



Security responses in Jonglei State in the aftermath of inter-ethnic violence



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Acronyms

CID	Criminal Intelligence Division
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRPB	conflict reduction and peace building
GHQ	General Headquarters
GoSS	Government of the Republic of South Sudan
ICG	International Crisis Group
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MI	Military Intelligence
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NSS	National Security Service
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SMSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
SSP	South Sudanese Pounds
SSPS	South Sudan Police Service
SSR	security sector reform
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNYMPDA	Upper Nile Youth Mobilization for Peace and Development Agency

1

Introduction and key findings

IN EARLY DECEMBER 2011 groups of mostly Lou Nuer cattle-raiders, or ‘White Army’¹ massed in Akobo County, Jonglei before advancing south into Pibor County – the home of the Murle tribe. Subsequent attacks in Pibor County from 23 December 2011 – 3 January 2012, particularly in Likuangole and the outskirts of Pibor town, by up to 6,000 men, resulted in hundreds of Murle killed and injured² and reportedly up to 50,000 cattle stolen. The attacks were in response to several months of Murle raiding in Akobo, Uror, Duk, Nyirol and Twic East counties that claimed the lives of up to 1,000 Lou Nuer and the loss of over 100,000 cattle.

The Murle were quick to retaliate to the December/January attacks. Groups numbering less than 50, who were already in Lou and Dinka territory, responded by attacking the Lou in Akobo County (Walgak and Dengjok), Uror and Nyirol counties (in the area of Waat) in mid and late January. The Murle even attacked the Dinka in Twic East County and elements of the security forces in their own county of Pibor. The total number killed from initial retaliatory attacks in January alone was over 100. This was expressed by Lou Nuer leaders as clearly demonstrating that “the Murle had not learned a lesson”³ from the Lou attacks weeks earlier and thus justifying further response.

Although it became apparent in early November 2011 that a major attack by the Lou in Murle territory was highly likely, the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GoSS) responded with attempts at political and reconciliation efforts rather than a major security response.⁴ But once the initial attacks occurred the South Sudanese

¹ The term ‘White Army’ can be misleading. The former White Army groups were effectively disbanded early during the CPA period. However, their loose structure means that they were never a clear and distinct force to begin with, at least in terms typically used to understand specific armed groups. The White Army was a loose collective of Nuer youths who were active during the war in Jonglei. Like many other armed groups in South Sudan the White Army was initially formed to protect cattle and property of the local community, along with taking an active part in the war, including being used by Khartoum as a proxy. They both fought against and were used by Riek Machar’s SPLM/A-Nasir after the 1991 Split. Acts of violence are still perpetrated by groups of youths calling themselves the White Army however they have no consistently unified and linear leadership or organisational structure and the members dissolve back into communities as quickly as they form into fighting groups. Previous research suggests the White Army was a significant force at the time of the CPA with fluctuating numbers, ranging from 10,000 to 20,000. The SPLA and the Government of South Sudan felt the need to deal with the White Army as it was a very large and open threat to the internal security of an impending sovereign South Sudan. For a detailed description see: Arnold M and Alden C, ‘This Gun is Our Food: Demilitarizing the White Army Militias of South Sudan’, NUPI Working Paper, No. 722, Oslo, Norway 2007.

² Unconfirmed reports from Pibor County Commissioner put the numbers at 3,000 and UNMISS 150–200, but humanitarian organisations claim roughly 1,000. Therefore a conservative estimate is hundreds, but because of the displacement of over 50,000 it will be impossible to get a more accurate figure for a number of weeks.

³ Discussions with county officials, Akobo, February 2012.

⁴ The most notable attempt at averting the violence in Pibor County was made by the Vice President. An alternative approach, and a stronger message, could perhaps have been communicated by the President through the peace commission mechanism.

security apparatus was quick to plan the deployment of reinforcements, from both the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and South Sudan Police Service (SSPS), to Pibor County. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) reinforced Akobo and Pibor with armoured personnel carriers from Nasir and Bor and additional personnel. However, given that there was ample information to indicate both the movement and intentions of the Lou, security responses were slow and only happened at all as a result of significant violence.

Concurrently, the national leadership identified an urgent need for simultaneous coercive disarmament of all groups – Murle, Nuer and Dinka – as the only way to ensure civilian protection and future peace. Plans for the deployment of up to 12,000 additional soldiers and policemen were initiated on 20 January 2012. This was done amid major concerns of increased insecurity at the hands of the security forces, as well as the armed youth from each of the ethnic groups.

