

**CTSAMVM CONFIDENTIAL**  
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**TO:** Maj. Gen. Rabi Mujung Emmanuel (ITGoNU)  
Maj. Gen. Martin Gama Abucha (SPLM/A-IO)  
Maj. Gen. David Nyang Kueth (SSOA)  
Maj. Gen. Bior Leek Kuareng (Former Detainees)

**FROM:** The Chairperson, CTSAMVM

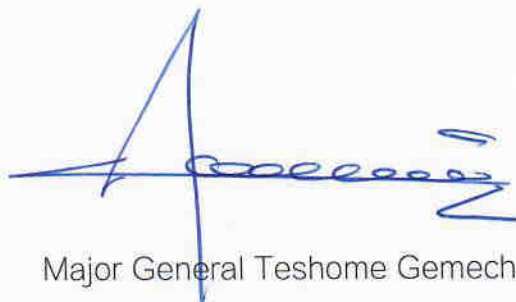
**DATE:** 27 April 2021

**SUBJECT: CTSAMVM REPORT 2021/ 004– INCIDENTS IN THE NASSIR AREA  
UPPER NILE STATE 14-15 MARCH 2021**

Dear CTSAMVM Technical Committee Senior Party Representatives,

Please find attached a report on incidents which took place in the Nassir area Upper Nile State on 14 and 15 March 2021.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.



Major General Teshome Gemechu Aderie

Chairperson

**Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification  
Mechanism**



## CTSAMVM REPORT 2021/004

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 15 March 2021 CTSAMVM received an allegation from SSPDF that an SSPDF **officer was killed by the "white army"** on 14 March 2021 and that SSPDF had taken action to deal with the attackers. On 15 March 2021 an allegation was received from SPLM/A-IO that on 14 March 2021 SSPDF had attacked and burned the villages of Luak Wien, Cie-thor and Wunthow as an act of revenge for the killing of the SSPDF officer. It was further alleged that the SSPDF had attacked SPLM/A-IO barracks in Kedbeck.

CTSAMVM investigated the incidents which occurred in the Kedbeck area. The area was also visited by a Joint Defence Board delegation for the purpose of defusing the tensions in the area.

The SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO agreed that the killing of the SSPDF officer was committed by armed civilians. The SSPDF did leave their barracks and carry searches of civilian house and burned houses in the villages surrounding the SPLM/A-IO barracks.

CTSAMVM concludes that SSPDF acted in violation of R-ARCSS Article 2.1.9 by carrying out revenge.

The JDB took prompt action to restore security and SPLM/A-IO leadership in Kedbeck exercised restraint over their forces to prevent escalation. SSPDF subsequently replaced the commander in Nassir who was responsible for launching the revenge attack.

## INCIDENTS IN THE NASSIR AREA

### Introduction

#### 1. Background:

- a. There have for a long time been tensions between the SSPDF garrison in Nassir and the surrounding population. There is an SPLM/A-IO garrison at Ketbeck which is only about 7 Km from the SSPDF garrison.
- b. The last incidents reported in the Nassir area were on 4 August and 5 September 2020, when some local youths allegedly killed an SSPDF soldier, and this led to a revenge attack in which some youths were killed. However, following a CTSAMVM Joint Field Visit on 6 October 2020 a Peace and Reconciliation Conference was convened between the Parties in Mandeng on 20 October 2020 and since then until 14 March 2021 the area has been calm.

#### 2. Incidents and allegations

- a. On 15 March 2021 CTSAMVM received information from the commander of the SSPDF Special Operations Brigade in Nassir, Maj Gen Gordon Banak Thoan, that on 14 March 2021 an SSPDF Officer had been attacked and killed **on the riverbank by the “White Army”, and that SSPDF troops had pursued the** alleged perpetrators to villages near Kedbeck.
- b. Later on 15 March 2021 CTSAMVM received an allegation from SPLM/A-IO Sector 4 Commander Lt. Gen Peter Thok Chol Luak in Mandeng, that on 14 March 2021 the SSPDF attacked and burnt down the villages of Luak Wien, Koat, Cie-thor and Wunthow in revenge for the killing of the SSPDF officer by **“unknown armed civilians”**. Lt. Gen Peter Thok Chol Luak went on to allege **that on 15 March 2021 the SSPDF launched an “aggressive attack” against the** SPLM/A-IO barracks in Kedbek and burnt it down. There were no reports of casualties.

