SAF JIU (Young, 2006: 28).

The NCP and SPLM agreed in June 2007 “that the SSDF no longer existed and that all former, SAF-aligned members had either been: integrated into SAF in the North, integrated into SAF and employed in JIUs in the South, integrated into other public ministries, or had been disarmed and demobilized” (AEC, 2007: 57).

In light of the renewed outbreaks of conflict in February 2009 and again in February 2011, however, both

⁶ For more on the Juba Declaration and the SSDF, please see John Young (2006), *The South Sudan Defence Forces in the Wake of the Juba Declaration*.

centring on JIUs with large former militia elements, the conclusion of one 2008 analysis seems prescient: “the practice of allowing OAG members to enter directly into JIUs negates the units’ ability to function cohesively and undermines their selling power as a symbol for national unity. Integration between the SAF and SPLA is in itself an extremely challenging task; adding armed elements that fall outside the control of these forces’ command mechanisms adds almost insurmountable problems” (Small Arms Survey, 2008: 4).

Three incidents in Malakal — in 2006, 2009 and 2011 — leave little doubt that the SSDF in Southern Sudan was never satisfactorily integrated nor brought under the control of the JIU general command in Juba nor the JDB in Khartoum.⁷ As redeployment and demobilization of elements of the JIU forces accelerates towards the end of the CPA era, the prospect of these former militias again being central actors in localized violence in already volatile areas of Southern Sudan is real.

IMPLOSION: THE JIUS OF MALAKAL AND ABYEI

MALAKAL 2006

The first major violation of the CPA Permanent Ceasefire occurred in November 2006, as a result of a breakdown in the functioning of Malakal’s JIU. As the UN Secretary-General reported to the UN Security Council (UNSC), “heavy fighting between elements of the [SAF] and the [SPLA] from 27 to 30 November killed at least 150 people, including civilians. The conflict erupted after a long-running dispute over the commissionership of a county in neighbouring Jonglei state triggered a series of skirmishes between the SPLA [JIU] contingent and SAF-aligned other armed groups. Fighting then escalated into

⁷ See also International Crisis Group (2009). *Jonglei’s Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan*.

a full-scale confrontation between SPLA forces and SAF” (UNSC, 2007). Thousands of civilians were displaced by the fighting.

While noting that no formal investigation had taken place, the AEC commented that “the significant presence at that time of other armed groups and an absence of integration of the...JIUs (whose components fought each other) were contributory factors [to the violence]” (AEC, 2007: 53). As one of the principal SAF-aligned commanders, former SSDF commander Major General Tanginya was strongly implicated in directing the violence.

MALAKAL 2009

Tanginya’s return to Malakal in February 2009 sparked another series of violent confrontations, including the use of tanks and other heavy weapons against civilians. As Human Rights Watch described, “[f]ighting erupted the morning of February 24, 2009, when SPLA soldiers surrounded the SAF barracks on the north side of town seeking to arrest Tang...The clash and subsequent violence resulted in more than 30 civilian deaths, as many military deaths, and widespread looting of civilian and government property by soldiers in the SAF JIU who are former militia members. The violence effectively polarized Malakal town into SAF-controlled northern and SPLA-controlled southern sectors” (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

ABYEI

Longstanding north-south tensions in the disputed territory of Abyei boiled over in May 2008. While the proximate cause was confrontation between non-JIU SAF and SPLA soldiers (their own presence in the Abyei area outside of the JIU was not permitted by the CPA), the Abyei JIU quickly became involved. As the UN described it, “the rapid disintegration of the Abyei [JIU]

during the May clashes, during which the constituent elements of the Units effectively rejoined their respective armies, highlighted the still-fragile nature of the [JIU] model” (UNSC, 2008). The AEC was blunter, stating the Abyei JIU “imploded in the May fighting” (AEC, 2008: 29). As a result of the fighting, approximately 50,000 residents of Abyei were displaced, and Abyei town was almost completely destroyed.⁸

The collapse of security in Abyei and the failure of the Abyei battalion resulted from a combination of the unauthorized presence in the area of other SAF and SPLA elements, as well as a failure of JIU integration, mistrust between the component forces and the inability of local commanders to restrain the units they led. In the aftermath of the fighting, emergency discussions between the NCP and SPLM led to the adoption of the Abyei Road Map, which, in part, ordered that “the JDB shall deploy a new JIU battalion...[and] the new JIUs battalion shall be constituted from new elements other than those elements of the former Abyei JIUs battalion” (UNMIS, 2008). The Road Map acknowledged that the JIU itself had worsened, rather than helped, the security situation, and rogue elements of the Abyei battalion had served to intensify the conflict.

However, merely replacing individual soldiers in the Abyei unit was not sufficient to make the unit functional. As the AEC remarked, “the Road Map helpfully acknowledges that lessons need to be learnt from experience with earlier JIUs. The new JIU now deployed in Abyei, and responsible for security throughout the area, needs to be genuinely integrated. It will need to receive generous support in respect of equipment and training if it is to be effective” (AEC, 2008: 31).

