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Headquarters Ceasefire & Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism

17 February 2025

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TO: Lt. Gen. Rabi Mujung Emmanuel (ITGoNU)
Maj. Gen. Dr. Chuol Ruey Kompuok (SPLM/A-IO)
Maj. Gen. Jany Kaway Yoakhor (SSOA)
Maj. Gen. Bior Leek Kuareng (Former Detainees)

FROM: The Chairperson, CTSAMVM

DATE: 17 February 2025

SUBJECT: CTSAMVM REPORT 2025/02 – ALLEGED ARMED CLASHES INVOLVING FORCES FROM SSPDF & SPLM/A-IO ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN WES & WBeGS

Please, find attached a report on the alleged armed clashes involving forces from SSPDF & SPLM/A-IO along the border between WES & WBeGS.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Respectfully,

Major General Yitayal Gelaw Bitew
Chairperson, CTSAMVM



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**CTSAMVM REPORT 2025/02 - ALLEGED ARMED CLASHES INVOLVING
FORCES FROM SSPDF & SPLM/A-IO ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN WES &
WBeGS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CTSAMVM MVT Wau reported armed confrontations between the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO along the border of Western Equatoria State (WES) and Western Bahr el Ghazal State (WBeGS) from January 11 to 13, 2025. The clashes allegedly began after SSPDF Division 6 took control of Bo Bridge on January 6, which was previously under SPLM/A-IO administration. On January 11, around 6:30 AM, gunfire was heard near Bo Bridge, about 25 kilometers south of Bazia Payam. The WBeGS Governor stated that an SSPDF unit entered WBeGS territory without coordination, leading to encounters with SPLM/A-IO soldiers on January 11 and 12. Attempts at mediation were unsuccessful, and another clash occurred on January 13, injuring two SPLM/A-IO soldiers. CTSAMVM MVT Wau documented these incidents in their reports and conducted patrols in the area from February 3 to February 6, 2025.

The findings of the investigation revealed that: On January 6, 2025, SSPDF Division 6 took control of Bo Bridge, establishing a base and digging trenches. The SPLM/A-IO Division 6A Administration Chief delayed by vehicle issues arrived on January 8 but was denied access. A misunderstanding led to the SSPDF seizing an RPG-7 from SPLM/A-IO soldiers, causing the SPLM/A-IO unit to withdraw to Gumbolo. Clashes began on January 11 throughout January, resulting in four SSPDF fatalities and 16 injuries, and two injuries for SPLM/A-IO. Colonel Denis Daniel Bazia of SPLM/A-IO was arrested on January 7 and reported dead on January 11. The SSPDF presence raised civilian fears, leading to the displacement of 95% of Nagero County's population, with no civilian movement along the Nagero-Bo Bridge-Bazia route due to ongoing conflicts.

CTSAMVM assesses that, large civilian displacements from Nagero and Bazia highlight a severe humanitarian crisis linked to tensions from the SSPDF Div6 base at Bo Bridge. The SSPDF's military presence is reinforced by new constructions, while SPLM/A-IO is the main opposing force. Recent ambush attacks targeting SSPDF logistics suggest SPLM/A-IO



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involvement. The lack of civilian movement along the Bazia-Bo Bridge-Nagero road requires the urgent need for safe corridors to aid humanitarian efforts in the area.

CTSAMVM concludes that the movement of SSPDF Division 6 forces into Western Bahr el Ghazal State without coordination caused instability and displacement, violating the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. SSPDF Division 6 took control of Bo Bridge from SPLM/A-IO, leading to military confrontations and further violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. SPLM/A-IO ambushes on SSPDF supply units also occurred, exacerbating tensions. The lack of safe humanitarian corridors in Bazia and Nagero counties constitutes additional breaches of agreements.

CTSAMVM recommends that: SSPDF Division 6 should withdraw to allow civilians to return; JDB to ensure NUF forces are deployed at Bo Bridge to ease tensions and prioritize Phase two training for SPLM/A-IO members; JDB to ensure both parties establish safe corridors for humanitarian aid; UNMISS and other peace partners to promote military dialogues to resolve conflicts between the 2 parties; Local leaders should provide accurate data on humanitarian needs; Establish clear communication between SPLM/A-IO and SSPDF to maintain peaceful relations to coordinate assistance for displaced individuals in Nagero County and Bazia Payam.



