



# Situation Report

Date Issued: 8 April 2004

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Distribution: General

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## **The South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF): A challenge to the Sudan Peace Process**

### Introduction

As this article is being written the oilfields of Sudan, or at least the areas adjacent to them, are burning. This was the ultimate fear of the Government of Sudan (GoS) during the height of the civil war with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). It is ironic that this fear is being realised at a time peace has been proclaimed, and the Sudanese public and the international community have been assured that a final agreement is only days away from being signed. But these assurances will mean little to the primarily Nuer people of the Western Upper Nile (WUN) region of Sudan, which forms the centre of the oil industry. From January to March 2004 the area has been torn by fighting within a GoS militia that has led to the destruction of schools and hospitals, dozens of deaths and injuries, looting, abductions, and the dislocation of thousands of civilians. In late 2002 a similar division in another government-supported militia in the Shilluk area of central Upper Nile produced comparable levels of destruction that has continued to the time of writing (late March 2004).

Informal military forces or militias have figured prominently in many civil wars — notably those in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, the Balkans — and just as commonly, they have proved to be a challenge to peace processes. This is also proving to be the case with respect to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sponsored Sudan peace negotiations currently taking place. Militias have been used extensively by successive Sudanese governments since the SPLM/A insurrection began in 1983. In the aftermath of the Khartoum Agreement of 1997, this relationship has been formalised and the militias grouped under the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF).<sup>1</sup>

While it is easy to dismiss the SSDF politically because of its dependence on the GoS army for logistical support, its internal divisions, and its weak links with its political wing (the United Democratic Salvation Front — UDSF, which is itself divided), the SSDF demands attention from those committed to the IGAD peace process and to a secure and stable southern Sudan. There are four basic reasons for this. First, while it is not easy to estimate accurately the size of the SSDF — its own claims to be “more formidable but less well

equipped than the SPLA”<sup>2</sup> are certainly untrue — there is no doubt that its membership, although always in flux, numbers several thousands. Given the right conditions, it can also mobilise thousands more from village militias and the local citizenry, particularly among the Nuer. Second, while the extent of the territory the SSDF controls is subject to debate, what can be said with confidence is that claims made by the SPLM/A and its supporters to hold sway over 80% of southern Sudan and to surround all of the GoS towns in the region are clearly false. The SSDF controls much of Upper Nile, parts of northern and western Bahr El Ghazal and of Bahr El Jebel, and much of eastern Equatoria. And it is not the SPLA, but the SSDF that surrounds and thus provides security for most GoS-held towns in the south, for example, Bentiu-Rubkona, Wau, Juba, Torit, Nasir, Adar and Malakal. Third, forces of the SSDF provide a crucial component of the security for the oil fields of Western and Eastern Upper Nile. Lastly, while the SSDF cannot be identified as a tribally-based organisation, its members include a substantial number of Nuer, who constitute the second biggest tribe in southern Sudan, and many from the Murle, Shilluk, Fertit and Equatorian tribes. Given the SSDF’s size, strategic location, and propensity to fight and resist, whatever the odds, a viable and sustainable peace process that does not have its support (and that of a large majority of the Nuer in particular) is hard to imagine.

Nonetheless, and despite the legitimacy conferred on this militia grouping by the Khartoum Agreement, the SSDF’s extensive size, deployment throughout much of south Sudan, and strategic function in providing security for the oil fields of WUN, it was not mentioned in the ‘Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements During the Interim Period Between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Sudan People’s Liberation Army’ signed at Lake Naivasha on 25 September 2003. This omission (by ignoring the problem posed by the SSDF) and the failure of the SSDF and the SPLM/A to overcome their differences through a reconciliation conference both constitute major short- and long-term threats to the success of the IGAD Sudan Peace Initiative. Despite the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement between the GoS and the SPLM/A (which includes the allies of both parties), at the time of writing elements of the SSDF are fighting the SPLM/A, and are at the same time quarrelling among themselves over whether or not to join the latter. And in the long term the divisions between the SSDF and the SPLM/A, which to some extent overlap with tribal and political differences, threaten the security of the south, and hence the viability and legitimacy of the peace process.

That few people beyond narrow security circles have much knowledge of the organization, leadership, ideology, operation, and relationship of the SSDF to the GoS military exacerbates the problem. This article therefore attempts to analyse the emergence of the SSDF, classify its various components, identify its leaders and understand their concerns. Against this background it will also consider the implications that recent developments in the security sphere in southern Sudan hold for the prospects of peace.

In a study of this nature, four qualifications must be noted. First, the following analysis is based almost exclusively on interviews, since there are virtually no secondary sources on this subject. Second, while the political climate has eased considerably in Sudan in recent years, most of the interviewees must necessarily remain anonymous. Third, the focus of what follows is on the military forces not belonging to the SPLM/A that have

## Emergence of the militias

emerged and operate in the south, and have their origins in the context of Sudan's second civil war, lasting from 1983 to the present. It does not consider the various GoS-supported armed groups operating from the north and west of the country or a smaller group of militias that operates outside the auspices of the SSDF. Lastly, it must be stressed that the political and military spheres of Sudan are very much in flux, and nowhere is this more the case than in southern Sudan. This means that a functional understanding of the security situation in the south cannot rely upon following the often bizarre and seemingly contradictory stream of events. Instead it requires a focus on the character of the struggles, the fluidity of alliances (almost always tactical and rarely strategic), and the mix of individual, local, tribal, regional, national, and political interests.

Sudan's first civil war ended when the rebel movement, Anyanya, signed the Addis Ababa Agreement with the Government in 1972. But already in 1978, before this agreement had ended in acrimony and the revolt of the SPLM/A in 1983, dissidents belonging to Anyanya II took up arms in eastern Upper Nile. Despite this, the start of the second civil war is usually dated from 1983, when southern soldiers at the garrison town of Bor refused orders to transfer to the north of the country. Instead, they first decamped to the bush and then fled eastwards, where they gained the support of the Ethiopian military regime, the *Derg*, which saw support of Sudanese dissidents as a riposte to Khartoum's backing of Ethiopia's internal enemies. Competition between Anyanya II and what became the SPLM/A led to the defeat of the former movement, and the incorporation of some of its members into the ranks of the SPLM/A. The remnants of Anyanya II consolidated into a militia supported by the government of General Jafaar Nimeiri. Paulino Matiep, a Bul Nuer, who was a commander in Anyanya II, later became its leader, and took up operations in Mayoum in WUN, where he is currently based.