⁸ The author visited Abyei several months after the May 2008 fighting, at which time most of the town was still in ruins and tens of thousands remained displaced, primarily in Southern Sudan’s Northern Warrap state.

STAGNATION: A FAILURE TO INTEGRATE

Five years into the CPA, the verdict on the success of the JIUs was dire: “shortcomings in provision for the JIUs remain; they are still unintegrated; and for the most part they have little by way of useful tasking. Renewed effort is needed to address these problems. Action to complete de-escalation in Malakal, including relocation and rotation of the JIU, remains a priority” (AEC, 2010: 13).

But it was too late. JDB decisions to relocate troublesome JIU elements to more suitable locations were never implemented. The plan to redeploy some JIU troops from the Malakal division to the battalion in Nasir was abandoned.⁹ While UNMIS and other international partners supported various training programs and efforts to more adequately equip the forces, “the fundamental problem of integration was never solved.”¹⁰ Moreover, according to UNMIS military personnel evaluating support to the JIUs, the provision of training was “grossly inadequate” and virtually doomed the successful fulfillment of JIU objectives.¹¹

Fundamentally, the same problematic dynamics that were present in 2005 and 2006 had not been resolved. Little had been done to build trust between disparate military forces. Training was insufficient, and many units suffered from low morale. The OAGs, nominally loyal to JIU authorities, still operated as semi-autonomous military structures, with divided loyalties and competing

⁹ In late 2009 and early 2010, UNMIS was asked to support the relocation of JIU units in Malakal to the town of Nasir, approximately 190 km southeast of Malakal. The JIU command first requested that completely new facilities be built in Nasir to house troops and their families. This plan was deemed unaffordable, and by June 2010, a revised plan to move only essential personnel was proposed. The UK government offered UNMIS assistance to finance the move, but due to “logistical constraints,” UNMIS was ultimately unable to effect the move. Correspondence with a diplomat privy to the discussions, Khartoum, February 2011.

¹⁰ Interview with a diplomat privy to the discussions, Juba, February 2011

¹¹ Correspondence with a diplomat privy to the discussions, January 2011.

command structures. In January 2011, one international analyst said, “the most important question is Tanginye’s people, the SAF component of the JIU — How to integrate it?”¹²

The implications of the failings reached well beyond the immediate functioning of the concerned military units. Delays in forming the units and their deficiencies as cohesive and effective military units allowed the SAF to argue for more than two years that non-JIU forces should remain in oil producing areas, “to protect a vital national asset while the JIUs are not ready to take over” (AEC, 2007: 54). While full redeployment of the SAF north of the 1956 boundary was later certified by UNMIS, the obligation to fully demilitarize the oil fields was never met.¹³

On December 6, 2010, the NCP and SPLM agreed that “the [JIUs] will continue to secure the outer circle of the oil installations until 9 July 2011, while the security forces from the National Intelligence and Security Services and the Southern Sudan Police Service will protect the inner circle” (UNSC, 2010), a final admission that forces independently controlled by Khartoum and Juba were the real players in delivering oil field security.

TWO STATES, TWO ARMIES: DISMANTLING THE JIUS

On January 31, 2011, following the Southern Sudan secession referendum held from January 9 to 15, the JDB agreed to begin the redeployment of SAF JIU forces based in Southern Sudan, and SPLA JIU forces based in the north, although final referendum results had, at that point, yet to be certified.¹⁴ Problems in Upper Nile

12 Interview with an international analyst, January 2011.

13 As required by CPA Article 20.14.2, see earlier section entitled “High Hopes for a New National Army.”

14 Interview with a senior JIU officer, Juba, January 2011. Final results from the referendum were released on February 7, with 99.57 percent of voters opting for the secession of Southern Sudan. Southern Sudan will become independent on July 9, 2011.

broke out almost immediately, with clashes reported on February 3. Units in at least three battalions — Malakal, Bounj and Melut — as well as a sub-unit in Kasara saw violence, with at least 15 soldiers killed in Melut, 11 killed in Kasara and three killed in Bounj.¹⁵ In total, at least 56 people were killed, with some estimates even higher (UNMIS, 2011b).

Just days before the violence, an SPLA spokesman told the author that “negotiations with Khartoum are ongoing. I don’t think there will be any problem. It is all in the CPA.” Contrary to this optimistic assessment, it has become clear that the redeployment of JIU forces is very complicated and will present a major political and security challenge.¹⁶ Past and present mixed military or militia allegiances are not the only considerations. The dimension of ethnicity and place of origin is now added, as Southern Sudanese SAF soldiers and Northern Sudanese SPLA forces see great uncertainty as Sudan moves towards a two-state future. The government in Khartoum has demonstrated its reluctance to deal with SAF-aligned former OAG members (*Sudan Tribune*, 2010), and also must manage those SAF JIU units predominantly comprised of soldiers from Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains, viewed with suspicion by the SAF general command in Khartoum.¹⁷