Although it is accepted that the situation is complex and therefore requires an equally complex, integrated and mutually reinforcing solution, this paper focuses only on security responses. It analyses the viability of forced disarmament (with consideration of the international community favoured voluntary disarmament), along with other immediate security responses, and aims to identify what can be realistically achieved in the short, medium and long term, given the challenges facing the security forces. It reviews the immediate security responses in the following context:

- The history of inter-ethnic violence in southern Jonglei State and the nature of the current conflict
- The influential actors: politicians, religious leaders, local authorities, security forces and non-state actors
- The challenges facing the security forces of South Sudan
- Support from UNMISS and other international actors.

The paper concludes with a broad assessment of other areas of inter-ethnic violence in South Sudan and analyses whether the potential security responses in Jonglei are also applicable elsewhere, as many may perceive the situation to be the same in other states.

Security force operations are ongoing in Jonglei. This paper analyses the immediate security options in the context of the situation as at 15 February 2012.

Among the key findings are the following:

- The recent violence is more than just inter-ethnic cattle raiding. In recent years the raiding has evolved into a more complex business and, although still fundamental to livelihoods, cross-border trading of cattle has exacerbated the situation. However, there are now strong indications of escalating ethnic animosity against the Murle who are acting as if their survival depends on taking the fight to their Nuer and Dinka enemies. Arguably, the stakes were raised by events such as the 2009 attack on Likuangole when Lou Nuer killed many women, children and elderly. Such events played a key part in the escalation in the nature of the conflict.
- The Murle are currently operating in small, mobile groups and their exact locations are not currently known. They are already, and likely to remain, deep in Lou and possibly Dinka territory spread across an area over 50,000 km². Conversely, the Lou (and Dinka) has tended to mass often in groups of over 1,000 or more. Although their locations are easily identifiable, they have significant strength 'en masse'. Both groups are extremely mobile, robust and flexible. They present very different, but equally tough challenges to the security forces who will have to configure their forces very differently to respond to the threat of both groups.
- A comprehensive response strategy, that builds in mitigation of future violence not simply reaction to events that have already occurred, must be developed, integrating and co-ordinating immediate security solutions with other key initiatives, such as access to justice, peace and reconciliation, and community development. The plan

should be appropriately resourced and the ownership rest with empowered state and county level authorities, intrinsically linked within a clear security decision-making architecture. In support, in the short term, UNMISS and international actors should fill any gaps in the capacity of state and county level authorities and the security forces assigned to respond.

- Disarmament, on its own, will not bring about a long-term solution to the security challenges in southern Jonglei. Attempts at coercive, or forced disarmament, even if conducted simultaneously in Murle, Lou and Dinka territory, is likely to result in numerous security force failures and, at worst, trigger further violence and humanitarian disasters. The SPLA and SSPS are not adequately prepared or equipped to conduct such wide-scale operations without significant negative impact.
- Immediate security solutions should focus on tasks the security forces are currently able to conduct successfully with some assistance, under the control of civil authorities. Monitoring, tracking, information sharing, dominating ground,⁵ violence containment and winning the confidence and 'hearts and minds' of the communities they should be protecting are the highest priorities. More complex operations require specific training and preparation, and there is currently neither the expertise nor the resources within the security forces to do this.
- Long-term security strategies need greater lead-time and should not begin until October/November 2012 at the earliest (the beginning of the next dry season). Border surveillance and control, advanced peace support operations, mediation and negotiation, and the sensitising of communities to security solutions, should be among the tasks the security forces must be capable of conducting successfully if a long-term security solution is to be found. Dramatically increasing the strength of the SSPS in Jonglei and other conflict states – specifically the Auxiliary Force – is vital to allow the SPLA to focus on military tasks in North/South border areas, as well as their own reform activities.
- In order to maximise success, the key security forces need significant advice, mentoring and support from UNMISS and other international security sector reform (SSR) actors. Planning processes (operational and logistic), information collation and analysis, communications and mobility should be the highest priorities for international support. Time is short for immediate responses, and the Government and security forces must be strongly encouraged to respond effectively before the rainy season approaches.
- The specific dynamics of the situation in southern Jonglei require a stand-alone plan. However, many of the immediate security responses are applicable to other inter-communal conflicts, which involve armed violence. The key security forces (SPLA and SSPS) need to develop, with international assistance, detailed and specific contingency plans to provide an immediate, proactive response to inter-communal conflict. In addition, specialist training should be included as part of SPLA transformation and development planning, as the current focus is solely on operations against a conventional enemy.

