

## The drift back to war

### Insecurity and militarization in the Nuba Mountains

In January 2008, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) announced that it had completed the withdrawal of its forces from the Nuba Mountains region of South Kordofan<sup>1</sup> in accordance with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA requires Government of Sudan (GoS) and SPLA forces to redeploy to their respective sides of the still-disputed North–South border of 1 January 1956.<sup>2</sup>

Like much else in the CPA, the pull-back was far behind schedule. The SPLA had linked the withdrawal of its forces to satisfactory demarcation of the North–South border, and the integration of the former enemies' police and armed forces, the latter into the CPA-mandated Joint Integrated Units (JIUs).<sup>3</sup> Resolution of the border issue—one of the main threats to the survival of the 2005 agreement—has been complicated by the fact that many of Sudan's richest oilfields lie in the border area, and much of the documentation needed to determine the border has been destroyed.<sup>4</sup> JIU deployment has also been delayed and fraught with problems.<sup>5</sup>

Despite complications on both counts, however, SPLA forces began to move south in July 2007, the month set for the completion of the withdrawal. They halted almost immediately at signs that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) were not reciprocating—apparently reluctant to withdraw from oil-rich areas of the occupied South—but resumed again in January 2008. On 9 January, the respective withdrawals—the SPLA from South Kordofan and the SAF from the

South—were declared complete, coinciding with the third anniversary of the CPA.<sup>6</sup>

The withdrawal of the SPLA from the Nuba Mountains region feels to many local communities like a hand-over of the territory to the SAF. It has revived local resentment over the CPA, increased feelings of insecurity and neglect, and deepened concern that government hardliners in Khartoum are mobilizing ethnic militias to manipulate elections scheduled for 2009.

The *Issue Brief* examines insecurity and militarization in the Nuba Mountains and surrounding areas, a region that has been overshadowed in recent years by the Darfur conflict and, more recently, the insecurity in Abyei. It focuses on the eastern part of the region where political tensions have been high since the CPA: military observers in the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) peacekeeping force are insufficiently resourced and supported; there are no permanent UN civil affairs and human rights officers; and international NGOs and other independent observers are few.<sup>7</sup> It finds that:

- The area is highly militarized with both parties to the conflict actively violating the CPA, including by recruiting members of armed groups.
- Khartoum's paramilitary Popular Defence Forces (PDF) is being re-organized in the region on a sharper ethnic basis than in the past.
- Arabs returning to *marahil* (animal migration routes) closed by the war are being armed, often through the PDF, with a corresponding mobilization by some settled tribes.

■ UNMIS has done little to calm tensions, in contrast to the active efforts of the much smaller number of unarmed ceasefire monitors, the Joint Military Commission (JMC),<sup>8</sup> which were present from 2002–05.

■ The region has received few tangible benefits from the CPA, and frustration among the region's different constituencies is contributing to heightened insecurity.

The Nuba Mountains region is a microcosm of the tensions surrounding CPA implementation. Many local residents feel ignored—with good reason—by the international community and neglected by the UN system. Growing ethnic insecurity in the region has the potential to deteriorate significantly over the coming months and needs urgent attention to prevent it from spiralling out of control.

### A history of violence

The Nuba Mountains cover more than 80,000 km<sup>2</sup> in South Kordofan state, the geographical centre of Sudan. Until part of Western Kordofan was annexed to South Kordofan in 2005, in line with the provisions of the CPA, Nuba from more than 50 different ethnic groups accounted for approximately three-quarters of the state's inhabitants. These indigenous black Africans outnumbered the Arab Baggara (cattle herders), chiefly from the Missiriya and Hawazma tribes, who moved into the mountain region centuries ago in search of water and pasture for their

expanding herds.<sup>9</sup> Although representing a 'bewildering complexity' of tribes,<sup>10</sup> with different cultures, interests, and grievances, most Nuba are sedentary farmers and share an experience of oppression. The subjugation extends from the slaving raids of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the *jihad* declared against them during the civil war by the government of President Omar al-Bashir.

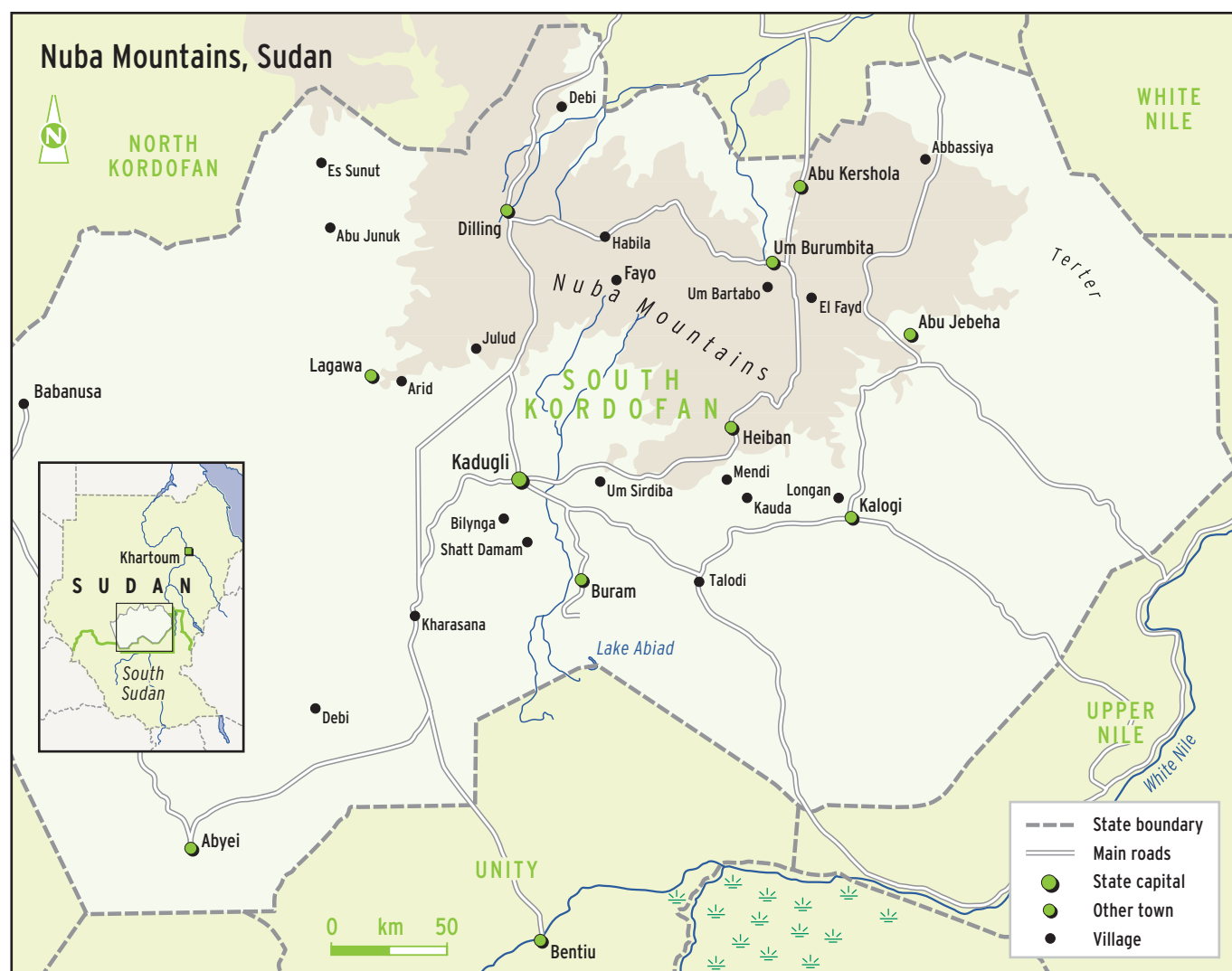
Long regarded as second-class citizens by Sudan's Arab elite, the Nuba's indigenous cultures and religions were suppressed, and local languages banned. Many reacted to political, economic, and social marginalization by taking up arms against the government in the mid-1980s. This followed harassment and government attacks on Nuba villages suspected of having joined the SPLA uprising in South Sudan. Under the leadership of a former teacher,