That the predominantly Nilotic, and in particular Dinka, component of the SPLM/A were sometimes ill-disciplined, and used military campaigns as a means to seize cattle and other possessions, caused resentment in some of the areas they occupied. Particularly in Equatoria, concerns were expressed about the corruption of individual commanders and the SPLM/A policy of eliminating local leaders, using harsh methods of recruitment and other hostile behaviour. There may also have been lingering resentment felt by Dinka and the SPLM/A because many Equatorians had supported President Nimeiri's decision to divide the south, an abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement that had precipitated Sudan's second civil war. As a result, local communities began developing militias to defend their home areas. These militias took form among the Bari, Mundari, Didinga, Taposa and other peoples of Eastern Equatoria; the Murle from south-eastern Upper Nile; the Fertit of western Bahr El Ghazal; and some of the Dinka from Bahr El Ghazal. Significantly, many of their members were former SPLA fighters. And, with little alternative way of arming themselves these groups, which were sometimes known as the Friendly Forces, accepted weapons from the GoS, which was only too happy to gain allies to fight the SPLM/A.

Unlike other, largely Moslem and Arab, militias that operated in the north, the relationship of these militias with the government was strictly tactical and defensive. In most respects their members shared the same sensibilities and goals as other southerners, including those that took up arms in the SPLM/A: that is, hatred of the *jalaba* (northerners) and rejection of Arabism and political Islam. Where they differed from the SPLM/A was

over their forceful espousal of independence for the south and rejection of New Sudan and the programme for a united Sudan espoused by the SPLA's John Garang. But ultimately these groups never developed to the stage of being liberation armies or forming viable political parties. They were, and largely remain, local level organisations whose chief objective is defence of their immediate communities.

The biggest grouping of military forces originated in a split in the SPLM/A, which split in two in 1991. These were the SPLM/A-Mainstream (sometimes called the Torit faction) of Dr John Garang, and the SPLM/A-United (also referred to as the Nasir faction) of Dr Riek Machar, a Nuer, and Dr Lam Akol, a Shilluk. Elements of a personal struggle for power figured prominently in the dispute, but what separated the two camps politically were two critical issues. The first was the SPLM/A-Mainstream's appeal for a new but united Sudan, as against the SPLM/A-United's unambiguous demand for southern self-determination. The second was the latter's demand for far-reaching democratic reforms within the SPLM/A. While these issues were being fought out on the political level, a wide-ranging and brutal war was unleashed between the Nuer and the Dinka, which led to the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians in the early 1990s. This provided a foretaste of the implications of a divided south. Ultimately the better-supplied SPLM/A-Mainstream won the war, and Riek and Lam were forced to turn to the government for support. A co-operative agreement between the SPLM/A and the GoS was signed in 1992.

In the same year, however, Riek and Lam parted ways. The latter retained the name SPLM/A-United for his faction, while Riek formed the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM). But the splits continued, and the Equatorians, who had initially affiliated themselves with the SSIM, departed to form their own organisation, the Equatoria Defence Force (EDF). Having effectively joined the government camp, the SSIM, SPLM/A-United, and the EDF signed a Political Charter in 1996, and moved their leadership to Khartoum. In the following year the SSIM, together with the EDF and three other smaller breakaway groups — SPLM Bahr El Ghazal Group (SPLM/A/M BGG), South Sudan Independence Group (SSIG) and the Bor Group — became signatories of the Khartoum Peace Agreement. A fourth group, Lam's SPLM/A-United, subsequently signed the Fashoda Agreement, which in essence fact constituted an addendum to the Khartoum arrangement.

The Khartoum Agreement is a far-reaching document, but essentially it commits the government to conduct a vote on self-determination for the south after an interim period of unspecified length. This Agreement also brought together as the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) the various military components that had been spawned by SSIM. Its political wing became the United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF). On the basis of that Agreement, Riek entered the government. For the southerners, and particularly the Nuer who constituted the biggest component of the SSDF, these were important steps towards the realisation of south Sudan's self-determination. Even more important symbolically was the government's decision to affirm its commitment to self-determination for the south by writing it into the country's 1998 constitution (specifically, Articles 137 and 138). For Khartoum, however, the major significance of these developments was that they not only seriously weakened the SPLM/A, but that the security provided by these other southern forces permitted the development of the oil industry in Unity State.

SSDF:  
Diversity but  
little unity

From the beginning, however, the government threw up obstacles to hinder the path towards the full realisation of the Khartoum Agreement. Although Riek established a regional government based in Juba (the Co-ordinating Council of Southern Sudan), ministers were imposed upon him by Khartoum and the Council was starved of resources. In addition, while the Khartoum Agreement made provisions for security arrangements in the transitional period, these were never implemented. Crucially, Riek's candidate for governor of the oil-rich Unity State, Taban Deng, was challenged by the military. Paulino Matiep, the dominant military leader in the region, broke with Riek in 1998, but continued to enjoy the backing of the GoS. Paulino supported the candidacy of Paul Leyei, who had served with him in Anyanya II. As a result, Taban was never able to assume the position of governor, and had to flee the state capital of Bentiu in fear for his life after four of his cabinet ministers were killed. Paulino was clearly the victor in this battle, but the political outcome was another fracture in the SSIM and the establishment of the South Sudan United Movement (SSUM), whose members included the mercurial Commander Peter Gadet. Moreover, such factional fighting and the failure of the GoS to overcome the SPLM/A insurrection provided the government with a reason to postpone the holding of a referendum on southern self-determination (assuming that it had ever had such an intention).

Splits in the SSDF continued, largely over power and rarely about ideology. After a gun battle in Khartoum in June 1998 which resulted in two deaths, a Nasir group under the veteran Gordon Kong took shape. Other powerful Nuer area commanders — Simon Gatwich (Waat), Gabriel Tang (north-east Upper Nile), Both Teny and Timothy Taban Juch (the Akobo area), and Thomas Mabior (northern Jongelei) — followed suit, and managed to acquire a measure of autonomy in their respective areas. In turn they were joined by Dinka commanders like Tom Mum in the Fashoda area, and Sabry Ashouly in Akoka. When Tito Bihl, who had been deputy to Taban Deng, refused to accept the leadership of Paulino, the two leaders divided Unity State between them and Tito retaining the name SSIM for his party. All of these men continued to claim allegiance to the Khartoum Agreement, but increasingly operated independently and developed separate lines of logistical support with the national army, and in particular with Military Intelligence. Meanwhile, Taban Deng returned to Khartoum, where he accepted the position of deputy minister of roads and bridges in the national government. His leader, Riek Machar, abandoned the Khartoum Agreement, took up residence in Nairobi, and tried to re-build the shattered SSIM under the name of the Sudan Peoples Democratic Forces (SPDF). When Taban eventually received permission to leave Sudan, he also went to Nairobi, where he immediately set about trying to unite the SPDF with the SPLM/A.