⁵ For the purposes of this paper, 'dominating ground' is defined as strong and more widespread security presence for protection purposes and, when necessary, to interdict the movement of raiding groups.

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The current situation: inter-ethnic conflict in Jonglei

THE RECENT VIOLENT ATTACKS in Akobo, Pibor, Uror and Nyirol cannot be understood as isolated events, but rather as the result of overlapping and changing factors involving a number of actors at the local, state, and national levels. The following section aims to provide a brief contextual overview of the various factors that are important to consider when analysing the recent violent confrontations in Jonglei and the appropriate security responses to these events.

Background

Jonglei is one of ten states in South Sudan. It is the largest state, both in population and in size. There are approximately 1.4 million people in an area of over 120,000km² with 11 counties including Bor, Uror, Ayod, Pibor, Akobo, Old Fangak, Nyirol, Piji, Twic East, Pochalla, and Duk Padiet. Jonglei is home to agro-pastoralist groups, including the Dinka, Nuer (Lou, Gawaar and Jikany), Anuak and the Murle. There are an estimated 1.5 million cattle in Jonglei State.

Jonglei, as the rest of South Sudan, is considered one of the least developed regions in the world. According to Laudati, “[p]ervasive poverty, combined with continuing insecurity, lack of infrastructure, and limited market opportunities have combined to create a general landscape of deprivation, discrimination, and marginalisation.”⁶ Fifty one percent of the population is below the age of 18 and 48 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.⁷ Pervasive poverty is most notable in Pibor County, which has received limited government services and investment. Many people in Jonglei perceive the Murle as ‘backward’ or ‘hostile’ and regard them as having a fearsome reputation.⁸ Groups of Murle are often blamed by default for acts of violence and cattle raiding, particularly the ‘Pibor Murle’ who are totally reliant on their cattle as the land they occupy is too arid for cultivation. Renowned for child abduction, it is a widely held belief in South Sudan that the Murle suffer from infertility. However, no definitive scientific studies have backed up these claims.

⁶ Laudati A, ‘Victims of Discourse: Mobilizing Narratives of Fear and Insecurity in Post Conflict South Sudan – The Case of Jonglei State’, *African Geographical Review*. 30.1, 2011, p 22.

⁷ Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, *Statistical Yearbook for Southern Sudan 2010*.

⁸ Laudati 2001, p 22.

History of inter-ethnic conflict in Jonglei

Community relations in Jonglei are characterised by inter-ethnic tensions primarily between the Dinka, Lou Nuer and Murle groups. The Lou Nuer are primarily located in Akobo, Nyirol, and Uror Counties while the Dinka are located in Duk, Twic East, and Bor Counties. The Murle tribe occupy Pibor County with another Murle section further south in Boma.

Cattle are a significant factor that have historically initiated and shaped tribal conflicts in Jonglei and throughout South Sudan, both in the context of grazing and raiding. Communities that rely on a transhumance approach to livelihoods and survival (a combination of pastoralism and seasonal agriculture, along with hunting and gathering in a seasonal fashion, which is the case for most groups in South Sudan) place immense social and economic importance on cattle. Cattle are a primary currency for these groups, representing wealth and social status, and are used for compensation and the payment of wedding dowries.⁹ The cattle are also critical within the migration system, which is characteristic between sites of agriculture and grazing, and is directly linked to the annual dry to wet season cycles.

As cattle require water and land for grazing, cattle keepers travel, often long distances, to seek out water sources and pasture land. Competition for resources amongst, within and between pastoralist communities can lead to instances of violent confrontation. For instance, clashes between the Jikany and the Lou Nuer frequently take place in Jonglei as the two groups compete for the fertile grazing areas around Wanding. Interestingly however, historical accounts tend to place the confrontations over cattle largely between the Murle and their southern neighbours the Kacipo as well as their western neighbours the Bor Dinka. There are only rare historical accounts of fighting between the Lou Nuer and the Murle to the south. Much of this is related to the fact that the Anuak people, previously a buffer between the Murle and the Lou Nuer, have over time moved further toward and beyond the Ethiopian border.