Yousif Kuwa Mekke, they demanded 'the right to be Nuba' and an end to marginalization in all its forms. As 'Africans' within the political boundaries of Arab-dominated northern Sudan, they fervently supported SPLA Chairman John Garang's vision of a 'New Sudan', in which all Sudanese would have equal rights and duties, irrespective of ethnicity.

The civil war in the Nuba Mountains was brutal. The government of Sadiq al-Mahdi (1986–89) armed the Baggara to fight their Nuba neighbours, politicizing age-old resource tensions. When the National Islamic Front (NIF) seized power in 1989, scores of villages were destroyed in joint army–militia offensives. In 1992, a *jihad* was declared in which all rebel supporters, Christian and Muslim, were denounced as apostates deserving of death.<sup>11</sup> Villagers burned

out of their homes were forcibly relocated to 'peace camps' in government-controlled areas. Nuba women were systematically raped and children forcibly Islamized.<sup>12</sup> The head of security in South Kordofan, who later sought political asylum in Switzerland, said the orders given to government troops were 'to kill anything that is alive . . . to destroy everything, to burn the area so that nothing can exist there.'<sup>13</sup>

For 13 years, Nuba in SPLM/A-controlled areas went without humanitarian aid: the government sealed off the mountains from both relief and external monitoring. With no independent witnesses, the full extent of the atrocities in the area was revealed only when a small group of international NGOs organized a clandestine humanitarian airlift and a human rights monitoring programme in 1995. The attention sud-



denly focused upon the Nuba secured a ceasefire agreement in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, in January 2002. But the subsequent Machakos peace negotiations in Kenya initially excluded the Nuba entirely, and they only belatedly received a separate protocol, which forms part of the CPA, but which failed to satisfy their aspirations.<sup>14</sup>

The CPA gave the Nuba limited regional autonomy and a 'popular [parliamentary] consultation' on the CPA—devoid of enforcement mechanisms.<sup>15</sup> Many Nuba considered this inadequate, fearing for their fate in the event of South Sudan separating following the 2011 referendum. Many also accused the SPLA leadership of compromising the political rights of the Nuba and Southern Blue Nile State in order to get self-determination for Abyei, which was the only one of the three border 'transitional areas' to be granted a referendum to determine whether it would be part of North or South Sudan after 2011.<sup>16</sup>

The CPA protocol on South Kordofan was considered weak for other reasons. Resolution of land ownership, access, and use rights—important factors behind the outbreak of war—was deferred until the South Kordofan Land Commission could be established, which has yet to occur. Security arrangements were also highly contested: in South Sudan, the SPLA retained its own army as a guarantee of security during the interim period; in the Nuba Mountains, by contrast, it was obliged to withdraw once the JIUs were in place.<sup>17</sup>

The state's precarious future came into clearer focus after the death of John Garang in July 2005, as fears grew that his successors would pursue separation for the South rather than unity, thereby 'abandoning' their brothers in arms. After the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Nuba during the war,<sup>18</sup> many feared that the partial annexation of Western Kordofan would tip the political and demographic balance in South Kordofan in favour of Arab groups—including in the 2009 national and legislative elections that will precede, and may determine, the outcome of the popular consultation.<sup>19</sup>

## Many Nuba fear their fate if South Sudan separates following the 2011 referendum

Indeed, the Bürgenstock ceasefire of 2002 was a mixed blessing. It gave the Nuba a period of relative security, but almost formalized the separation between government and SPLM areas in the region by defining the so-called 'goose eggs'—cantonments around Julud in the west and Kauda in the east that were SPLM/A strongholds during the war. The CPA was supposed to integrate the administration of these areas into the joint National Congress Party (NCP)–SPLM state administration, but in reality they became increasingly isolated to the point where they are now separate enclaves to which access by government allies (coming from government areas) is almost precluded.