#### 3. Methodology:

- a. CTSAMVM visited Nassir and Mandeng on 17 March 2021.
  - i. At Nassir CTSAMVM met with the SSPDF Special Operations Brigade Commander Maj Gen Justine Nhial Botoang, who had replaced Maj Gen Gordon Banak Thoan on 16 March 2021. The deputy commander, Brig Gen Salva Kiir Amet, was also present.
  - ii. At Mandeng CTSAMVM met the SPLM/SA-IO Sector 4 Commander Lt Gen Peter Thok Chuol.
- b. The standard of proof used by CTSAMVM to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to verify that a Party is not in compliance with the provisions **of the Agreements is “reasonable grounds to believe that the incident that is the subject of the investigation occurred.” This is in accordance with accepted practice for monitoring mechanisms and humanitarian entities and signifies that sufficient facts and evidence have been collected to conclude that an event has occurred.**

## Findings

4. Both the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO commanders reported that the situation had returned to normal since the events of 14 and 15 March 2021.
5. The killing of the SSPDF officer took place on 14 March 2021 near Khor-Wako, which is about 12 Km downriver from Nassir.
  - a. According to the SSPDF the officer was fishing with a sergeant when he was attacked by armed civilians who wanted to steal their guns. The sergeant escaped. The body of the officer was allegedly burnt by the killers.
  - b. According to the SPLM/A-IO the officer confronted and tried to disarm a group of armed civilians known as Chiengkuik who were travelling through the area.

The officer fired his gun but missed and was shot and killed; the sergeant threw down his weapon and escaped.

- c. The armed civilians involved in the incident have not been traced.
6. Later on 14 March 2021 the SSPDF searched a number of villages in order to try and find the perpetrators.
7. On 15 March at 06.30 the SSPDF left their barracks and advanced to and threatened the SPLM/A-IO garrison at Kedbeck. However, the SPLM/A-IO had been ordered to withdraw and only a small guard force was left. The garrison was burnt as were several surrounding villages. According the SSPDF the fires were started by tracer bullets; according to the SPLM/A-IO they were started deliberately.
8. Lt Gen Peter Thok Chuol Luak said that when they saw the garrison and villages being burnt SPLM/A-IO forces started to mobilise, but he stopped them and instead called the SSPDF commander Maj Gen Gordon Barak and asked him to pull his forces back.
9. Both the SSPDF commander and the SPLM/A-IO commander agreed the incident could – and should – have been resolved amicably.

#### **Joint Defence Board (JDB) visit 19 March 2021**

10. On 19 March 2021 the JDB visited the SSPDF garrison in Nassir and the SPLM/A-IO Garrison in Ketbeck in order to defuse tensions following the incident. The JDB party included Gen Johnson Juma Akot, SSPDF CDF and JDB Co-Chair, Lt Gen Gabriel Duop Lam, SPLM/A-IO Deputy Chief of Staff and JDB Co-Chair, Lt Gen Julius Tabuley Daniel SSOA JDB Co-Chair and senior representatives from JTSC and JMCC.
11. During the visit the senior JDB members all emphasised the importance of peaceful coexistence. Gen Johnson Juma Akot stated that Maj Gen Gordon Banak Thuan had been recalled to Juba to be investigated as a result of what happened.

## **Assessment**

12. It was agreed and understood by both the SSPDF and the SPLM/A-IO that the killing of the SSPDF officer was by armed civilians. Each Party had a different version of exactly what happened.
13. On 14 March 2021 the SSPDF left their barracks, moved to and searched civilian houses following the killing of the officer. The SSPDF did not, at this stage, contact the SPLM/A-IO to discuss the incident and what should be done as a result.
14. On the morning of 15 March 2021 the SSPDF left their barracks and advanced to and threatened the SPLM/A-IO barracks at Ketbeck. The garrison and some of the surrounding villages – where soldiers lived – were burnt. By leaving their barracks and advancing to the SPLM/A-IO barracks the SSPDF in Nassir acted in clear violation of the R-ARCSS.
15. A potential clash between the SSPDF and the SPLM/A-IO was avoided by the actions of SPLM/A-IO Sector 4 Commander Lt Gen Peter Thok Chuol, who ordered his soldiers to withdraw from Ketbeck and not to engage the SSPDF.
16. The recall and replacement of the SSPDF commander in Nassir, Maj Ben Gordon Banak Thoan, and the subsequent visit by the JDB did much to reduce tensions in the area.

## **Conclusion**

17. It is the conclusion of CTSAMVM that by leaving barracks on 15 March 2021 and advancing to and burning the SPLM/A-IO barracks in Ketbeck the SSPDF acted in clear violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically article 2.1.9: “No revenge, vengeance

or retribution and any kind of violation of the Permanent Ceasefire is allowed under any circumstances.”

### **Observations and Recommendations**

18. The killing of the SSPDF officer on 14 March 2021 was a tragic incident which resulted from some sort of altercation with armed civilians. Following the Peace and Reconciliation Conference in Mandeng on 20 October 2020 the mechanisms have been in place to manage these sorts of incidents. It was unfortunate the SSPDF commander decided to take direct action rather than contact the SPLM/A-IO commander and resolve it amicably.
  
19. The SPLM/A-IO acted commendably during the incident, and the SSPDF and JDB must also be commended for their actions taken after the incident:
  - a. The SPLM/A-IO refrained from reacting to the SSPDF advance to their barracks at Ketbeck.
  
  - b. The SSPDF took quick remedial action by replacing the SSPDF commander in Nassir.
  
  - c. JDB acted swiftly to defuse tensions in the area