

Annex 17

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Sudan accuses Juba's army as rebels say captured two strategic areas

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February 26, 2012 (KHARTOUM) – Heavy clashes erupted on Sunday between allied Sudanese insurgents and government forces along the borders with neighboring South Sudan, triggering a diplomatic and military fallout between Khartoum and Juba.

The Sudan Revolutionary Forces (SRF), an alliance of rebel groups including the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N) and the Darfur rebels Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Movement of Abdel Wahid Nur (SLM-AW), and the Sudan Liberation Movement of Minni Arkoi Minnawi (SLM-MM), announced the battles in a statement released Sunday.



Soldiers of Sudan People's Liberation Movement's northern arm (SPLM) drive through South Kordofan in 2011 (AFP)

SRF's spokesperson Abu Elgasim al-Haj announced that a joint force of SPLM-N and JEM took control of Jau town and Toroge area in South Kordofan where as many as 6,000 Sudanese army soldiers and officers had incurred heavy losses in lives and equipment.

According to SRF's statement, the rebels' spoils included three tanks, more than 300 Dushka, heavy Russian machine guns, and 140 vehicles, many of which laden with ammunition and small arms.

In a separate statement, the SPLM-N's spokesperson, Arnu Ngutulu Lodi, said that this operation was the first warning to Khartoum's government and that other victories would follow in the near future and on a number of fronts.

JEM's spokesman, Gibril Adam Bilal confirmed in a phone call with *Sudan Tribune* on Sunday night that their forces gained control of Toroge, and they would keep moving northward. Bilal said that their next military operations would witness the participation of SLM-AW and SLM-MM troops and warned Khartoum of more strikes in the coming days.

The SRF was established in November last year with the goal of toppling the Sudanese government in Khartoum which repeatedly accuses South Sudan of supporting the rebels. Juba, which shares a history of joint armed struggle with the SPLMN before South Sudan's independence in July last year, denies the charge.

Meanwhile in Khartoum, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) has confirmed the clashes but countered rebels' claims of victory.

SAF's official spokesman Al-Sawarmi Khalid Sa'ad said in statements reported on Sunday by the country's official news agency (SUNA) that their forces had repulsed the "treacherous" attack he accused South Sudan of executing in collaboration with the rebels.

The army spokesman also claimed that their forces had inflicted heavy losses on the rebels but he gave no figures.

In another statement, SAF accused South Sudan's army known as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) of penetrating into Sudanese territories. The army charged that Juba was still maintaining its relations with the rebels and continues to provide them with financial and logistical support.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese ministry of foreign affairs has launched a diplomatic tirade against Juba. In a statement released Sunday, the ministry accused Juba of supporting the rebels and announced its determination to file another complaint to the UN Security Council and the African Union.

The statement said that Sudan reserves its right to retaliate against the attack and defend the integrity of its territories.

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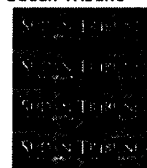
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The ministry noted that the new attacks happened two weeks after Khartoum and Juba signed an agreement of non-aggression in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

The non-aggression deal was signed under AU mediation after tension and talk of war rose dramatically between Khartoum and Juba against the background of a failure to resolve a bitter dispute over transporting South Sudan's oil via Sudan.

The ministry also announced that it intends to summon foreign diplomats in Khartoum on Monday in order to brief them on the recent developments. The statement accused Juba not only of supporting the rebels but also of arranging to unite them. It added that what South Sudan did was a flagrant attempt to undermine security and stability in Sudan.

Furthermore, the statement accused Juba of creating an additional SPLA base in the Mang area of Unity State under the supervision of the state's governor Taban Deng. The ministry also said that the SPLA had begun to gather Darfur rebel groups in the Mang and Fariang areas in Unity State.

Meanwhile, South Sudan's army said it clashed with SAF forces in Jau and announced that its forces had captured the disputed town.

Jau town is a disputed territory on the borders between Unity State in South Sudan and South Kordofan in Sudan. The town was attacked several times by Sudan's army and last year it witnessed the first military confrontation between Sudan and South Sudan since the latter seceded.

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in July last year as part of a 2005 deal that ended decades of civil wars between the two sides. However, their relations remain tense over a host of issues including borders and oil.

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