### Slow CPA implementation

The ceasefire saw the return of Arab pastoralists to some *marahil* that the war had made inaccessible, and encouraged the expansion of mechanized farming in other areas. This aggravated tensions over land as an estimated 600,000 war-displaced people began to return. Rigorous implementation of the CPA—especially the swift establishment of a functioning state government, and integrated security and police forces<sup>20</sup>—was essential if peace were to hold. But progress has been exceedingly slow. More than three years after the agreement was signed, integration is not a political reality and no Land Commission has emerged. While a joint government has been established at the state level, the administration of government- and SPLM-controlled areas remains separate. Two local government systems currently operate in parallel, with separate policies for education (two languages, two systems), judicial and security systems, and local government structures. Passing from one area to the other involves passing through armed checkpoints.<sup>21</sup>

The JIUs that were to have formed the nucleus of a new national army with a 'common military doctrine'<sup>22</sup> are integrated in name only. In reality, the 6,000 SAF and SPLA forces in Kadugli, Heiban, Talodi, Buram, Julud, Um Sirdiba, Dilling, and Arid, near Lagawa, are separate, except at the administrative level. Without the required co-location in training centres, the former enemies have separate chains of command, training, armaments, and barracks. Police forces, which should have been integrated in the first six months of the interim period, also remain separate.<sup>23</sup> UN officials say the Sudan government is 'reluctant' to recognize the SPLA police force, and SPLA officers say that the SAF refused them joint training in Kadugli. They allege that the UN police subsequently trained government recruits who were later deployed to the Popular Police, a paramilitary reserve force composed largely of Islamist volunteers.<sup>24</sup> There is no joint body to oversee disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, and no serious effort has been made to dissolve the Other Armed Groups (OAGs) that have not melted into the regular military forces, the civil service, and the civil society institutions of the two sides, in accordance with the CPA.<sup>25</sup>

The perception among interviewed Nuba is that, with only one year remaining before elections, integration is a pipe dream—'a nonsense'. They blame the weakness of their own political leaders as much as government intransigence, accusing them of 'following the orders of the *jellaba*' (a pejorative word for northerners).<sup>26</sup>

Feelings of separation are also common among the Missiriya, notably over the loss of Western Kordofan, where they were the majority. For Nuba who were displaced for years during the war, the right to land is of particular



importance. But land 'rights' are often articulated in exclusive terms and are seen as a direct threat by many Missiriya and Abbala (camel-herding) residents. Some SPLM-controlled areas close to the Missiriya in the west and the Hawazma in the east, for example, have blocked traditional transhumant routes through their territories. The Hawazma also feel marginalized by the CPA; many are confused about the issue of popular consultation and the future of South Kordofan after the 2009 elections.

### Ethnic- and resource-related insecurity

Despite its less positive consequences, the relative stability in the Nuba Mountains that resulted from the 2002 ceasefire was skilfully monitored and facilitated by the few score international personnel of the Joint Military Commission (JMC), which focused on community liaisons, monitoring, and mediation of local disputes. The hand-over by JMC to UNMIS in 2005 coincided with a marked deterioration in security, however, as Baggara and Abbala camel herders attempted to return to their pre-war grazing camps, again competing with Nuba for land and water. UNMIS failed to monitor the situation,<sup>27</sup> and armed conflicts have become common.

In es Sunut in Lagawa locality, 17 Missiriya pastoralists and four Abu Junuk Nuba farmers died in clashes in late September 2007. A number of provocative incidents preceded the clash: the Missiriya were accused of sabotaging Abu Junuk water sources, and attacking and killing people repairing them, while the Abu Junuk allegedly attacked and killed Missiriya herders and kidnapped two children. The Abu Junuk subsequently fled their homes in Quba, Laloba, Sifiira, and Hanbol villages. There have also been clashes between Nuba farmers and Arab traders in eastern areas rich in gum arabic, timber, and palm trees; between returnees and labourers on mechanized farms, especially around

the Habila scheme; and among Nuba agro-pastoralists, around Debi and Dilling.<sup>28</sup> Small-scale armed clashes between Missiriya and the Kamda Nuba, and Daju and the Missiriya, have been common throughout 2008 around Lagawa town, claiming upwards of 20 lives. They usually occur around water points or along *marahil*. In the 'Goz Corridor', west of Dilling and close to the Lagawa oilfields, there have also been intermittent conflicts between armed Missiriya and Ajang Nuba since most of the Nuba groups threw their political support behind the SPLM after the CPA was signed, and the Nuba in the PDF aligned themselves with the SPLA.

Conflict over land is resulting in increased tensions. In the last year, interviewed Nuba and other African

groups<sup>29</sup> say they detect a new dimension to the conflict, especially in the east of the mountains where an internal UN report speaks of 'an unprecedented level of insecurity', and UNMIS monitors warn that 'armed nomads (are) terrorizing villages'. Local people say this is no longer resource-related violence: young Arabs have G3 rifles—reportedly new—and talk about driving non-Arabs out of the mountains.<sup>30</sup> Fears were first aroused at the time of the CPA negotiations, with the emergence of a shadowy, Arab supremacist movement calling itself the *Awlad al Ferek* ('Sons of the Cattle Pens') that claimed the SPLA wanted to drive Arabs from the mountains. Some Nuba link the group to the *Tajamu al Arabi*, representing an inflammatory mix of Arab supremacy and Islamic extremism,



Nuba boy with war-related graffiti, 2000.  
© Liz Gilbert/Corbis Sygma

## Box 1 Demographics, violence, and the 2009 elections

Political analysts link recent violence in the east to the 2009 elections and preparations by government hardliners to achieve political ends through military means in an area of the Nuba Mountains where the SPLM/A has only recently begun to win support.<sup>31</sup> In the last elections in 1986, the Sudanese National Party of Philip Ghaboush, a Nuba pastor, won all the constituencies in the western and central mountains, but lost to northern parties—the Umma Party and the Democratic Union Party—in the east. During the war, the SPLA failed to establish a foothold in the east, despite a push in 1990. Since it ended, the SPLM has opened political offices throughout the east, challenging the NCP for power.

Over the last year, SPLM-administered schools have been burned, usually at night, in a number of areas reoccupied by the GoS from 2002–05, such as Shatt Damam, Buram, Bilynga, south of Kadugli, Um Dehelib in Longan, and Jebeleen, near Abu Kershola.<sup>32</sup> SPLM offices have also been attacked and its flags burned in a number of locations, including Buram and Jebeleen. On Eid al Adha (The Islamic Festival of Sacrifice) on 20 December 2007, armed Arabs on camels attacked farms belonging to members of the Hausa north of Abu Jebeha, wounding nine people. The Hausa said the attackers told them to leave, as they did not own the land.<sup>33</sup> Before the CPA, many Hausa supported the NIF. Analysts believe the NCP is attempting to fix the elections by changing the area's demographics.

