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TO: The Chairman, IGAD Council of Ministers
The Chairman, JMEC


FROM: The Chairman, CTSAMM

DATE: 9 May 2018

**SUBJECT: CTSAMM REPORT 2018/15 – REINFORCEMENT AND OFFENSIVE
MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE KAJO KEJI AREA**

Your Excellencies,

Please find attached a report on a violation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access (21 December 2017), specifically reinforcement and military operations which took place at BORI and SOKARE in the KAJO-KEJI area on 25 and 30 March 2018.


Major General Ibrahim Abduljelli
Chairman



Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism

CTSAMM REPORT 2018/15
REINFORCEMENT AND OFFENSIVE MILITARY OPERATIONS
IN THE KAJO KEJI AREA
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the end of March and beginning of April 2018 CTSAMM received a series of allegations from the SPLA-IO (RM) of attacks against several of their positions by the SPLA in the KAJO KEJI area in southern Central Equatorial State.

CTSAMM undertook an investigation into alleged attacks by the SPLA against SOKARE, a village which was under the control of the SPLA-IO (RM).

On their own admission, the SPLA attacked SOKARE on 25 March 2018, and then again on 30 March 2018 when they took it. Before the 30 March attack the SPLA reinforced their troops in BORI from JUBA. It was these troops CTSAMM found in occupation of SOKARE when they visited on 8 April 2018.

It the opinion of CTSAM that by attacking SOKARE on 25 March, reinforcing their troops at BORI on 28 March then attacking and taking SOKARE on 30 March 2018 the SPLA were in clear and blatant violation of the ACOH.



REINFORCEMENT AND FIGHTING IN THE KAJO KEJI AREA

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background:

- The Kajo Keji area is in what is known as Yei River State. When the number of states in the country was increased from 10 to 28 then 32, the original Kajo Keji County was spilt into 4 new counties: Kajo Keji, Nyepo, Liwolo and Kangapo.
- The area is prosperous and was relatively peaceful until the town of Kajo Keji was taken from opposition forces by the SPLA in December 2016. The town had been held by the SPLA-IO (RM) but just prior to it being taken by the SPLA they lost it to NAS. Most inhabitants of the area fled and are now living in refugee camps over the border in Uganda.
- In 'greater' Kajo Keji most of the towns and villages are under the control of the SPLA-IO (RM), apart from those found in Kajo Keji and Nyepo counties. The few civilians remaining in the area have been subject to harassment and abuse by the warring parties. This has been recorded and reported by CTSAMM.
- SPLA and SPLA-IO (RM) forces are in close proximity in the area, and neither have made any apparent attempt to disengage as they are obliged to do under the ACOH.
- There is tension within what is known as Yei River State and there have been several reports of conflict since the signing of the ACOH on 21 December 2017. CTSAMM submitted a report (2018/01) on fighting in the Morobo area and is in the process of conducting a number of other investigations.



- According to information given by the SPLA-IO (RM) to CTSAMM in 2018, the village of SOKARE was under the control of the SPLA-IO (RM). This had not been verified by CTSAMM

1.2 Allegations: CTSAMM received a series of allegations from the SPLA-IO (RM) sent to CTSAMM direct and also published in the form of press releases as follows:

- SPLA-IO (RM) Press Release dated 25 March 2018: "This morning at about 8:00am the regime's forces left their trenches and attacked our positions in Morsak and Sokare, Kajo Keji in an attempt to forcefully open the road from Kajo Keji to Panyume. The fight is heavy and still ongoing as I write."
- Letter 'Record of Violations' sent by SPLA-IO (RM) Directorate of Military Intelligence to CTSAMM dated 1 April 2018: " (B) On 25 March 2018, at 8.00 AM the regime forces left their trenches and attacked our position at Morsak and Sokare – Kajo Keji with the intention to open a Road of PANYUME. (C) On 28 March 2018 the Regime attacked our base at Agana – Kajo Keji,....."
- Message communication from the SPLA-IO (RM) to CTSAMM Yei MVT on 4 April 2018: Claims of heavy fighting in the KAJO KEJI area (reported in MVT Yei DSR 20180404)

1.2 Aim: The aim of this report is to describe the findings of investigations into the alleged attack at SOKARE, and attribute responsibility for violations of the ACOH where appropriate.

1.3 Methodology:

- On 7 and 8 April 2018 the Yei MVT visited KAJO KEJI, BORI and SOKARE where they were able to meet with and interview SPLA commanders.
- A visit to MANGALATORE planned for the week of 23 April 2018 to meet SPLA-IO (RM) officers did not take place due to coordination issues with the SPLA-IO (RM). However, the MVT was able to have some contact with the SPLA-IO (RM) by telephone and messaging, despite the closure of the Vivacell network (which was the main network used in the area).