From Nairobi and through field visits Riek attempted to bring his former commanders to re-form under his leadership, but because he could not assure military supplies most retained their ties with the GoS. Those remaining in the north had varied motives for not following Riek to Nairobi and eventually back to the SPLM/A. In the first place many concluded that their alliance with the government would ensure its continuing commitment to the Khartoum Agreement and the self-determination for south Sudan. Second, the Nuer resented the perceived domination of the SPLM/A by the Dinka, and feared that any return to the movement would see them (Nuer) marginalised further. And third, although the government's supplies of food, munitions and weapons served to keep the former

SPLM/A fighters in line, it was always understood that these weakly-led groups, whose loyalty to northern governments was tactical and therefore transient, might rebel or return to the SPLM/A.

Both the SSDF and its supposed political wing, the UDSF, were, and remain, weak and fragmented, because the government would not permit a strong southern separatist movement to develop within its bosom. In any case, most of these groups were fiercely independent and unwilling to share power among themselves or to delegate it to the politicians of the UDSF. Meanwhile, the latter quickly divided into a dominant section led by Joseph Malwal, a minister in the national government, and one headed by Peter Sule, who held that the government had in effect rejected the Khartoum Agreement and that the party should take up a position in the opposition. Moves are now under way for the UDSF to hold a national convention to resolve the leadership issue, but to date these have not been finalised. However, the biggest weakness of the UDSF is that, as its leaders readily acknowledge, it does not have any control over the military forces it is intended to oversee. While SSDF leaders who are members of the UDSF (some are not) are quick to call for a strong and united party, it is not clear that they would willingly give up any of their power to achieve such an objective. Neither is it obvious that the government's security forces would approve of such a development. The Peter Sule wing appears to have come to the same conclusion: it formally broke with the UDSF in late 2003, and re-established itself as the United Democratic Front (UDF).

But attempts at unity were not completely forestalled by these obstacles. Under the leadership of Gatluak Deng, the Chairman of the Southern Co-ordinating Council, the various militias outside the Khartoum Agreement were brought into the SSDF at a conference in Juba in April 2001. The result was to increase significantly the size and stature of the SSDF. This was a considerable achievement, since Riek Machar failed in the same task in 1998, when he was chairman of the Council, owing to government opposition. Paulino Matiep, a close confidant of Gatluak, was elected Chief of Staff of the SSDF at the conference, and continues to hold that position. Although not an educated man, Paulino is respected and feared among the Nuer and the other elements of the SSDF, and there was no opposition to his selection. Agreement was also reached on a system of rank and hierarchy, something very important to the military people who make up the organisation. Paulino is a major-general in the Sudanese army, and one of only four members of the SSDF who held a senior rank prior to the widespread promotions of January 2004 (to be discussed in greater detail below). However, despite these achievements, the same problems of separate organisations directed individually by the government's Military Intelligence continued. Paulino serves largely as a figurehead beyond the area of his immediate military control in WUN.

The Southern Co-ordinating Council serves as a focal point for the Khartoum-based southern politicians and its current chairman, Dr Riek Gai, has attempted to continue the pattern of Riek Machar, who was both the political leader of the Council and the military leader of the SSDF. Curiously, however, Riek Gai is a member of the ruling National Congress Party. UDSF members serve as ministers in the Co-ordinating Council, and a number of people associated with the SSDF have been appointed as *wallis* (governors) and commissioners for the ten southern states. These appointments by Riek Gai make clear the government's attempt to exert greater control over the military forces, and perhaps strengthen them for the political battles with

the SPLM/A. While Riek Gai and his followers see him as a leader of the south, the SPLM/A has claimed that all such officials are instruments of the government, and that therefore it wants to deal with them only as members of the GoS. It is significant that while the SPLM/A is held to be a Dinka-dominated organisation, the Southern Coordinating Council has always been headed by a Nuer with an Equatorian deputy. The latter position was previously held by Dr Ochieng of the Equatoria Defence Forces. The present incumbent is Major-General Kelement Wani, leader of the Mundari section of the SSDF, and like Riek Gai a member of the ruling National Congress Party).

### *Introduction*

Paulino Matiep is the chief of staff of the SSDF, and holds great power over almost every facet of the lives of the inhabitants of the Bentiu–Mayoum–Mankin areas of WUN. He also exerts at least some influence over the Nuer in the traditional spheres of Upper Nile. However, his title is largely symbolic: Paulino's direct control is limited to his home area of the Bul Nuer, and even that has sometimes been challenged by ambitious local commanders.

Assisting Paulino in the SSDF are a number of deputies and a Military High Command made up of 11 people. The deputies include Commander (recently appointed major-general) Gordon Kong, who serves as the deputy chief of staff for operations; Major-General Ismael Konyi, who is responsible for logistics; Commander Emanuel Ambrose, who oversees administration; Commander Elio Benson Otome, who controls intelligence; Commander John Machmadit, who covers mobilization and political orientation; Commander Atel Benjamin Bill, who serves as head of Recruitment and Training; and Commander Simon Gatwich Dual, who is responsible for the national mobile force. Overlapping these positions is the SSDF's Military High Command, which is again led by Paulino. Its members include Gordon Kong, Ismael Konyi, El Tom Anour, Simon Gatwich Dual, Martin Terensio Kenyi, John Machmadit, Atel Benjamin, Emanuel Ambrose, Gabriel Tangi-Nyang and Elio Benson.

This 'central command' is in turn divided according to the three zones that make up southern Sudan — Equatoria, Upper Nile, and Bahr El Ghazal. El Tom Anour serves as the commander of the Bahr El Ghazal Military Area, with Mou Mou Deng acting as his deputy. Martin Terensio has been the overall commander of SSDF forces in Equatoria until recently, with Emanuel Ambrose as his deputy, and Gabriel Tang is the general commander of Upper Nile, with Thon Amum Kerjok filling the position of deputy. Below the regions, the SSDF is divided into zones (of which there are ten), sectors, sub-sectors, and so on. It must be stressed, however, that these structures express intent rather than any reflection of the actual situation. In practice real power is shared by the local commanders, who are under the direction of the Military Intelligence of the GoS.