SPLM cadres have stepped up political mobilization for the elections as a result. African tribes in many areas have organized to defend themselves—sometimes with the help of SPLA and/or veterans; sometimes through tactical alliances, including with Shanabla Abbala competing against Baggara for land;<sup>34</sup> and sometimes with their own guns, including former PDF weapons. Relief workers visiting the predominantly Hawazma village of Fayo recently found the market filled with traders and men in civilian dress carrying Kalashnikovs: Koalib Nuba farmers in the surrounding rural areas were also armed.<sup>35</sup> Many Nuba are armed and semi-organized in local militias, loosely connected with the SPLA. The Ajang Nuba group (which includes the Abu Junuk, Kasha, Mendel, and Suboi) all have armed members ready to aid one another. In the Abu Junuk incident (see p. 4), one witness saw 800–1,000 armed, uniformed fighters who identified themselves as Nuba.<sup>36</sup>

whose rhetoric in Darfur in the 1980s laid the ideological foundations for the *Janjawid*.<sup>37</sup> One of the *Tajamu's* main directives set out an agenda for dominating Darfur and Kordofan by 2020, in part through 'infiltration in the army and security services'.<sup>38</sup>

Concern over a resurgence of Arab supremacism deepened in mid-2007 after a series of ethnically-targeted attacks of unusual brutality. On 28 May 2007, armed men riding camels stopped a truck near the village of Jabalat, between Abu Kershola and Al Fayd, and robbed all non-Arab passengers. The attackers reassured Arab travelers on the truck that they need not fear because they were 'cousins'. A Sudanese human rights lawyer who investigated the attack said six Nuba women were raped.<sup>39</sup> He quoted police who said that one of the attackers had dropped a G3 rifle as he made off, and another was captured in possession of a Kalashnikov.<sup>40</sup> In a statement on the attack, the Sudan Organization Against Torture said: 'This trend of attacks on innocent civilians has been repeated in many areas of the eastern part of

South Kordofan, and mainly carried out by well-organized Arab militias determined to destabilize the area and create a sense of insecurity among the population, mostly black African tribes, to induce them to flee.'<sup>41</sup>

In June 2007, armed men killed 10 people in three days of attacks on the road between Kauda and Mendi. Five of the victims were Nuba women. They were raped and mutilated. Some of the attackers wore military uniform.<sup>42</sup> Arabs riding camels tried to disrupt a conference of Koalib Nuba in Um Burumbita, brandishing new G3s and shouting: 'This is our land.'<sup>43</sup> In some areas, farmers were told to leave within a month or face 'all-out war.'<sup>44</sup> In the single area of Abu Kershola, 13 diesel generators for water pumps were destroyed in 2007, mostly at night. Police described the attacks as 'systematic'.<sup>45</sup> In some attacks, mango trees were cut down and gates opened, allowing cattle to devastate farms.

The deeply fragmented social and political fabric of the area, combined with the absence of the rule of law, has caused different groups to compete at

local level for a variety of resources and interests. The likelihood of ongoing and escalated armed conflict in the region has been increased by the breakdown of a traditional system in which regular, inter-tribal conferences were held prior to the migration of nomads.

UNMIS monitors in rural areas say they do not have the mandate or resources to prevent violence; all they can do is 'verify and report'. Critics say that, in contrast to the JMC, UNMIS chooses to interpret its mandate narrowly, and that its resources are concentrated, problematically, in Kadugli. Observers in Kauda say the UNMIS team covering the east of the Nuba Mountains region has less than 20 military observers to patrol 32,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and no workshop, welder, or mechanic to keep its cars running; monitors add that requests for helicopters from Kadugli have been held up for over a month at a time. Perceived UN inaction, compounded by the silence of countries once outspoken about the region, have persuaded many Nuba that peace is not sustainable, and that preparation for war is necessary.

## SPLA forces and militias

Many Nuba in SPLM areas opposed the SPLA's withdrawal, which they wanted to be linked to the disarmament of government-supported militias and the downsizing of the SAF. But SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir urged them to 'take the moral high ground'—and they reluctantly accepted.<sup>46</sup> Commander Izaat Kuku, the SPLA officer in charge of the forces at Lake Abiad, assured worried community leaders that the main body of the SPLA was only a few hours away and would intervene rapidly should there be a need.<sup>47</sup>

UNMIS officers in SPLM areas believe the 'main backbone' of the SPLA has moved to Lake Abiad, south of Buram, on the border with Unity State,<sup>48</sup> but say that not all those men who set out eventually arrived: some (with their weapons) dropped out en route. The withdrawal was undertaken



## Nuba SPLA commanders are not convinced that the GoSS is committed to supporting them

without any oversight or logistical support from UNMIS or any other international organization, an omission that some UNMIS officers confidentially criticize. They say the fact that some men walked and others rode bicycles encouraged 'slippage'. SPLA commanders, however, insist that all forces have deployed out of the mountains, leaving behind only 1,436 war wounded, 4,036 veterans and women, 866 members of the civil service formerly in the SPLA, and 1,500 police. They say more than 8,000 men on active service have departed—one

brigade to the oil-rich Bentiu area in August 2007, and the remainder to Lake Abiad (with a temporary stop in Kharasana in March 2008).<sup>49</sup>

In addition to slippage, SPLA commanders acknowledge that many of the men who transferred to Lake Abiad turned straight around, declaring conditions to be unacceptable: there was no fresh water, medicine, or accommodation, and almost no building materials because fires had destroyed the vegetation. This trend was reversed only after the SPLM/A pointed out that the CPA bans training in South Kordofan

outside the framework of the JIUs.<sup>50</sup> Many deserters returned, joined by hundreds of new recruits drawn by the promise of new equipment. By April, SPLA headquarters in Juba had dispatched uniforms, shoes, and an undisclosed number of light weapons. Promised heavy weapons remained in Juba, reportedly waiting for trucks to deliver them.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, Nuba commanders, who already feel betrayed by the CPA, are not convinced that the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) is committed to supporting them.

Morale is low among the 3,000 men who form the SPLA component of the JIUs and who have not, according to their commander, 'received a single bullet' from the government.<sup>52</sup> Intended by the CPA to act as 'a symbol of national unity,' should the 2011 referendum indicate a desire for unity, the JIUs are instead a symbol of continu-



SPLA soldiers gather at Lake Abiad assembly area on the border of South Kordofan and Unity States, 2007. © Tim McKulka

ing disunity. There is no 'uniformity in . . . supplies, armament, and equipment', as stipulated in the CPA.<sup>53</sup> SPLA forces in the JIUs are equipped with old Kalashnikovs, some 82 mm mortars, and 12.7 mm machine guns.<sup>54</sup> UNMIS observers believe that in contrast the SAF components of the JIUs have heavy weapons, including artillery in some locations, but say that their mandate allows them only to ask questions—not to attempt verification. In all JIU locations except Julud, SAF and SPLA barracks exist side by side, exacerbating the lack of unity between the forces.