The Lou Nuer has historically been involved in most conflict cycles in Jonglei. In order to access water sources and seek out land for pasture during the dry season, the Lou Nuer cross over into other groups' territories and compete for their resources. The migration of the Lou Nuer during the dry season has been identified as a primary trigger of conflict in Jonglei, notably with the Bor Dinka, Jikany Nuer, Anuak and the Murle.¹⁰ More recently however, the situation has moved from Lou Nuer engaging with Jikany Nuer and Bor Dinka toward confronting the Murle. Along with their historic animosities with the Bor Dinka and other Nuer sections "the Lou are very fearful of their [...] Murle neighbours to the South."¹¹

In addition to competition for land and water, pastoralists also compete for cattle. Cattle raiding and rustling, often followed by reprisals, is common throughout Jonglei. According to the 2011 Upper Nile Youth Mobilization for Peace and Development Agency (UNYMPDA) report commissioned by Saferworld, cattle raiding between pastoralist communities in Jonglei was historically both "peaceful and prestigious" with fewer killings or abductions.¹² Furthermore, "no self-respecting Nuer or Dinka man would kill an unarmed woman or child on purpose. Such deaths placed the offending side at a moral disadvantage and usually resulted in a swift transfer of blood-wealth cattle to the family of the victim."¹³ A 2009 International Crisis Group (ICG) report indicates that small-scale violence was associated with cattle raiding in the past. However, "the

⁹ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Jonglei's Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan*, Africa Report No 154, (December 2009), p 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p 2.

¹¹ Arnold M and Alden C 2007, p 7.

¹² Upper Nile Youth Mobilization for Peace and Development Agency (UNYMPDA), *A Report on Community Security and Conflict Assessment in Jonglei State, South Sudan*, An assessment conducted in Likuangole and Nyandit Payams on behalf of Saferworld, (May 2011), p 10.

¹³ Hutchinson S & Jok J M, 'Gendered violence and the militarisation of ethnicity: A case study from Southern Sudan', In Werbner R (ed), *Postcolonial subjectivities in Africa*, (London: Zed Books, 2002), pp 84–108.

nature and scope of the violence has changed”.¹⁴ Whereas knives and spears were historically used to carry out cattle rustling, small arms are now used, “making raiding more deadly and in some ways undercutting traditional practices and authority”.¹⁵

While historically fighting between Lou Nuer and Murle was limited compared to the inter-ethnic violence between Lou Nuer and other groups, or the Murle and the Kacipo or Toposa in recent years, this violence has escalated. Interestingly, reflecting on similar inter-communal violence during the peace period of the 1970s, was that as the war re-ignited in 1983 the conflict shifted seeing 8 out of 14 raids recorded that year being perpetrated by Murle on neighbouring groups. This is the same year that it was recorded that the Sudanese armed forces were “arming the Murle and encouraged them to harass the SPLA”.¹⁶

Large-scale cattle raiding characterised recent Lou Nuer and Murle relations, with both claiming to be the offended party. Drawing on historic depictions of the Nuer as violent aggressors, it was the Murle that were claiming victim status and right to retaliate during events in the early days of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) period. The Lou Nuer were purportedly disarmed by the government in January 2006 and they have since claimed that they were vulnerable to attack by the Murle without their previous armed force, whether in the form of the White Army or just locally armed youth. At the time the Lou Nuer perceived a major threat from the Murle since they had not been disarmed. As Arnold and Alden recorded, the Akobo County Commissioner at the time stated, “Even now [we] worry about the Murle. The people of Akobo County are worried ... worried because the Murle are still armed. Protection should come from the SPLA.”¹⁷

The violence between the two groups reached a peak in 2009 when more than 1,000 men women and children died in clashes that took place in Akobo and Pibor counties.¹⁸ Notably, the attacks on Likuangole Payam (Pibor County) by the Lou between 5–8 March 2009 left over 450 people dead (mostly women and children), over 150 injured, 200 women and children abducted and over 5,000 displaced. This attack signalled a significant escalation in violence, particularly the specific targeting of vulnerable people – women, children and elderly – and is seen by many as the point when the brutality of inter-ethnic fighting increased markedly.¹⁹ The December 2011 attacks very much resembled the attacks on Likuangole in March 2009.