2.0 Findings

- 2.1 The SPLA commander in KAJO KEJI did not offer any information about the alleged fighting between 25 March and 4 April 2018, but instead made an allegation about another incident that is yet to be investigated.
- 2.2 The SPLA commander in BORI again declined to say anything about the fighting, but like his superior officer in KAJO KEJI, made an allegation about an incident which is yet to be investigated.
- 2.3 The MVT attempted to get to SOKARE on 7 April, but were turned back by the SPLA at a checkpoint at BORI. However, the Commissioner in KAJO KEJI helped clear things up and the MVT visited SOKARE on 8 April 2018. At SOKARE the MVT met with the SPLA detachment commander, who told them the following:
- He and his forces had only recently deployed to the area from JUBA. They arrived on 28 March 2018 to reinforce SPLA troops at BORI who had attacked SOKARE on 25 March.
 - The SPLA took SOKARE from the SPLA-IO (RM) on 30 March 2018. Since then, according to the SPLA commander there had been several attempts by the SPLA-IO (RM) to re-take the village. He reported three attacks on the night of 5-6 April.
 - He gave no information about casualties during the fighting.
- 2.4 The MVT observed that the SPLA troops in SOKARE were in about company strength, and looked as if they had only recently arrived. They still appeared to be settling in.
- 2.5 The MVT members observed that all houses/tukuls between and around BORI and SOKARE had been burnt, and that permanent structures had been looted, although they could not confirm whether this was a result of the recent fighting. Very few civilians were seen in the area, and those that remained were old people who were unwilling to say anything to the MVT about what had happened.



3.0 Assessment:

- 3.1 It is clear by their own admission that the SPLA attacked SOKARE on 25 March 2018. This admission corroborates the allegation made by the SPLA-IO (RM).
- 3.2 The SPLA reinforced its troops in BORI from JUBA. This is confirmed by the statement made by the SPLA commander in SOKARE.
- 3.3 The SPLA attacked SOKARE again on 30 March 2018 and took it from the SPLA-IO (RM). This is confirmed by the statement of the SPLA commander in SOKARE, and also by the observations of the MVT which visited SOKARE and confirmed it was occupied by SPLA troops.
- 3.4 There is no dispute that SOKARE was in the hands of the SPLA-IO (RM) prior to 30 March 2018. Although this was not physically verified by CTSAMM, the SPLA-IO (RM) clearly claimed it as theirs in list given to CTSAMM in February 2018, and it was the only Party to make such a claim. The SPLA commander in SOKARE also clearly stated he and his troops had fought to take SOKARE, so it is logical to conclude it was occupied by the SPLA-IO (RM) prior to the attack of 30 March 2018.
- 3.5 Other villages in the area were reportedly also caught up in the fighting of 25 and 30 March, but the MVT was unable to visit those others mentioned. This is why the focus of this report is the attack on SOKARE rather than any wider conflict.

4.0 Civilian impact

- 4.1 The area has for a long time been almost empty of people, because so many of the local population have fled the fighting and gone to Uganda. The few local people remaining – mainly elderly – proved unwilling to engage with CTSAMM, and the MVT was unable to get a clear picture of how many were displaced by the attack against SOKARE. However, incidents like this not only lead to displacement, but also prevent the return of the local population.
- 4.2 The MVT observed the abandonment and destruction of civilian structures in SOKARE, BORI and KAJO KEJI. Many houses were deserted with doors



seemingly forced open and left ajar, unharvested farms and compounds, tukuls burned, buildings looted and no sign of livestock except for 30 cattle kept in KAJO KEJI town.

5.0 Conclusion

It is the conclusion of CTSAMM that by reinforcing their position at BORI and by attacking SOKARE on 25 and 30 March 2018, the SPLA were in clear violation of the following provisions of the ACOH:

- Article 1 (2) & 11 (6) Failing to freeze its forces and moving without notification or authority of CTSAMM (the reinforcement from Juba on 28 March 2018).
- Article 3 (2) Carrying out hostile military actions prohibited under this Article by attacking SOKARE on 25 and 30 March 2018.

6.0 Observations and Recommendations:

- 6.1 By reinforcing its troops and BORI and attacking SOKARE the SPLA demonstrated a complete disregard for the ACOH. CTSAMM calls on JMEC and the IGAD council of Ministers to remind the Government of its obligations under the ACOH, and take the necessary measures at the political level to ensure compliance.
- 6.2 Continued fighting between the warring parties and actions against the civilian population in the KAJO KEJI area has left what should be a prosperous and productive area devoid of most of its population. Measures must be taken to address the issues in the area and get the Parties to adhere to the most basic principles of the ACOH, namely to freeze forces in place and desist from any kind of provocative or offensive military operations.
- 6.3 Continued tension and conflict in the KAJO KEJI area in particular and southern Equatoria State in general has had a huge impact on the civilian population. CTSAMM recommends that urgent action be taken to address the underlying drivers of conflict in the area in order to help alleviate this suffering and enable people to return to their homes and villages.



Abbreviations:

- ACOH: Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access signed 21 December 2017.
- MVT: CTSAMM Monitoring and Verification Team
- SPLA: Sudan People's Liberation Army. Military forces under the command and control of the Transitional Government of National Unity, including those opposition forces under the First Vice President Taban Deng Gai now with the Government.
- SPLA-IO (RM): Sudan People's Liberation Army In Opposition and under the command and control of Dr Riek Machar.
- NAS: National Salvation Front.