The imbalance is equally pronounced in the police, and the absence of an effective force increases the likelihood of the military becoming involved in matters of public security, thereby escalating local conflict. The 3,000 SPLA police—1,500 listed as armed combatants, and an equal number who are unarmed—are short of transport, communications equipment, and uniforms.<sup>55</sup> Only 1,600 SPLA policemen receive salaries from Juba. In contrast, UNMIS monitors say northern police, who had only Kalashnikovs before the war, are now armed with light and heavy mortars, grenades, and Degtyaryov-Shpagin anti-aircraft machine guns.

In the last six months, SPLA ranks have swelled—in contravention of the CPA—by 1,500 new recruits, mostly Missiriya, many of them former PDF fighters.<sup>56</sup> Dissatisfaction in the local PDF became vocal in 2006, especially among the Missiriya who felt betrayed by the abolition of Western Kordofan State, the unfavourable Abyei Boundary Commission report,<sup>57</sup> the government's failure to integrate or compensate former PDF fighters, and the absence of any peace dividend. They accused Khartoum of ignoring their development needs, and the international community of bias.

The SPLA resolved to recruit a battalion as an advance guard for a future war.<sup>58</sup> With monthly salaries of USD 150 on offer, thousands turned up at the recruiting station in Debab. In September 2007, SPLA General Head-

quarters in Juba formed a committee to screen them.<sup>59</sup> Some 1,500 were accepted and moved to the Pariang area, south of the North–South border. Led by a former PDF commander from the Humur branch of the Missiriya, Hassan Hamid, they were told they would be trained and integrated into the SPLA, in further violation of the CPA.<sup>60</sup>

## Government and allied forces

The CPA required the SAF to 'reduce the deployment of its forces in Nuba Mountains to peace-time level'.<sup>61</sup> Before the outbreak of war, the SAF had a single battalion in South Kordofan, headquartered in Dilling.<sup>62</sup> Today there are three divisions—the 5<sup>th</sup> in Kadugli; the 14<sup>th</sup> in Dilling; and the 10<sup>th</sup> in Babanusa, formerly in Western Kordofan (see Table 1). The SAF maintain that its forces have the right 'to stay in the northern sector' (that is, anywhere north of the 1956 border).

In the immediate aftermath of the 2002 ceasefire, SAF troop levels across the mountains diminished, a move many observers linked to the beginning of hostilities in Darfur. But in recent months they have been on the rise. In February 2008, a new SAF unit arrived in Um Dorein, south-east of Kadugli, and the site of an existing company,

occupying a boys' school there. SPLA Acting Commissioner Ibrahim Sebit Angolo complained to the SAF and UNMIS, in vain.<sup>63</sup> In March, a new brigade arrived south-west of Kadugli. The SAF commander, according to UN officers, refused to allow UNMIS to monitor the new unit. Training of new recruits is reportedly under way in many locations, mostly in the west of the mountains. Training in Kadugli takes place in barracks on the main road—in full view of UNMIS. With virtually no development in South Kordofan since the war ended, monthly salaries of 300–400 Sudanese pounds (approximately USD 150–200) are a powerful inducement to new recruits.<sup>64</sup>

Some estimates put the number of PDF (formed in 1989 as a government-sponsored militia under the jurisdiction of the army) in the Nuba Mountains today as high as 20,000. Community leaders, local administration officers, and SPLA commanders say the paramilitary force has been reorganized since the CPA, retrained—often by retired SAF officers—and is now being rearmed with a strong ethnic bias.<sup>65</sup> In the past, many PDF were Nuba, mostly forcibly conscripted. With the Bürgenstock ceasefire, most Nuba forced into the PDF declared for the SPLM.

Military observers say it is not uncommon for a PDF unit, of which there are dozens, to be battalion-strength.

### Box 2 The Central Reserve Police: an emerging threat

One of the biggest causes of concern in the Nuba Mountains is the rapid expansion of the Central Reserve Police (CRP) or *Ittihad al Merkazi*. A gendarmerie commanded by the Interior Ministry, the CRP was originally set up for riot control, but emerged as one of the government's main fighting forces in Darfur, with strong militia connections. In 2004, CRP officers began training recruits in Musa Hilal's Misteriha barracks<sup>66</sup> in North Darfur; and, in 2008, Western military observers say Arab militiamen were recruited into the CRP after Darfur rebels attacked Omdurman in May. The group is primarily made up of people from outside the region and is extremely loyal to the NCP, unlike much of the army, police, and other forces that draw on local Nuba, Arabs, and other groups.

A confidential SPLA report, dated 13 March 2008, estimates that the number of CRP in the Nuba Mountains has increased from a few dozen in Kadugli two years ago to almost 2,000 today. The report says many served in the army in South Sudan before the SAF deployed out, merely exchanging military uniforms for police garb on being sent to the mountains. Key locations are Abbasiya and Khor Dilib near Al Fayd, where one of the force's officers—identified only as Major Maas—is accused by the SPLA of running a private militia. SPLA officers claim that the CRP is training irregulars in Dilling County.

The CRP is reportedly equipped with weapons never before deployed by Sudanese police—light and heavy machine guns, RPG-7s, 82 mm mortars, and, according to one informant, 9K11 anti-tank missiles. UNMIS observers believe they have access to heavier SAF weapons, including 105 mm and 130 mm artillery.