Whereas competition for cattle and resources has historically been a prominent source of tension among the communities in Jonglei, confrontations between groups have changed and evolved over the past five years. These confrontations have become more violent resulting in an increased number of deaths and displacement of fighters and civilians. According to a 2012 briefing paper by Conflict Reduction and Peace Building (CRPB) sub-cluster, the tensions that have historically characterised community relations in Jonglei are exacerbated by the proliferation and widespread availability of small arms, perceptions of state bias leading to feelings of marginalisation, lack of roads and basic infrastructure, inability to access justice systems, and food insecurity and poverty.²⁰

There is further evidence that the motives and objectives of raids have changed in addition to the means in which these clashes are carried out. According to field research conducted in Jonglei’s Akobo and Pibor counties in May 2010 by UNYMPDA on behalf

¹⁴ ICG 2009, p 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See Gurdon C, ‘Sudan in Transition: A Political Risk Analysis,’ The Economic Intelligence Unit [London], January 1986, Special Report No 226, pp 85–86, cited in Howell P, Lock M and Cobb S, *The Jonglei Canal: impact and Opportunity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p 266.

¹⁷ Arnold M and Alden C 2007 p 19.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *No one to intervene: Gaps in Civilian Protection in Southern Sudan*, (June 2009).

¹⁹ Discussions with Murle, Lou and senior security force personnel, Pibor and Juba, January 2012. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), “Southern Sudan: *Facing up to reality. Health crisis deepens as violence escalates*”, *Special Report*, (December 2009), p 13.

²⁰ Conflict Reduction & Peace Building (CRPB) sub-cluster, *Integrating conflict sensitivity into protection responses in Jonglei*, Briefing Paper (Draft Version), (February 2011), p 1.

of Saferworld, there is a perception among many citizens that the nature of conflict between the Lou Nuer and the Murle has changed and the motives behind violent confrontations have evolved. Whereas the objective of cattle rustling in the past was to steal and acquire more cattle, Murle respondents claim these confrontations are now fuelled mainly by ethnic animosity: “previously, the raiders used to collect only cattle; but of late they have resorted to killing, abduction and destruction of homesteads, thus, portraying their inherent and deliberate intentions to kill but not raid cattle.”²¹

The Lou Nuer further expressed this sentiment of ethnic animosity in a communiqué that was issued by the Nuer community in the diaspora following the raids on Pibor County in early January 2012. The communiqué supports the raids and calls for the disarmament of the Murle tribe and additional operations against the Murle: “To fully protect communities, the Nuer and Dinka youth must have a force over 50,000 which shall be armed for self-defence.”²² In addition, a grouping of Nuer and Dinka in Jonglei, calling itself the Nuer and Dinka White Army, issued a media release in February 2012 following the raids in December 2011 and January 2012 stating their intention to launch ‘operation savannah storm’ on 1 March 2012, “until Murle do not pose security threats to their neighbours.”²³

The 2009 ICG report provides an overview of the exacerbating factors that have changed the nature and scope of violence in Jonglei State. The following section briefly summarises some of the factors from the report with added analysis and updated facts.

Changing conflict dynamics – civil war and armed groups

Political interests and actions during the civil war and the period after the CPA have shaped and moulded inter-ethnic relations in Jonglei State. Civilians in Jonglei have been exposed to high levels of violence since the 1970s due to the state’s central role in significant events in the north-south civil war, including the 1975 Akobo mutiny, John Garang’s split from the Sudan military in 1983, and the split between John Garang and Riek Machar in 1991.²⁴

There is a history of local armed groups in South Sudan, formed for the purpose of defending cattle and communities. According to Young in a 2007 Small Arms Survey Report: “Typically these groups have been tribally based, defensive, transitory, and without ideologies or long-term objectives.”²⁵ The White Army is the exception to this rule. Specific detail concerning the formation of the White Army is unknown, but its roots are traced back to the formation of defensive groups by Nuer youth in the cattle camps of Upper Nile. According to Young, the major event leading to the establishment of the White Army was when Riek Machar split from John Garang’s SPLA in 1991 and mobilised the origins of the White Army to launch an attack on the Dinka in Bor. The attack resulted in the death of more than 2,000 Dinka. Despite the reconciliation of Garang and Machar, the signing of the CPA, and the independence of South Sudan, there remains deep divisions and mistrust between the Lou Nuer and the Dinka in Jonglei alongside outbreaks of violent confrontations between the two groups.²⁶

The White Army was active in Jonglei State up to 2006, with many of the Lou Nuer youth from Jonglei claiming membership.²⁷ After the 2006 clash with the SPLA in response to a forced disarmament policy (to be discussed further below), the White Army retreated. However, the term White Army has recently re-emerged in Jonglei

²¹ UNYMPDA 2011, p 14.