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CTSAMVM REPORT 2025/02 – ALLEGED ARMED CLASHES INVOLVING FORCES FROM SSPDF & SPLM/A-IO ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN WES & WBeGS

References:

A: 20250214 Sector 3 Investigation into alleged armed clashes involving forces from SSPDF & SPLM/A-IO along the border between WES & WBeGS

B: JMCO Task Number S3/106 of 14 Jan 2025.

C: 20250111 CTSAMVM MVT Wau DMR.

INTRODUCTION

1. Background:

- a. CTSAMVM MVT Wau reported several armed confrontations between the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO along the border of Western Equatoria State (WES) and Western Bahr el Ghazal State (WBeGS) from January 11 to 13, 2025. The clashes were alleged to have began after SSPDF Division 6 took control of Bo Bridge on January 6, 2025, which was previously under SPLM/A-IO administration.
- b. On January 11, at approximately 6:30 am, gunshots were heard near Bo Bridge, about 25 kilometers south of Bazia Payam. The clashes involved SSPDF forces at Bo Bridge and SPLM/A-IO troops, who had moved to Gombulu. The WBeGS Governor indicated that an SSPDF unit entered WBeGS territory without coordination, leading to confrontations with SPLM/A-IO soldiers on January 11 and 12. Despite attempts to mediate, another clash occurred on January 13, injuring two SPLM/A-IO soldiers.
- c. CTSAMVM MVT Wau documented these incidents in the Daily Monitoring Report for January 11 and 13, the matter was also reported in the press¹. The team

¹ https://www.sudanspost.com/spla-io-confirms-sspdf-seizure-of-cantonment-site-in-western-equatoria/#google_vignette



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conducted patrols to WBeGS civil authority offices, to the bases of SSPDF Division 5 and SPLM/A-IO 2 Brigade, along with a Long Duration Patrol in the area from February 3 to February 6, 2025.

2. **Allegation:** The SPLM/A-IO alleged that, the presence of SSPDF at Bo Bridge has led to frequent clashes in the area, creating an atmosphere of fear among local communities and humanitarian organizations, as the area has become increasingly hostile due to military activity.
3. **Aim:** This report aims to present the findings of Monitoring and Verification Team's investigation regarding alleged armed clashes involving forces from SSPDF & SPLM/A-IO along the border between WES & WBeGS, to attribute responsibility for violations of the R-ARCSS if proven, and where appropriate make recommendations to foster compliance with the R-ARCSS.
4. **Investigation.** Investigations were undertaken with the support of national monitors from all parties.
5. **Methodology:**
 - a. From 3 – 6 February 2025, CTSAMVM MVT Wau conducted a Long Duration Patrol to Bazia, Bo Bridge, and Nagero County, the team also carried out face-to-face interviews with persons directly connected and those relevant to the alleged incidents.
 - b. CTSAMVM interviewees include:
 - a) **Government officials;** WBeGS Governor at Wau Office, WBeGS RRC Chairperson, Lindi Boma Chief Police Inspector, County Health Director and Deputy Director for Civil Society, Paramount Chief Bazia, Achudo Boma Chief, Chief Boma WestChief Boma Raffili, Sub Chief Bar-Tambura Boma, Barmal Boma sub chief, WBeGS Governor, Sub chief-Maju Boma, Deputy Executive Director Bazia Payam, Sub chief of Lindi, Executive Director of Nagero County, Paramount Chief –Nagero, Executive Chief Rengu Boma in Nagero, Zomoi Boma Chief, Bandala Payam Administrator , Women Chairlady Nagero County, RRC Coordinator, Nagero County, County Education Director and State minister for Health, WBeGS.



