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TO: The Chairman, JMEC
FROM: The Chairman, CTSAMM
DATE: 04 Sep 2017

**SUBJECT: CTSAMM REPORT 049 – REPORT INTO AMBUSHES IN EASTERN
EQUATORIA STATE**

Your Excellency,

Please find attached a CTSAMM report on ambushes in Eastern Equatoria State. This report was discussed at the CTSAMM meeting of 23 August 2017.

Signed:

Major General Molla Hailemariam
Chairman
CTSAMM

CTSAMM REPORT NUMBER 049
REPORT INTO AMBUSHES IN EASTERN EQUATORIA STATE

Executive Summary

The threat of ambush in Eastern Equatoria appears to be increasing. On 2 August 2017 there was the second serious fatal ambush on the Juba-Nimule road in two months. It was perpetrated by heavily armed men and civilians were killed. Other ambushes – particularly those to the west of Torit – have been perpetrated by “men in uniform”.

Ambushes pose a significant threat to the free movement of goods and people.

CTSAMM reminds the Parties that ambushes constitute a serious violation of the PCTSA, and that under the PCTSA they have an obligation to control all armed groups under their influence and control, and also have a duty to protect civilians.

AMBUSHES IN EASTERN EQUATORIA STATE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background:

- It is apparent that ambushes are becoming an increasingly frequent feature of conflict in Eastern Equatoria State. The Juba – Nimule road is particularly vulnerable.
- At the last CTSAMM meeting on 20 July we reported an ambush that took place on the Juba-Nimule road near the village of MOLI. The SPLA-IO (RM) claimed responsibility for this ambush, and CTSAMM decided it was a clear violation of the PCTSA.
- The commander allegedly responsible for this and other attacks – Brigadier General David Okot - has, according to a statement by the SPLA-IO (TD) military spokesman Colonel Dickson Gatluak, joined the Government. Colonel Gatluak stated that as Brigadier General Okot leads a “Huge number of opposition forces” his change of allegiance would result in there being no more ambushes in the Juba-Nimule road. Unfortunately there was another ambush on 2 August 2017.
- It is also apparent there is an increase in the number of ambushes in Eastern Equatoria in general, especially in the area to the west of Torit.

1.2 Aim: The purpose of this initial report is to provide members of CTSAMM with information about recent ambushes in Eastern Equatoria with observations and recommendations.

1.3 Methodology

- Following an investigation into the ambush of 8 June, the MVT based in Torit have been particularly aware of the issue of ambushes. They have followed the situation closely liaising with all relevant stakeholders.
- The MVT in Torit has been directed by the Chairman of CTSAMM to investigate all ambushes, especially those on the Juba-Nimule road incident, in order to be able to attribute responsibility if possible and to make recommendations.

2.0 **Initial findings:**

2.1 Juba-Nimule road ambush 2 August 2017:

- On 2 August 2017 at about 10.00 Hrs A civilian bus and another vehicle travelling from Nimule to Juba was ambushed in Moli Boba, in the same area as the ambush of 8 June 2017.
- Both vehicles were burnt. At least 5 people were killed: one was a National Security officer, three were South Sudanese Civilians and one was a Ugandan civilian (the owner of the second vehicle). There were thirteen people injured, three of whom were women.
- Witnesses described the attackers as using machine-guns and RPG's. They were not identified, and so far there has been no claim of responsibility from any party.

2.2 Other ambushes in Eastern Equatoria State: There have for a long time been criminals operating on the roads of Eastern Equatoria, especially towards Kapoeta. However, there is an apparent increase in the number of ambushes, west of Torit. The MVT in Torit has recently received information about three cases:

- West of Torit - Agoro Boma, near Magwi: There were two consecutive alleged ambushes of vehicles driving from Juba to Magwi, one on 9 and one on 10 August. Both took place at about 17.00 Hrs, and both were perpetrated by men in uniform, and both appeared to be motivated by robbery with money and telephones being stolen. There were two cars attacked in the first ambush; civilians in the first car were robbed, but there were SPLA-IG soldiers in the second who were not. During the second ambush two SPLA-IG soldiers were wounded in the legs.
- East of Torit – Idolo Bridge: 5 uniformed men allegedly ambushed two civilian trucks moving towards Torit. There were no casualties, but money, phones and food were stolen.

3.0 Assessment:

- 3.1 The fatal Juba-Nimule ambush was carried out by “heavily armed” men. The other ambushes were carried out by “men in uniform”. It is not known who carried out the ambushes, and whether those who perpetrated them were with groups affiliated to the Parties or otherwise.
- 3.2 The Juba-Nimule road is a key route for the movement of people and trade between Uganda and South Sudan. The 2 August ambush was the second in two months which involved a heavy attack with loss of civilian life. If this ambush was carried out by an affiliated armed group it constitutes a clear violation of those articles of the COHA and PCTSA that cover the Protection of Civilians. The interruption of trade and free movement on the Juba-Nimule road caused by such ambushes has a negative impact on the already very difficult lives of South Sudanese people.
- 3.3 It is possible that the two ambushes near Magwi were perpetrated by the same unidentified group.

4.0 Conclusion:

- 4.1 Ambushes pose a serious threat to the free movement of goods and people, especially on the vital Juba-Nimule road. Civilians are particularly vulnerable, and many have lost their lives as the result of ambushes perpetrated by heavy-armed men deploying significant firepower.
- 4.2 CTSAMM condemns all ambushes, whether they are carried out by Unknown Armed Groups (UAG) or groups or personnel affiliated to the Parties.
- 4.3 The Parties have a duty under the PCTSA to control all armed groups under their influence or control, and also to protect civilians in the areas they control. A failure to do so constitutes a failure to implement the PCTSA.

5.0 Observations and Recommendations:

- 5.1 CTSAMM will continue to monitor the situation closely. The MVT's in both Torit and Juba have been directed to make this a priority task.
- 5.2 The Parties are reminded that ambushes constitute a serious violation of the provisions of the PCTSA, and they should exercise rigorous control over all armed groups under their influence or control. CTSAMM recommends that the Parties do all in their power to stop all types of ambush, from robberies of vehicles to major attacks resulting in the loss of life.
- 5.3 South Sudanese citizens are facing a significant threat to their lives and property when travelling on the roads of Eastern Equatoria. CTSAMM reminds the Parties – again – of their duty to protect civilians in the areas they control, and recommend that positive steps are taken to ensure the safety of the roads on which so much depends.