### *The South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM)*

It is now time to identify the various components of the SSDF, beginning with those groups that came into alliance with the Government of Sudan under the auspices of the Khartoum Agreement. Probably the largest is the South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM), under the personal authority of Paulino Matiep. James Gatduel is formally Paulino's first deputy within his own SSUM structure, but his current allegiance is in some doubt, and this

role has been largely assumed by Tayib Gatluak. Again, Peter Gadet was Paulino's most active commander until his defection in May 2003. Gadet began his military career in Khartoum as a paratrooper in the national army, went on to fight on the side of Iraq in its war with Iran, returned to Sudan and joined the SPLM/A. Later he went to Khartoum with Riek Machar when the latter signed the Khartoum Peace Agreement. He then left Riek and joined SSUM, but not for long, as he soon revolted against Paulino and re-joined the SPLM/A. There his exceptional skills as a local level military commander and his success in gaining the support of many Nuer in his home area in Unity State seriously threatened the operation of the oilfields. However, demonstrating again the individualism of such commanders, Gadet, rejecting the decision of John Garang to transfer him from WUN, defected back to the GoS and Paulino in November 2002. But in May 2003 Gadet and a number of other senior commanders of Paulino left his camp to form their own Military Intelligence-assisted factions or to join the SSIM. At the time of writing, Gadet's forces have been much reduced in numbers, and are largely restricted to the Wangkai area of WUN.

#### *The South Sudan Independent Movement (SSIM)*

Beyond SSUM, but still within the fractious Unity State, is the South Sudan Independent Movement (SSIM, retaining the name given to his organization by Riek Machar) of Tito Biel and James Leah. Paulino's role as commander-in-chief of the SSDF includes the SSIM, but Tito and James have long been openly disdainful of him. In late June 2003, SSIM and SSUM forces fought in and around Bentiu, to be contained by the army only after a number of deaths among them and the wounding of a dozen civilians. In late 2003 both Tito and James defected to the SPLM/A, and currently Peter Dor Monyjour appears to be in control of what remains of the SSIM. Forces under Gadet and other former commanders of Paulino have also carved out parcels of territory in WUN. Mayiek Machar, a Dinka, has gained the support of a small group of followers in the Panriarng area, and crucially the logistical assistance of Military Intelligence.

#### *The Nuer Forces of Gordon Kong*

To the east in the Nasir area are the Nuer forces of Gordon Kong, again nominally under Paulino. However, Gordon is a man with a long political pedigree dating back to Anyanya II and clearly a person with a considerable following in his home area. And further to the east are a host of commanders, foremost among them Chayout from the Longochuk area, who acknowledge Paulino and Gordon but (with the co-operation of Military Intelligence) have a substantial amount of autonomy. An Ngok Dinka component of the SSDF, formed with the support of the GoS in mid-2003 after a group of SPLA fighters had defected, is located to the west in Abyei.

#### *The Equatoria Defence Force (EDF)*

Though not the largest, probably the most politically effective group within the SSDF is that of the Equatoria Defence Force (EDF), which operates in the area around Juba and Torit. This group is made up predominantly of fighters from Latuku and Lokoya, but includes Acholi, Mahdi, Loluba, Bari and Zande. It dates back to the mid-1980s, when a largely defensive organisation began to take shape to provide protection against the civil disobedience practised by SPLM/A forces operating in the area. Like all of the other components of the SSDF, a majority of its members are former



SPLM/A fighters. Before it was fully established, this group developed relations with the GoS, and by the early 1990s it was receiving some military supplies. It joined Riek Machar in 1991 after he broke from the SPLM/A because of his commitment to self-determination for south Sudan. Another reason was probably that his forces were predominantly Nuer, and the Equatorians had difficult relations with the Dinka. (However, from the perspective of the leaders of the EDF, the Nuer also mistreated the local people.) The EDF was officially founded in October 1995, with the proclaimed aims of defending the local inhabitants and demonstrating commitment to self-determination. The EDF also represents an attempt to establish an extra-tribal regionally-based organization that pursues a number of political objectives in both defensive and proactive ways. From the 1980s the leading lights of the organization have been Dr Theophilis Ochieng, a medical doctor and politician, and Martin Terensio Kenyi, an American-educated military leader from the Mahdi tribe. In 1997 the EDF signed on to the Khartoum Agreement and began a period of collaboration with the government.

However, on March 5, 2004, Dr Ochieng, in his capacity as Chairman of the EDF, signed the Nairobi Declaration of Unity with Salva Kiir, Deputy Chairman of the SPLM/A, making an alliance between the two military and political organizations.<sup>3</sup> The EDF had been one of the most effective components of the SSDF and a fierce critic of the SPLM/A and the leadership of Dr John Garang. That it should take this course indicates the failure of reconciliation efforts, a rejection by its military leadership of being absorbed into the GoS army, and also local concerns, chief of which is protecting its people in Equatoria from the continuing depredations of the Lord's Resistance Army (a Ugandan rebel group). It is noteworthy that the agreement gives high priority to south-south reconciliation and to local level administrations, both matters that the EDF leadership has long advocated.

#### *The Bor Group*

Another signatory to the Khartoum Agreement is the Bor Group, which was formed by the late Aron Thon Arok in the mid-1990s. It is led by Kelia Riak, and the military forces are commanded by Major Deng Kelei, who was also recently appointed commissioner of Bor town. Like many other SSDF groups, most of the members of the Bor Group were originally in the SPLM/A and left it for various reasons. Often people from southern Bor claimed that they were being persecuted by forces from north Bor, which is the home area of John Garang. Although this disaffection dates from the 1980s, the attacks by the Nuer that the Bor experienced in 1991, by the Nuer following the Riek Machar-Garang rupture, made joining the SSIM impossible. Therefore the Bor Group kept its semi-independent status. Its activities are restricted to the town and to matters of self-defence, and its representative attributes to these efforts the lack of organised violence (whether stemming from the government or the SPLM/A) in their area of operation. Local administration and services in the town are provided by the government.

#### *The South Sudan Independence Group (SSIG)*

Kawach Makuei, who signed the Khartoum Agreement on behalf of the South Sudan Independence Group (SSIG), was initially in Anyanya II, and then became a senior member of the SPLM/A before falling foul of Garang,

after which he was held in an SPLM/A prison between 1984–1993. When released he formed the SSIG, which is based in Aweil, although most of its members are now in other organisations, particularly that of Abdel Bagi, a powerful sultan (traditional leader), who operates in the same area. Another component of the SSDF is the forces formed under Kerubino, now deceased, whose representatives subsequently signed the Khartoum Agreement. This group is largely made up of former SPLM/A fighters, and is currently operating in southern Bahr El Ghazal under John Machamdit.