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- b) **SSPDF:** Ag SSPDF Div5 Cmdr at Grinti- Wau, Former SSPDF Div5 101, Chief of Operations for SSPDF Div6 phone interview, SSPDF Div5 Inf Cmdr, SSPDF Div6 Cmdr, SSPDF Regional Forces Cmdr and SSPDF Nagero Base Cmdr, SSPDF Div5 Inf Cmdr.
- c) **SPLMA-IO:** SPLM/A-IO Bo Bridge Commander, SPLM/A-IO 2 Bde Cmdr, SPLM/A-IO Div6a Chief Admin .
- d) **Local population:** Women leader -Bazia,Elders Representative, Chairperson interfaith community/Local journalist in Nagero, 59 yr old male from Bo Bridge, 29 yr old female IDP from Bo bridge, Youth leader-Kpaile Payam, 60 yr old man and an IDP from Zomoi, 50 yr old man from Zomoi, 27 yr old female IDP from Bo Bridge, 45 yr old male IDP from Bo bridge, Youth leader-Kpaile Payam, 60 yr old man and an IDP from Zomoi.
- c. **Standard of proof:** The standard of proof employed 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 has occurred". This is in accordance with accepted practice for monitoring mechanisms, human rights and humanitarian entities. Reasonable grounds imply that sufficient facts and evidence has been collected to conclude that an event happened.

6. **Findings:**

- a. On January 6, 2025, SSPDF Division 6 took control of Bo Bridge and established a base. The SPLM/A-IO Div6A Admin Chief attempted to meet SSPDF commanders but was delayed due to vehicle issues, arriving at the bridge on January 8 at 1830 Hrs. However, SSPDF denied him access, requesting that he wait until the following day to visit the camp.



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- b. On January 8, 2025 at around 2000 Hrs, an unconfirmed misunderstanding led to the SSPDF confiscating an AK-47 rifle and an RPG-7v with a shell head from two SPLM/A-IO soldiers at Bo Bridge. However, the SSPDF later verified that the soldiers were only in possession of the RPG-7v. Following these incidents, the SPLM/A-IO unit withdrew from Bo Bridge and allied with other SPLM/A-IO forces in the Gumbolo area, located 5 kilometers north of Bo Bridge in Bazia Payam, WBeGS.
- c. The SSPDF made attempts to persuade the SPLM/A-IO units to return to the base and remain alongside them to ensure stability at the border between the states of WES and WBeGS. However, the SPLM/A-IO commanders in the area declined this request, asserting that Bo Bridge was under their control and that the SSPDF should withdraw from the location.
- d. On January 11, 2025, a confrontation occurred in the Gumbolo area of Bazia involving suspected SPLM/A-IO soldiers and SSPDF Division 6. This incident marked the beginning of a series of clashes occurring on January 13, 16, and 22, 2025, in Bazia Payam, WBeGS.
- e. An ambush by suspected SPLM/A-IO soldiers targeting SSPDF personnel returning to Bo Bridge from the Nagero market took place at Denga in the Zomoi area on January 14, 2025. A reinforcement from SSPDF Division 6 arrived at Bo Bridge from Tambura under directives from the Division 6 Commander. However, on February 3, 2025, an SSPDF unit led by Major Makok was ambushed by suspected SPLM/A-IO soldiers at Korgana, about 20 kilometers south of Nagero County, while providing logistical support from Tambura to Bo Bridge.
- f. Since SSPDF Division 6 entered Bo Bridge on January 6, 2025, there have been six recorded clashes between the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO. These encounters resulted in damage to one SSPDF vehicle, the deaths of four SSPDF soldiers, and injuries to sixteen others in the areas of Denga and Korgana in WES, as well as Raffili and Gumbolo in Bazia Payam, WBeGS, during the period from January 11 to February 3, 2025. The SPLM/A-IO reported two injuries during this timeframe.



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- g. There has been a notable lack of coordination between the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO regarding military movements and operations, which has contributed to the escalation of conflicts.
- h. An SPLM/A-IO officer, identified as Colonel Denis Daniel Bazia, was reportedly arrested by the SSPDF at Lindi Boma in Nagero Payam on January 7, 2025. Witnesses stated that the SSPDF Division 6 transported the officer from Lindi Boma to Bo Bridge on January 8, 2025, and he was last heard from on January 9, 2025, before news of his death surfaced on January 11, 2025. There are no witnesses to confirm the location of his body, if indeed he is deceased.
- i. Civilians interviewed expressed that their primary source of fear stems from the takeover and presence of SSPDF Division 6 at Bo Bridge.
- j. The local communities in Nagero and Bazia are primarily descended from the Balanda community. The deployment of Brigadier General James Nando, a former SPLM/A-IO defector and a member of the Zande community, poses a direct threat to the Balanda community, currently in dispute with the Zande community in Tambura County, WES.
- k. According to reports from the Nagero County Authority, approximately 58,991 households reside in the county. Due to the SSPDF's takeover of Bo Bridge, 95% of the county's population has been displaced from their homes, seeking refuge in nearby bushes or crossing into neighbouring states. Accurate data is still being gathered by county authorities. Additionally, there are displacement issues in Bazia Payam, resulting in a critical humanitarian situation that requires an urgent response. Local leaders have not confirmed the numbers.
- l. There have been no signs of civilian presence or movement along the Nagero-Bo Bridge-Bazia route, as local residents are fearful due to the SSPDF's presence at Bo Bridge, which has led to frequent clashes in the area.