Table 1 **Armed elements in the Nuba Mountains area**

Name	Leaders	Alignment	Stated strength	Areas of operation	CPA	Remarks
<b>Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)</b>	-	SAF	5 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> Divisions and elements of the 14 <sup>th</sup>	Headquarters in Kadugli, Babanussa, and Dilling, with smaller units across the region	To be downsized to peacetime levels after formation of the JIUs	The conflict around Abyei has brought new units into South Kordofan that refuse UN monitoring
<b>Central Reserve Police (CRP)</b>	-	SAF	2,000 (SPLA estimate)	Region-wide	Not addressed in CPA	Massively expanded in the last two years (see p. 7)
<b>Popular Defence Forces (PDF)</b>	-	SAF	UN estimates range from 5,000 to 20,000, with independent estimates at the higher end	Region-wide, with the exception of the SPLM-controlled 'goose eggs'	To be absorbed into the regular forces or dissolved	Some limited defections to SPLM/A by dissatisfied Missiriya PDF members in the last six months
<b>Joint Integrated Units (JIU)</b>	Brig. Jagod Makwar, Nuba	Troops remain divided along SAF / SPLA lines	6,000 divided equally between SAF and SPLA	Kadugli, Heiban, Talodi, Buram, Julud, Um Sirdiba, Dilling and Arid near Lawaga	Envisaged as the core of a new national army should the 2011 referendum indicate a desire for unity	The JIUs are funded centrally, by the Government of National Unity, but still answer to separate military commands
<b>Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)</b>	Brig. Izzat Kuku, Nuba	SPLA	SPLA claims 9,000 troops moved south of the 1956 border, to Lake Abiad and Bentiu (but this is disputed)	-	All SPLA forces not in the JIUs to move south of the 1956 border	Brig. Izzat has refused to allow UNMIS monitoring of Lake Abiad
<b>Debab Forces</b>	Brig. Hassan Hamid Saleh, Missiriya	SPLA	1,500 currently in the Pariang area, according to the SPLA, pending full integration into the SPLA; many others joined the SPLA police and other SPLM bodies	Debab, Kharasana, Bajayea, Dandur, Abu Sofifa	Unauthorized recruitment of new forces is in contravention of the CPA	The Missiriya leadership is widely thought to be keeping options open with other forces
<b>South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF)</b>	Gen. Paulino Matieb	SPLA	One company in Kharasana, according to the SPLA	Kharasana	Required to align with SAF or SPLA and integrate	Largely integrated into the SPLA following the January 2006 Juba Declaration
<b>The Central Sudan People's Liberation Army</b>	Juma Wakil Hamad Angil	Self-styled independents	The group claims to have widespread support, but there is no evidence of this	The group's two main leaders are both Kujuriya Nuba, from the Dilling area	Required to align with SAF or SPLA and integrate	Suspected pro-government spoiler group
<b>Nuba Mountains II</b>	Al Bulola Hamed Abdul Bagi	Ostensibly pro-SPLA	Abdul Bagi claims to be able to raise 40,000 men	Most activities to date in the Um Burumbita area	Required to align with SAF or SPLA and integrate	Suspected pro-government spoiler group

One confidential report estimates there are 1,200 irregulars in El Fayd alone—though only half are said to be armed—divided into two groups: the Karari forces, named after the last stand of the Mahdist army in 1898, and the *Nasir el Mobin* (Clear Victory) unit. A second unit east of Al Azraq, reportedly established in 2002, is named *Liwa al Jihad* (Jihad Brigade). Both are under

the command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division in Abu Jebiha. According to the SPLM commissioner of Abu Jebiha, Musa Kotcho, the number of SAF and PDF there has risen in the last year from fewer than 1,000 to approximately 1,500 men, drawn almost exclusively from Arab tribes—the Hawazma, Awlad Himeid, Kenana, and Kawahla.

A new PDF unit, reported by SPLA officers to be company-strength, was also established recently in Terter—a contested area on the eastern border of the Nuba Mountains, in the Block 7E concession of the state oil company, Petrodar. An estimated 80 per cent of the irregulars in Terter are reportedly from the Kawahla tribe.<sup>67</sup> During the war, the Kawahla administered Nuba



communities in the south-east of the mountains. Since the war ended, many Nuba have established separate administrations from the Kawahla—the Longan, for example, elected their own *mek* (paramount chief) and started collecting their own taxes<sup>68</sup>—and long-standing competition over natural resources, including gum arabic and timber, has taken on political and racial dimensions.<sup>69</sup>

## Armed groups

As disillusionment with the CPA grows and election fever mounts, it is widely believed that both the SAF and the SPLA are arming local groups.<sup>70</sup> The potential for armed group activity is fuelled by the large numbers of ex-combatants, the near absence of a comprehensive reintegration programme since organized hostilities ended in 2005, and the presence of thousands of unemployed youths—many of them graduates—who joined the SPLA and received military training after the war ended, but who now feel marginalized by the SPLM/A, which they say regards them with suspicion.

Throughout Sudan and the wider region, pastoralists habitually carry weapons to protect themselves and their animals during migrations. In the Nuba Mountains, some tribes—prime among them the Umbororo, a nomadic tribe originating in West Africa and described by Nuba as a ‘model’ for co-existence—carry them only for self-defence. At the other end of the spectrum, the Shanabla, who are Arab camel nomads from North Kordofan, have gained a reputation as opportunistic bandits. They are accused of looting and kidnapping children on their northwards migrations, and are frequently involved in skirmishes as they compete for water with Nuba tribes, Arab pastoralists, and mechanized farmers.

Since the CPA, UNMIS monitors report seeing more ‘armed nomads’, including Bideriya pastoralists from North Kordofan in 2007, who are new to the Nuba Mountains. In October

2007, UNMIS observers verified that in Um Bartamba, a village near Um Burumbita abandoned during the war but which is now being resettled, the Bideriya entered farms with their cows and caused widespread destruction, including of water pumps. Local people quoted the Bideriya as saying they had been armed by Khartoum.

Municipal authorities and SPLA officers say weapons are sent from Khartoum and Kadugli to SAF garrisons at night, and are distributed to militias. The line between PDF and ‘armed nomads’ can be blurred, especially in the eastern part of the region where locals are now speaking of *Janjawid*. Commissioner Kotcho reported that 1,000 weapons were trucked into Abu Jebeha on 13 April 2008 and delivered to Brigade Commander Jibril Ibrahim Abdalla, whose name is repeatedly linked to the arming and training of irregulars in Abu Jebeha.<sup>71</sup> In Talodi area, Commander Simon Tap of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division reportedly sent ammunition to the Awlad Bashir clan of the Hawazma after they killed six Nuba near a water point, prompting local SPLM administrators to close the area to Baggara during the harvest season.<sup>72</sup> Villagers living near PDF units in a number of villages say they have seen Kalashnikovs being transported secretly—presumably to Arab tribes—sometimes in cars, but more frequently hidden in straw mats stacked on donkey carts.<sup>73</sup>

At the height of tensions between Arab Ma’alia and Manadil and Sobai Nuba in 2006, which resulted in 20 Ma’alia and 12 Nuba combatant deaths on 31 July, empty boxes of G3 rifles were found in the bush where government helicopters had landed a few days earlier.<sup>74</sup> Soon after, Ma’alia were seen carrying G3s that appeared to be new.<sup>75</sup> The Ma’alia, in turn, accuse the SPLA of supplying Nuba with arms and ammunition.