#### *The Mobile Forces Group*

Also part of the SSDF, and one of its most ambitious projects, is the Mobile Forces group, which was formed as a result of the Juba Conference of April 2001. The Mobile Forces drew elements from all of the SSDF components. Numbering as many as 3,000, these Forces were based around Juba under the leadership of Benson Kuany, who had been a leading member of both Anyanya I and II. However, the Mobile Forces under Benson have not always accepted Paulino as commander-in-chief. In late 2002 Paulino attempted to appoint James Gatduel as senior commander of the Forces. This resulted in a clash in which a number of people were killed in Juba. The government responded by removing all the SSDF groups from the city, while the Mobile Forces, much reduced in numbers but still under Benson, were re-assigned to the Malakal area. The SSDF leadership claims that the group will operate independently until a convention of the SSDF is held and another leader for the Forces is selected. Recently Benson has taken up a more conciliatory position, however, so he may not be replaced.

#### *The SPLM/A-United*

The SPLM/A-United, led by Lam Akol, signed an arrangement parallel to that entered into by Riek Machar with the GoS. Known as the Fashoda Agreement, it brought him into the government in 1997. The SPLM/A-United is not formally a member of the SSDF, but it has worked increasingly closely with it, has similar objectives, and comparable relations with the GoS military. Because Lam never accepted Riek's leadership, he did not follow him when he established the UDSF, and instead became a member of the ruling National Congress Party. Lam accepted the position of transport minister and remained in that role until late 2002, when he was dismissed. Having been expelled from the government, Lam became a leading figure in the newly-established Justice Party, which claims a country-wide membership and espouses democracy and self-determination for the south. However, in late 2003 Lam defected to the SPLM/A. Since then both the SPLM/A-United and the Shilluk forces, which are based in the Malakal area towns of Fashoda and Tonga and led by Awad Jago, have been mired in conflict. (This will be discussed in greater detail below.)

#### *The South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM)*

A much smaller group is the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), a largely Nuer organisation (although its membership also includes Anuak and Murle), which was established in the late 1990s as a separate entity, owing to frustration with Riek's SSIM and Garang's SPLM/A. The founders of the SSLM aspired to follow the legacy of Anyanya I, echoing its commitment to democracy and self-determination. Its leading lights included the leader, Michael Wal Duany, an American citizen and professor of political science at Indiana University; Timothy Taban, the senior military commander; and

Gabriel Yoal Doc. A former judge, John Luc, played a critical role in the establishment of the SSLM before returning with Riek Machar to the SPLM/A. Idealistic, but lacking outside support, the SSLM was able to capture Akobo only with the help of local forces. As a result it had to form an alliance with Tuat Wath Pal, a former Ethiopian *Derg* official and a Nuer, who attempted to lead a revolt against the ruling party in Addis Ababa. Tuat gained military assistance from Eritrea by allowing the movement of fighters from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) through Akobo into Ethiopia's western province of Wallega. Because of its vulnerable position, the SSLM had little option but to sign an agreement with the Sudan government in July 2002. On 20 October, three days after the IGAD-sponsored Machakos peace talks had agreed to a ceasefire, the SPLM/A captured Akobo, to the fury of Khartoum. The GoS complained to the IGAD mediators. When nothing was done, the SSLM, in alliance with the SSDF, retook the town in early February 2003. This in turn led the SPLM/A to complain to the IGAD mediators, also without success. But shortly thereafter, and despite the attempt by the SSLM leadership to bring in Tuat's Ethiopian fighters from their base in Eritrea to defend Akobo, it again fell to the SPLM/A. The SSLM, like the SPLM/A United, is formally outside the SSDF, but retains ties with it, shares many of its political sentiments and has a similar relationship with the GoS. The smaller organisation may one day be assimilated into the larger.

#### *The Mundari Forces*

Beyond those groups which signed formal agreements with the GoS is another cluster of what are more clearly militias who are now part of SSDF as a result of the Juba conference organised by Gatluak Deng. The biggest group is the Mundari Forces, led by Kelement Wani, who was one of the few surviving officers of Anyanya I (and hence is technically senior to Paulino). Kelement, who served as a major-general in the Sudanese army, has a reputation for being a shrewd military strategist, which makes him a person worthy of considerable respect. He is also a member of the ruling National Congress Party, an advisor to the SSDF, and deputy chairman of the Southern Co-ordinating Council (which once again illustrates the fluid character of these organisations and their leaders). Made up largely of former SPLM/A members, the Mundari Forces came into being in the mid-1980s as a self-defence organisation. This group is now a major component of the SSDF and critical to the defence of Juba. Kelement's headquarters is in Terakaka, north of Juba. Operating both north and south of Juba are the Bari Forces of Bahr Jebel, led by Dr Paulino Lonyumbek, a psychiatric medical assistant.

#### *The Didinga and Boyya militias*

Also formed in Equatoria as a means of defence against the SPLM/A are the Didinga and Boyya (Taposo) militias. But as a result of the efforts of the Sudan Council of Churches in mid-2002 to reconcile the Didinga with the SPLM/A, their organization has largely disintegrated because many of its members appear to have returned to the SPLM/A. Meanwhile, the militia of the largely pastoralist Taposa seem to have used the weaponry supplied by the government as much for cattle raiding and banditry as for fighting the SPLM/A. At least formally, these militias are members of the SSDF. The Mahdi tribe also formed a similar type of militia and fought the SPLM/A repeatedly in the 1980s, before being absorbed by the SSDF. Equatoria-based militias have their own local leaders, but they are (or were) officially

under the overall direction of Martin Kenyi of the EDF. But again personal ambition, the government's policy of dividing the components of the SSDF and daunting logistical problems make it difficult for Martin to control the forces that do not belong to the EDF.

### *The Murle*

The Murle have also formed a militia that was subsequently absorbed by the SSDF. They are a largely pastoralist people, with a reputation for being committed to their cattle. They are also ferocious fighters, with a long history of contentious relations with their neighbours, particularly the Bor Dinka. These long-standing conflicts were exacerbated when, after the outbreak of Sudan's second civil war, SPLM/A Dinka arrived in Murle territory well armed and supplied. Like the Equatorians, the Murle established a militia with the objective of self-defence, and subsequently gained the support of the government. The Murle force is under the immediate control of Ismael Konyi, a major-general and sultan. In addition, Ismael was recently appointed *walli* of Jongelei State in which most of the Murle reside, although in numbers they rank third after the Dinka and Nuer. Ismael gained his position in part because he had provided fighters that supported the largely government and EDF forces that re-took the crucial Equatorian town of Torit from the SPLM/A in 2002. He is also credited with holding his regional base in Pibor, despite its isolation and distance from any forces of the Sudan army that could provide assistance. As the third largest tribe after the Nuer and Dinka in Jonglei, and having difficult relations with these tribes, the Murle have long depended on ties with successive governments in Khartoum.