While the JDB announced that it intended to complete JIU redeployment by April 9, well in advance of the CPA timetable, and that parts of the Khartoum and Juba battalions have already begun relocation, redeployment from the five division headquarters, 12 brigade headquarters and 47 separate battalions, many of which

15 UNDSS sources, February 2011.

16 Interview with a SPLA spokesman, Juba, January 2011.

17 One source familiar with the discussions confirmed Khartoum’s position as unwilling to have SAF units entirely comprised of men from Blue Nile or South Kordofan, on account of their questionable loyalty to the Khartoum regime and potential sympathy for opposition elements emerging from their home states (Interview with a diplomat privy to the discussions, Juba, January 2011).

remain logistically weak, will not be a simple routine task. Redeployment is only the first step; reintegration or demobilization must then follow. This will be a greater challenge in Southern Sudan, particularly given the SPLA's concurrent efforts to reduce the overall size of its standing forces and demobilize troops that are no longer required.

RETURN TO ABYEI

Nonetheless, the JIU model has not been completely exhausted. Despite the JIU being responsible for much of the May 2008 violence, this mechanism was called upon again following renewed clashes in Abyei in January 2011, around the time of the Southern Sudan referendum, which left at least 46 dead (Mazen, 2011). While the new battalion deployed after the incidents of May 2008 failed to prevent the escalation of violence in Abyei in January 2011, the hope that a reinforced JIU contingent would succeed was key to the subsequent Kadugli Agreement signed on January 13.

As part of the Kadugli Agreement, the NCP and SPLM agreed to deploy two new additional JIU battalions, formed of troops drawn from the Third (Wau) and Fifth (Kadugli) Infantry Divisions. Deployment took place in mid-January and early February, supported by the UNMIS. This raised JIU troop levels in Abyei by a further 1,280 soldiers.¹⁸

In violation of the earlier 2008 Abyei Road Map, some troops implicated in the May 2008 conflict returned to Abyei as part of the new battalions. This immediately undermined the credibility of the force now offered as the unlikely solution to hold the peace while negotiations over Abyei's final status continued. Still, with the migration of the pastoral Misseriya underway from the north of Abyei, one observer speculated that increasing

the number of JIUs might qualify as the "least worst option," among a dearth of other choices.¹⁹

Early indications have not been good. Further violence in the Abyei area broke out on February 27, leaving at least 10 dead in the vicinity of Todach, 13 km north of Abyei town (Heavens, 2011). The chief administrator of Abyei subsequently condemned the JIU as "useless" (*Al-Sahafa*, 2011a). On February 28, a further 30 people were reported killed (*Sudan Tribune*, 2011). A senior Misseriya leader, Bashtana Mohamed Salim, described the presence of Abyei's JIU as only "symbolic" (*Al-Sahafa*, 2011b). Though it may be unlikely, there remains an opportunity for the JIUs to contribute to a more stable security environment in Abyei, or, at a minimum, to avoid the further aggravation of the situation. However, the commanders and men of Abyei's three battalions will need to show demonstrable competence in order to gain popular confidence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hopes for the JIUs have clearly not been met. The units have been at the centre of some of the most serious conflicts of the CPA period, and are principally responsible for the only violations of the permanent ceasefire. Attention has now turned to dismantling the JIUs, but their continued responsibilities in Abyei, and for the security of the oil fields (even if nominal), means they are still relevant. While the JDB has already begun work to redeploy units, the following steps should be considered by the GoNU, GoSS and their JDB representatives, as well as by international actors advising the two governments:

- *Better communicate redeployment and end-of-service plans to affected soldiers and units.* Given the sensitive environment in which redeployment is taking place,

¹⁸ Interview with a senior JIU officer, Juba, January 2011.

¹⁹ Correspondence with an international official, February 2011.

the way in which movement plans are communicated is crucial. The suddenness with which redeployment orders were given in Upper Nile in early February, and the accompanying uncertainty, was a recipe for disaster, especially given the existing low levels of trust on all sides. Redeployment is inevitable, but with a more informed picture for those involved, it need not be confrontational.

- *Prioritizing JIU units for DDR assistance.* The reluctance of both the SPLA and SAF to fully reintegrate former JIU combatants will not disappear. Therefore, a holistic and realistic DDR assistance package should be offered to JIU soldiers (going beyond farm tools and a token cash grant). With their unique history, JIU forces should be at the front of the line for any DDR assistance.
- *Maintaining the JDB.* Despite its weaknesses and inability to fully control the JIUs under its command, the JDB has proved to be a useful forum for the discussion of issues of mutual interest to the SPLA and SAF, and has been capable of some form of crisis management when incidents have occurred. Such a forum — with a modified mandate — could prove useful beyond the CPA. Both the SPLA and SAF will retain obvious interests in the security of the borderlands, the oil installations and the Abyei area (if ongoing negotiations fail to resolve Abyei's final status before the end of the CPA's Interim Period in July). The JDB has achieved a level of trust and respect among professional military officers, and could continue to play a facilitating role for discussions between both sides.

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