7. **Assessment.** It is the assessment of CTSAMVM that:

- a. The large displacement of civilians from Nagero and Bazia, who are currently seeking refuge in the bushes, highlights the serious humanitarian crises they are facing. This



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situation is linked to the ongoing tensions created by the establishment of an SSPDF Div6 base at Bo Bridge.

- b. The expansion of the Bo base, evidenced by the newly constructed tukuls and trenches built by SSPDF Div6 soldiers, reflects the determination of the SSPDF to maintain its presence at the bridge.
- c. The only armed forces operating in the Nagero and Bo Bridge areas are the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO forces. Since SPLM/A-IO is the only group opposing the SSPDF's presence at Bo Bridge, it can be concluded that the ambush attacks on January 14 and February 3, 2025, which targeted logistical supplies being transported to the SSPDF at Bo Bridge, were carried out by SPLM/A-IO forces in Western Equatoria State.
- d. The absence of civilian presence or movement along the Bazia-Bo Bridge-Nagero road, emphasizes the urgent need for safe corridors to be established for humanitarian organizations. This would facilitate their response to the humanitarian crises in Bazia and Nagero County.

8. **Conclusion:** It is the conclusion of CTSAMVM that;

- a. The movement of SSPDF Division 6 forces from Western Equatoria State (WES) into Western Bahr el Ghazal State (WBeGS) was conducted without coordination with state governments, resulting in instability and displacement. This action breaches **Article 2.1.10.4** of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).
- b. On January 6, 2025, SSPDF Division 6 took control of Bo Bridge, previously held by SPLM/A-IO, violating **Articles 2.1.10.7.2** of the R-ARCSS and **Articles 1 (2) and 3 (2, a)** of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) 2017. Military confrontations in Bazia followed, leading to clashes on January 11, 13, 16, and 22, 2025, which breach **Articles 3 (3)** of the CoHA 2017 and **2.1.10.7.2 of the R-ARCSS**.
- c. Ambushes by SPLM/A-IO forces on SSPDF supply units occurred on January 14, 2025, and February 3, 2025, violating **Articles 2.1.10.7.2** of the R-ARCSS and **Article 3 (2, a)** of the CoHA 2017. Furthermore, the lack of safe corridors for humanitarian aid in Bazia and



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Nagero counties constitutes a breach of **Article 2.1.10.1** of the R-ARCSS and **Article 8 (4)** of the CoHA 2017. Relations between the Nagero and Bazia communities and SSPDF Division 6 at Bo Bridge are now strained.

9. Observations and Recommendation:

- a. The SSPDF Division 6 to withdraw its forces to the nearest base, in order to allow civilians to return to Nagero and Bazia Payam.
- b. The JDB to ensure the NUF Forces are deployed at Bo Bridge to address tensions between Western Equatoria State (WES) and Western Bahr El Ghazal State (WBeGS) and Priority should be given to initiating NUF phase two training for remaining SPLM/A-IO members, facilitating the peaceful deployment of NUF forces to vacated areas.
- c. The JDB to ensure that SSPDF Division 6 and SPLM/A-IO establish safe corridors for humanitarian aid in Nagero and Bazia to address basic needs due to displacement in the area. Local leaders are encouraged to promote peace and share accurate information about individuals requiring assistance.
- d. UNMISS and other Peace partners to organize military dialogues to resolve conflict between SSPDF Division 6 and SPLM/A-IO further preventing disputes at Bo Bridge.
- e. The JDB to ensure SPLM/A-IO and SSPDF should create clear communication channels to maintain friendly relations and prevent tensions along the border.