### *The Dinka Forces*

Also active in the SSDF are the Dinka forces of the elderly Sultan Abdel Bagi and his son Hussein, which operate in Bahr El Ghazel north of Aweil. Since 1964, when Abdel Bagi's forces were first attacked by Anyanya, he has more often than not allied himself with the government of the day against southern rebels. After 1983 Abdel Bagi's forces fought the SPLM/A, and in addition had to defend themselves against the Baggara Murahaleen, which had been established under the auspices of the government of Sadiq Al-Mahdi. Recently Abdel Bagi reached agreement with the National Islamic Front government, which now supplies his forces with some armaments and has promised to contain the Murahaleen. He in turn protects his villages against the SPLM/A, and from his headquarters in Marian provides soldiers to patrol a stretch of the railway line running north of Aweil to the Bahr Al-Arab. However, as a result of SPLM/A attacks on a number of bridges, the railway is not functioning at present. The sultan's forces also played a critical role in the 2002 government re-capture of Gogri, a town important in the defence of the oil fields, by intercepting SPLM/A forces that were being sent to reinforce the besieged town. Abdel Bagi opposes both an independent south and domination of the region by the SPLM/A. He is affiliated with the National Congress Party, but his son, Hussein, is a member of Hassan Al-Turabi's Popular National Congress.

### *The Peace Forces of El Tom Anour*

Another group operating in western Sudan, and with a basis of support among the 24 tribes that make up the Fertit is the Peace Forces of El Tom Anour, a major-general in the Sudanese army. The Fertit tribes are largely

peasant farmers, in contrast to their pastoralist Dinka neighbours. They are partly Islamicised and many, most notably Anour, see the Dinka as a threat. Indeed, many of the Fertit currently in Wau fled to the town after SPLM/A attacks. Wau is now divided between them and the Dinka. Anour's agreement with the government dates back to 1987: in exchange for military assistance and recognition of Fertit militia ranks parallel to those of the army, his forces participate in joint operations and supply the army with intelligence. However, the Fertit militia does not operate outside its local area. It provides security for the trade route from Wau to Raga, and in a number of villages around Wau. In 2001 the largely Fertit town of Raga was captured by the SPLM/A, but the forces of Anour and the government eventually took it back. Although the Peace Forces are now a component of the SSDF, unlike the core groups that developed relations with the government based on the Khartoum Agreement and are committed to an independent southern Sudan, Anour's militias subscribe to the government position, which seeks southern self-determination within a united Sudan. The Fertit, however, are spatially divided between western Equatoria, western Bahr El Ghazal, and a small group in the far west of Darfur near the Chadian border, an area of increasing strategic significance as Sudan's other civil war intensifies. They are also divided politically, with Anour representing one wing and James Wanagi, a leading member of the SPLM/A from Equatoria, representing another. With peace it can be expected that many civilian politicians would come to the fore. For the present Anour provides security over a limited area, but the territory of the Fertit is awash with weapons, both as a result of Sudan's civil war and of conflicts in neighbouring Chad. Hence much of this area is outside the control of Anour, the army, and the SPLM/A.

As the above overview makes clear the SSDF is a broad conglomeration, containing groups spawned by the SSIM, the SPLM/A-United, the EDF, and a number of what were originally tribal militias. They are linked by their shared commitment to an agreement reached by Riek Machar that is clearly no longer operational, even if the government has not officially disowned it. This agreement and the existence of the SSDF, however, give its adherents a sense of identity, a rationale for their tactical alliance with the government, and a measure of security, in that others will come to their defence if they are attacked. It also serves as a rallying-point for a large group of southerners currently excluded from the formal IGAD peace process. Nevertheless they are demanding that their interests should be recognised. The major concerns of SSDF leaders relative to the rapidly unfolding peace negotiations are the security arrangements and what their own future in terms of the final peace agreement is likely to be. However, the finely-tuned government policy of dividing southerners; the Military Intelligence practice of dealing with each group separately, and not permitting the SSDF to establish an effective and united organization; the strong attachments of tribe and clan in southern Sudan; and the ambitions of individual leaders all conspire to prevent these bodies (the SSDF, the UDSF, and the Southern Co-ordinating Council) from uniting. But it is only through a concerted effort that southern interests will find a sufficiently forceful advocate.

The SPLM/A has claimed that all of these organisations, and particularly the SSDF, are stooges of the government. This charge has been effective internationally in that, to the extent that it is known at all, the organisation is regarded as a pariah. The short-sighted approach of the government to the SSDF and allied militias has also contributed to this perception. But

now the chickens are coming home to roost for both the GoS and the SPLM/A. A highly effective military instrument for the government in time of war, the SSDF is a problematic and potentially dangerous group as the Sudan peace process moves forward. Both the government's hopes that the SSDF can be controlled and the expectations of the SPLM/A that this armed group can be readily assimilated are being called into question. Armed, angry at being left out of the peace process, and fearful that decisions are being made that will affect its interests, the SSDF poses a major challenge to both the peace process and to the success of the proposed six-year transitional period.

To date, however, the approach of the partners to the IGAD negotiations has largely been to ignore the threat to the peace process posed by the SSDF. While the mediators, GoS the SPLM/A, and key international actors like the United States seem to believe that a viable peace process can go ahead with the south militarily and politically divided, southern civil society has recognised the threat, and consistently pressed for reconciliation. To their credit, the churches have spearheaded a number of peace-building efforts at the local level. On a regional level, in December 2002 the New Sudan Council of Churches (the NSCC, made up of churches in SPLM/A-controlled territory) and the Sudan Council of Churches (the SCC, which comprises churches in GoS-controlled areas) sponsored a conference in Entebbe, Uganda. This brought the SPLM/A and the SSDF together for the first time. However, the conference was fraught with difficulties from the beginning, as the SPLM/A's participation involved a public acknowledgement of the military significance of the SSDF. On the other hand, the SSDF's participation depended upon the GoS overcoming its fears that reconciliation would lead to the absorption of its valued ally by the SPLM/A. By all accounts the first days of the conference were characterised by considerable acrimony, but before it ended the southerners had overcome much of their personal animosity, and there was widespread support for further meetings that could lead to a general reconciliation. Regrettably this promising start was also to be the end of the process, as both the SPLM/A and the GoS refused to agree to further meetings. Instead, although there has been little direct military confrontation between the GoS army and the SPLA in the period since the Entebbe conference, there have been countless destructive encounters between the movement and the SSDF. Some of the most serious incidents (as noted at the beginning of this article) took place in the fading days of 2003 and the first months of 2004.