Two recently formed armed groups of uncertain allegiance are widely suspected by interviewed Nuba of being part of a government strategy to disrupt the elections. The Central Sudan

People’s Liberation Army announced itself in the Khartoum newspaper *Al Rai al Aam* on 17 February 2008. Its founder, Juma Wakil Hamad Angil, a former SPLM chairman in Gezira State in eastern Sudan, said the southern army used Nuba to fight in the South, then left the mountains ‘without security’. He called the SPLA manifesto ‘a lie’: it promised a New Sudan, but the SPLA was ‘planning for separation’. Dr. Juma, a Kujariya Nuba from Dilling, said that ‘friends in Khartoum’ were helping him and that he had some arms, but needed more. He travelled to Darfur in early 2008 and spent several weeks with SLA-Unity in Haskanita, seeking both men and weapons.<sup>76</sup> SLA-Unity claims it gave him only moral support. Dr. Juma’s expressed support for Telefon Kuku, an SPLA officer arrested for mutiny after handing Buram to the government without a fight in 1993, which has led many Nuba to question his allegiance.

A second armed group, Nuba Mountains II, first surfaced in the Um Burumbita area early in 2008, recruiting in the name of the SPLA. Its leader, al Bulola Hamed Abdul Bagi, a member of the Hawazma tribe and a former sergeant in the Sudanese army, was previously unknown to SPLA commanders. He travelled to Juba, where he met Riek Machar, vice president of South Sudan, and then to the Nuba Mountains region to meet Brigadier Jagod Makwar, the SPLA officer in command of the JIUs. Arriving in a Land Cruiser purchased in Khartoum and accompanied by four colleagues in civilian clothes, Abdel Bagi claimed he had 40,000 men ready to join the SPLA reportedly recruited in Khartoum. SPLA headquarters in Juba ordered that he be shunned.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

It is clear that security is the biggest immediate challenge in the Nuba Mountains. A combination of weak political will, an international community distracted by Darfur, and UNMIS’s underperformance has led to the fail-

ure of CPA implementation in South Kordofan. Ethnic tensions are mounting in the region, and recovery and development plans are overshadowed by the danger of a return to open conflict. Discontent over the CPA's failure to deliver economic development is turning to anger, and many now view war in the Nuba Mountains as inevitable. An emerging local narrative sees parallels with the events that led to the Darfur conflict.<sup>78</sup>

Clashes between Arab herders and Nuba farmers are an ever-present concern, as is spillover from any Missiriya–SPLA conflict around Abyei. Heavy fighting between the SAF and the SPLA in Abyei in mid-May left the town burned to the ground and caused the displacement of about 50,000 civilians. There is reported movement of both SAF and SPLA troops on the border between Abyei locality and the rest of South Kordofan. In the longer term, many Nuba fear 'war by proxy' as national elections approach.

The JIUs, designed to be a pillar of the CPA, are militarily ineffective and could even add a layer of disruption to sensitive local dynamics. When fighting erupted in Abyei, the JIU there split along its SAF–SPLA fault-line. Without greater efforts to support the JIUs, discourage militias, encourage reconciliation, and organize free and fair elections, the little that has been achieved in the Nuba Mountains region in six and a half years of peace risks being swept away in a new conflagration.

At the same time, there is an urgent need for UNMIS to reorient and refocus its observers, protection force, and civil affairs officers on the transitional areas—especially Abyei and South Kordofan—in order to better understand these areas and their centrality to the future stability of Sudan. If war resumes in the Nuba Mountains, there is little reason to believe the UN system will be able to intervene meaningfully, given its current mandate,<sup>79</sup> capacities, and understanding. In the absence of an internationally-sponsored plan to address insecurity in the region, any protective measures are likely to be ad hoc, temporary, and insufficient. ■

## Notes

*This Issue Brief was prepared by the HSBA, and includes research by Julie Flint, an independent researcher and journalist who has published widely on Sudan, including co-authoring, with Alex De Waal, Darfur: A New History of a Long War (Zed Books, 2008).*

- 1 The Nuba Mountains region was defined by the 2002 ceasefire as the five provinces of former South Kordofan, plus Lagawa province in former Western Kordofan.
- 2 AFP (2008).
- 3 The Security Arrangements protocol of 25 September 2003 requires that all SPLA forces not in the JIUs 'shall be redeployed South of the North–South border of 1/1/1956 as soon as the Joint Integrated Units are formed and deployed under international monitoring and assistance'.
- 4 Southerners accuse Khartoum of moving the border further south after the discovery of oil and diamonds. Border skirmishes that began in December 2007 climaxed in April 2008 around Kharasana, a town of strategic importance in the contest over Abyei that lies north of Heglig and its surrounding oil fields.
- 5 95.3 per cent of the CPA-authorized SAF contingent and 85.7 per cent of the SPLA contingent had been verified as deployed at the end of May 2008. UNMIS (2008), p. 36. For an analysis of the redeployment of SAF and SPLA forces, and the delays in forming the JIUs, see Small Arms Survey (2008a).
- 6 AFP (2008). However, verified redeployment is very uneven. As of the end of May 2008, approximately 95 per cent of the 46,403 SAF troops initially stated as being south of the 1956 border were verified as having redeployed north of the border. In contrast, only 10.7 per cent of the SPLA's declared forces (numbering 59,056) in South Kordofan and Southern Blue Nile had been verified as having redeployed south of the line. See UNMIS (2008), paragraphs 178 and 179.
- 7 Tensions and insecurity have also been high in other areas of South Kordofan, but are beyond the scope of this *Issue Brief* for which research was undertaken only in SPLM-controlled areas.
- 8 The JMC is sometimes referred to as the JMC/Joint Monitoring Mission. Its mandate was to monitor the Bürgenstock ceasefire agreement. See Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Nuba (2002), Article VII.
- 9 The Hawazma came to South Kordofan much earlier than the Missiriya. When the latter arrived, they violently displaced the former eastwards.