Despite its fears that the SSDF would break ranks and join the SPLM/A, the GoS agreed to the SSDF's sending a delegation of 17 officials to Nairobi for the security arrangements negotiations. It also appointed the EDF military commander, Martin Kenyi, to the GoS negotiating team as a representative of the SSDF. The delegation proved something of an eye-opener for the IGAD mediators and assorted diplomats who knew little about the operation of this previously shadowy organisation, the SSDF, and even less about its leaders. At the bargaining table, Martin forcefully articulated the SSDF's position, one that was at odds with that of the GoS. The SSDF's stance has consistently been based on arguments for the legitimacy of the Khartoum Peace Agreement, including the provisions regarding the security arrangements. These, like the subsequent IGAD Agreement, called for the maintenance of a separate southern armed force until the outcome of a referendum to determine whether the south was to remain part of a united Sudan or become independent.

The critical difference between the two arrangements was that the Khartoum Agreement identified the SSDF as the sole southern agent charged with providing security for the region, while IGAD's Security Arrangement Agreement designated the SPLM/A alone as assuming this role. In the event, the capacity of the SPLM/A to continue the war undermined the Khartoum Agreement, and there is reason to fear that a similar failure to acknowledge the SSDF could threaten the viability of the IGAD peace process. The IGAD Security Arrangements Agreement — really a framework only — repeatedly acknowledges only two military forces on the ground in southern Sudan. Further, it makes clear that “[n]o armed group allied to either party shall be allowed to operate outside the two forces”.<sup>4</sup> Provision is made for members of the unacknowledged armed groups in the south to be absorbed into the army, prison, police, and wildlife services.<sup>5</sup> And finally, in one of the most confusing components of the Agreement, the belligerents are asked to accept that “[t]he parties agree to address the status of other armed groups in the country with the view of achieving comprehensive peace and stability in the country and to realize full inclusiveness in the transition process”.<sup>6</sup> The Security Arrangements Agreement therefore first denies the existence of other armed groups in the south, but nonetheless says they have to be absorbed into the two recognised groups, and then ends by insisting that the question of their status has to be addressed. Not surprisingly, these seemingly contradictory provisions have led to widely divergent interpretations.

Significantly, however, the initial response of officials from the SSDF to the security arrangement provisions was one of considerable goodwill. Most accepted the rapid disbandment of their organization with the signing of a final peace agreement. They expressed the belief that the efforts of the SPLM/A in the IGAD Initiative would be consistent with their own previous attempts on behalf of the Khartoum Peace Agreement to achieve the principal demand of southerners for self-determination. They also said that they anticipated a quick resolution of their differences with the SPLM/A, as part of a broader south–south reconciliation process.

Once again, however, the window of opportunity opened up by the euphoria of the southern Sudanese at the prospect of peace, and their strong support for reconciliation, has closed. Indeed, in the six months since the signing of the Security Arrangements Agreement much of the goodwill has dissipated, positions have hardened and clearly there are sections of the GoS, SPLM/A, and the SSDF now actively opposed to reconciliation between the SPLM/A and the SSDF.

Further exacerbating tensions between the protagonists, particularly the SSDF's Nuer members, who make up the majority in the oil-producing Unity State, was the new agreement on wealth-sharing, which provided for only 2% of oil revenues to be allocated to oil-producing states,<sup>7</sup> as against the 40% allotted in the Khartoum Agreement. Even if the GoS was sowing the seeds of discontent and had no intention of implementing the promises of the Khartoum Agreement (as its critics claim), the response of many Nuer in the north was nonetheless one of extreme anger. This too diminished any prospect of SPLM/A–SSDF rapprochement.

Despite these setbacks, south–south reconciliation, and particularly that between the principal southern combatants, remains a major concern of southern civil society. Many announcements were made and plans

initiated to pursue this aim, but for one reason or another they have never been realised. The SPLM/A appeared reluctant to accept initiatives popularized by Riek Gai, chairman of the Southern Co-ordinating Council, while the SSDF is averse to supporting efforts led by the church groups, which they believe are too close to the SPLM/A. The most promising effort, which is not yet dead but is currently on life-support, was started by a group of southern politicians resident in the north who have close links with the SPLM/A. It has been taken up by the European Commission (EC), which has offered facilitation and financing.

In this three-cornered contest, only the weakest element, the SSDF, has been consistent in its support for reconciliation with the SPLM/A. The latter's leadership appear anxious not to acknowledge the military capacity of the SSDF, are concerned lest direct negotiations should force them to make concessions or share power, and probably fear the disruptive effect of absorbing senior officials from the SSDF into their own ranks. It must also be clear to the senior members of the SPLM/A that if leaders of the GoS-affiliated armed groups like Lam Akol (although not himself a member of the SSDF), Tito Biel, and James Leah are prepared to rejoin the mother party without conditions, then there may be no pressing need for formal reconciliation talks. A handful of southern opposition politicians, such as the EDF leader, Theopholis Ochieng, have recently joined the SPLM/A.

Although the GoS in late 2003 sent signals that it had no objection to formal SPLM/A-SSDF reconciliation talks under EC auspices, its members were clearly divided over the issue. In the first instance the military, and particularly Military Intelligence, has long been reluctant to accept a process that might well see the SSDF absorbed by its foe of almost 21 years. Perhaps, as some critics suggest, elements in the government who do not support the peace process see the SSDF as a means to undermine the IGAD Initiative, either now or in the future. There were also disagreements in the government between two groups. The first, led by the First Vice-President, Ali Osman, favours a political alliance with the SPLM/A and they tended to be more sympathetic to SPLM/A-SSDF reconciliation, even if it meant the loss of military allies. The second, following a former Peace Advisor, Ghazi Salahadien, opposes such a move, and prefers to develop allies among non-SPLM/A groups, including at least some elements in the SSDF. As a result this group tends to oppose reconciliation if it means absorption of these forces into the SPLM/A.

Despite the obstacles to reconciliation, the need for it has never been greater. The decision by Lam to go back to the SPLM/A precipitated conflict within his military organization, the SPLM-United, which quickly spread to the Shilluk community. Until that time, the Shilluk had enjoyed the enviable distinction of having stayed out of Sudan's civil war. The GoS supported one faction and brought in other groups from the SSDF (notably those of Thomas Mabior and Gabriel Tangye) to fight Lam. They in turn were divided over whether or not to fight their former partners. For the first time in many months, regular forces of the GoS became engaged in the conflict. Much property has been burned and looted, and an undetermined number of civilians have been displaced, wounded and killed as the conflict continued.

A similar pattern is occurring in WUN as a result of the return of Tito Biel and James Leah (leaders of SSIM) to the SPLM/A and their being sent back to the field to bring over their forces. The GoS military is struggling to keep its remaining allies in the SSIM afloat, which includes providing artillery support, something not seen in the area for more than a year. And again



civilian casualties are mounting, many communities have been displaced and valuable infrastructure, including a new and modern clinic and a school outside Bentiu, has been destroyed. Significantly, Paulino Matiep has refused GoS orders to deploy his forces against those of Tito and James. Both of these conflicts are continuing at the time of writing, and there is good reason to fear that in the absence of a genuine process of reconciliation between the SPLM/A and the SSDF, other components of the latter will divide and produce violence in the same way.

In January 2004 the GoS appointed some 60 SSDF commanders to senior ranks in its army, in so doing heightening tensions with the SPLM/A and often causing divisions between these newly-commissioned officers and their forces, who are in no position to receive such benefits. While there is little doubt that nothing more than opportunism has motivated some of these officers, the more thoughtful have struggled to decide whether, in the face of the SPLM/A's refusal to support a genuine reconciliation, they should rejoin a party they had left many years before, or whether they should hold down positions in the GoS until the end of the interim period, when the outcome of the referendum would be known. In addition, the in-coming officers were acknowledged to be representatives of their components of the SSDF. This, at least in theory, made them duly answerable to both the national army and the SSDF High Command. How sincere the commitment of these newly-commissioned officers is to the GoS, however, has already been cast into doubt. One of them, Brigadier James Leah, defected to the SPLM/A and reported that he had accepted promotion only because he had been in fear for his life.

More alarming than the personal dilemmas of these officers may be the thinking behind the GoS's policy. Critics accuse the Khartoum government of playing the old game of dividing and weakening the south by attempting to keep a valued core from the SSDF that can be used to at any time to abort the peace process or to put pressure on southern regional governments during the transitional period.

But if the intention of the GoS in making these appointments was to throw up obstacles to SPLM/A–SSDF reconciliation, the government would effectively be in league with hard-line elements in the SPLM/A, who want to defeat the SSDF and marginalize its southern political opposition before they accept a reconciliation process. While presented as a harbinger of peace, the unprecedented visit of a high level SPLM/A delegation to Khartoum in December 2003 was noteworthy for what it did not do (meet with either its major military foe, the SSDF, or its major political opponents, the leadership of the Southern Co-ordinating Council). This was not lost on the southern Sudanese community, which has as much to fear from south–south strife as north–south conflict.

Deepening the pessimism felt by many over the prospects for reconciliation is the limited pressure that is being exerted by the international community, in particular the US. The latter's position appears to be based on a number of false assumptions. First, it believes that the SSDF is an anarchistic group that is incapable of being understood. Second, it holds that internal security within post-conflict southern Sudan cannot be considered part of the peace process, and is best left to the SPLM/A, which will assume responsibility. Third, the US is inclined to follow the lead of John Garang, who urges patience and assures those who have raised the issue that he is finalizing his position

## Conclusion

on south–south reconciliation. In response it must be said that the SSDF clearly can be understood, as the above analysis should have made clear; that south–south reconciliation is an absolutely essential component of a peaceful Sudan and commands the support of the overwhelming majority of southern Sudanese; and that while positions are being finalised, violence is deepening in southern Sudan. Divisions are taking root that will carry over to a post-peace agreement southern Sudan.

The Sudan IGAD Peace Process may well have passed a critical juncture from which there is no turning back. Few in southern Sudan will be convinced of its legitimacy unless the many divisions in their community — and none is more marked than that between the SSDF and the SPLM/A — are resolved. From its inception the Sudan IGAD Peace Process has suffered from a lack of democracy, and from the assumption by the mediators and important elements among the international community that the SPLM/A and the GoS control the destiny of the country. The first shock to the holders of this myopic view was the rapidly escalating war and humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The second shock could well be a demonstration of the inability of either the GoS or the SPLM/A to control and pacify the disparate elements of the SSDF.

Wars of liberation such as that conducted by the SPLM/A have the effect of both uniting and dividing people. In the process of division, various armed and militia groups come to the fore. This experience is not unique to Sudan, but what is surprising is that, given a wealth of relevant international experience to draw on, and the significance of the SSDF as a military force in the conflict, all the external parties involved in the peace process have failed to recognize this as a major threat to the peace process. No doubt the argument will be made that from the beginning of the IGAD negotiations it was agreed that they should be confined to the GoS and the SPLM/A, but it is doubtful if this legalistic argument will carry much weight if the final agreement does not produce peace and security because the violence between the SSDF and the SPLM/A continues unabated.

Unlike other groups and political parties in Sudan that have a broad interest in the outcome of the IGAD peace process, the focus of the SSDF leadership has largely been restricted to issues relating to the security arrangements. To its credit the GoS did bring Commander Martin Kenyi into the security arrangements negotiations, even if the final agreement did not reflect any of his or the SSDF's concerns. Even at this late date, however, there are three other means by which the interests of the SSDF could be taken up. First, as noted, the agreement on security arrangements provides merely a framework; it needs much more hard and detailed discussion to produce a workable final form. The SSDF leadership should be involved in that process. Second, efforts by the mediators to address the concerns of the SSDF can be carried on outside the formal structures of the IGAD peace process. Last and most significantly, there must be a major push both to encourage and make possible direct talks between the respective leaders of the SPLM/A and the SSDF. The Sudanese people in general, and particularly their southern citizenry have suffered almost 21 years of civil war, and they deserve a peace agreement which at least gives them genuine hope for the future.

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- 1 The Sudan Peace Agreement (Khartoum 21 April 1997).
  - 2 SSDF, 'A Short Presentation of its Position Paper' to the IGAD Envoys, (undated) p. 12.
  - 3 Nairobi Declaration on Unity Between the SPLM/A and EDF (5 March 2004).
  - 4 Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements During the Interim Period Between The Government of the Sudan and The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, Lake Naivasha (25 September 2003), Section 7A.
  - 5 Ibid., Section 7B.
  - 6 Ibid., Section 7C.
  - 7 Agreement on Wealth Sharing During the Pre-Interim and Interim Period, Navaisha (7 January 2004), Section 5.5.

### *List of Acronyms*

GoS	Government of Sudan
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Force
UDSF	United Democratic Salvation Front
WUN	Western Upper Nile
SSIM	South Sudan Independence Movement
EDF	Equatoria Defence Force
SPLM/A/MBGG	SPLM Bahr El Ghazal Group
SSIG	South Sudan Independence Group
UDSF	United Democratic Salvation Front
SSUM	South Sudan Unity Movement
SPDF	Sudan Peoples Democratic Forces
UDF	United Democratic Front
SSLM	South Sudan Liberation Movement
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NSCC	New Sudan Council of Churches
SCC	Sudan Council of Churches
WC	European Commission