- 10 Nadel (1947).
- 11 African Rights (1995), p. 289.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 BBC (1995).
- 14 See Chapter 5 of the CPA, 'Resolution of the conflict in the two States of South Kordofan and Blue Nile'.
- 15 The CPA states that a 'popular consultation is a democratic right and mechanism to ascertain the views of the people of South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile States on the comprehensive agreement reached...'. See Chapter V, Article 3.1. Should the legislature find any 'shortcomings' in the constitutional, political, or administrative arrangements of the CPA, it has the right to 'engage in negotiations' with the National Government to rectify the situation (Article 3.6).
- 16 Suleiman Rahhal (2007).
- 17 See CPA, Chapter VI, Article 3c.
- 18 The present NCP governor, Omar Suleiman, was at the time head of the Peace and Resettlement Commission, established in April 1991, and spoke of plans for resettling 500,000 people—the entire population of contested and SPLA-controlled areas.
- 19 Notably, in the state parliament in Kadugli, the CPA allocated the ruling NCP a 55 per cent majority, compared to the SPLM's 45 per cent.
- 20 CPA, Chapter V, Article 4.
- 21 Pantuliano, Buchanan-Smith, and Murphy (2007).
- 22 CPA, Chapter VI, p. 106.
- 23 CPA, Chapter VI, p. 114. See Small Arms Survey (2008a) for more on the JIUs.
- 24 Interview with SPLA police chief, Lt. Col. Abdel Hafiz Hussein, Lewere, April 2008.
- 25 For an update on the status of OAGs in South Sudan, see Small Arms Survey (2008b).
- 26 Interviews with Nuba community members and representatives, South Kordofan, April 2008.
- 27 Pantuliano, Buchanan-Smith, and Murphy (2007).
- 28 Vaux, Pantuliano, and Srinivasan (2008).
- 29 There are a number of small, settled groups of West African origin in the region, including Hausa in the eastern part.
- 30 Interviews with local officials, community workers, and farmers from many areas of Rashad County, April 2008.
- 31 Interview with Hafiz Mohamed of Justice Africa, London, March 2008.
- 32 Interviews with tribal and community leaders, international NGOs, and SPLM officials, South Kordofan, April 2008.
- 33 Interview with Omda Ibrahim Izhaq, Lewere, April 2008.
- 34 Interview with South Kordofan Finance Minister Ahmad Saeed, Nairobi, March 2008.

- 35 Interview with members of the Community Based Organization Calendar, Kauda, April 2008.
  - 36 Interview with UN source, May 2008.
  - 37 *Janjawid* is a local Arabic term with echoes of the Arabic words *jim* (the letter 'G', referring to the G3 rifle), *jinn* (devil), and *jawad* (horse). In the current Darfur conflict the term refers to government-backed ethnic militias that recruit mostly from the Arab Abbala camel herders of North and West Darfur.
  - 38 Flint and de Waal (2008), p. 53.
  - 39 Interview with a Sudanese human rights researcher, who sought anonymity, London, 25 April 2008.
  - 40 Ibid.
  - 41 SOAT (2007).
  - 42 Interviews with UNMIS monitors, Kauda, April 2008.
  - 43 Interview with veteran Nuba politician Anour Burtail, Kauda, April 2008.
  - 44 Interviews with human rights monitors, London and Kauda, March–April 2008.
  - 45 Confidential report, *Human Rights Violations in Rashad County*, undated.
  - 46 Interview with South Kordofan Finance Minister Ahmad Saeed, Nairobi, March 2008.
  - 47 Interview with veteran Nuba politician Anour Burtail.
  - 48 The SAF have since claimed that this is on the northern side of the disputed 1956 line.
  - 49 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 50 CPA Security Arrangements, Annexure 1, p. 114.
  - 51 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 52 Ibid.
  - 53 CPA, Chapter VI, Annexure 1, p. 129.
  - 54 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 55 Interview with SPLA police chief, Lt. Col. Abdel Hafiz Hussein, Lewere, April 2008.
  - 56 Interviews with senior SPLM officials and SPLA commanders, April 2008.
  - 57 Available online at <<http://www.sudan-archive.net/cgi-bin/sudan?a=d&d=D1d18>>.
  - 58 SPLA sources, April 2008.
  - 59 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 60 Ibid.
  - 61 CPA, Chapter VI, Annexure 1, p. 143.
  - 62 More than a dozen SPLA officers interviewed concurred with this appraisal. They said the battalion had companies in Heiban, Liri, Talodi, and Kadugli.
  - 63 Interview with the SPLA Acting Commissioner for Kadugli County, Ibrahim Sebit Angolo, Kurchi, April 2008.
  - 64 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 65 An internal SPLA police report, dated March 2008, gives many details of the rearming, including logistical routes, suppliers, and stores.
  - 66 Flint and de Waal (2008), p. 127.
  - 67 Interviews with Musa Kotcho and UNMIS monitors, Kauda, March–April 2008.
  - 68 Interview with Mohamed Omar, South Kordofan Assessment and Evaluation Commission, April 2008.
  - 69 Pact Sudan (2007).
  - 70 Vaux, Pantuliano, and Srinivasan (2008), Annex 5.
  - 71 Interviews with police, local officials, and community leaders from Abu Jebaha, Kauda, and Lewere, April 2008.
  - 72 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 73 Interviews with villagers from the eastern and western *jebels*, Kauda and Lewere, April 2008.
  - 74 Interviews with SPLM officials from Manadil area, Kauda, April 2008.
  - 75 Interviews with SPLM and relief officials, Kauda, April 2008.
  - 76 Telephone interview, January 2008.
  - 77 Interview with Brig. Jagod Makwar, SPLA commander of the JIUs, Um Sirdiba, April 2008.
  - 78 Ousman (2008).
  - 79 UNMIS' new mandate (SCR 1812 of 30 April), refers repeatedly to Abyei, but makes no mention of South Kordofan.
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The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a multi-year project administered by the Small Arms Survey. It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian government, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely, empirical research the project supports violence reduction initiatives, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes, incentive schemes for civilian arms collection, as well as security sector reform and arms control interventions across Sudan. The HSBA also offers policy-relevant advice on redressing insecurity.

Sudan Issue Briefs are designed to provide periodic snapshots of baseline information in a timely and reader-friendly format. The HSBA also generates a series of longer and more detailed Working Papers in English and Arabic, available at [www.smallarmssurvey.org/sudan](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sudan).

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