²² Sudan Tribune, ‘The Nuer Youth in Diaspora Declared the Invasion of Murle Tribe Legitimate; Criticized the Government for its Failures to Protect Civilians’, Communiqué of Nuer Community in the diaspora on the disarmament of Murle tribe by the white army of Nuer and Dinka in South Sudan, 8 January 2012.

²³ Nuer and Dinka White Army, *Nuer and Dinka White Army Will Launch Operation Savannah Storm*, Media release, 4 February 2012.

²⁴ CRPB sub-cluster 2011.

²⁵ Young J, *The White Army: An Introduction and Overview*, Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International Studies, (2007), p 9.

²⁶ ICG 2009, p 4–5.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p 12–13.

claiming to encompass youth from both Nuer and Dinka groups, operating only against the Murle.²⁸ In this context, White Army has now become a term used to incite inter-ethnic and political conflict, and represents mostly Lou Nuer raiders in Jonglei.

Widespread availability of small arms

The prevalence and widespread availability of small arms in Jonglei has been viewed as one of the main contributing factors to insecurity in the State. Although the enmities stretch back to the pre-war era the availability of small arms today means that the conflicts between the different ethnic groups have become more deadly, and with each violent encounter the stakes are raised. Another divergence from bygone years is the shift in power from the hands of the chiefs to the youths. While the war is in part responsible for breaking down the traditional authority structures, the availability of small arms is also a cause of youth acting without seeking sanction from community leaders. This is one of the reasons that local chiefs have been active and co-operative in promoting and organising disarmament campaigns. The state governor, Kuol Manyang has repeatedly and successfully put pressure on the GoSS to deliver decrees authorising the collection of weapons in civilian hands despite there being little national legislation to support such actions. Furthermore, the widespread availability of arms has been compounded by cross-border trade in cattle for weapons, ammunition and cash. Neither Ethiopian nor South Sudanese authorities have taken any serious action to stem the flow of arms into Jonglei.

Disarmament processes

While civilian weapons ownership in Jonglei state presents a threat to security, the process of forced disarmament has proved to be equally if not more deadly. The exercise itself has caused the deaths of hundreds, and the subsequent security vacuum that is created in an area where the police are weak and the SPLA are not present, has on many occasions left communities vulnerable to their neighbours who have not gone through the disarmament process. According to a 2012 joint-briefing note prepared by Danish Demining Group, Pact, and Saferworld, communities in Jonglei are suspicious of the political motives underpinning disarmament campaigns.²⁹

From December 2005 to May 2006, a civilian disarmament campaign was launched in northern Jonglei by the SPLA when Lou and Gawaar Nuer were disarmed at the behest of the Jonglei state government ahead of the cattle-grazing season. The Lou Nuer refused to surrender their arms, arguing that disarmament should not be a precondition for grazing. Negotiations failed to achieve resolution and a forced disarmament was announced. Violent confrontations between the White Army and SPLA characterised the early stages of the disarmament process. On 18 May 2006 a major confrontation erupted between the White Army and the SPLA, resulting in the retreat of the White Army until 2011. Following the White Army's retreat, the SPLA called upon chiefs and community leaders to organise disarmament. According to local authorities, the two-month campaign was 95 percent effective. However, the human costs of the forced collection were significant, with an estimated 1600 people killed.³⁰ According to O'Brien, "the approach was militaristic, poorly planned, and included few security guarantees" resulting in one of the bloodiest military actions in South Sudan since the end of the second civil war and failed to improve long-term security.³¹

During the same year a more collaborative attempt at disarmament was carried out in Akobo County, using teachers and youth leaders to promote a symmetrical

²⁸ Nuer and Dinka White Army, 4 February 2012.

²⁹ Danish Demining Group (DDG), Pact, and Saferworld, *Disarmament Déjà Vu: Recommendations for Peaceful Civilian Disarmament in Jonglei*, (2012), p 1.

³⁰ Small Arms Survey, 'Anatomy of civilian disarmament in Jonglei State: Recent experiences and implications', *Sudan Issue Brief*, Human Security Baseline Assessment, No. 3 2nd Edition, (2007), p 5.

³¹ O'Brien A, *Shots in the Dark: The 2008 South Sudan Civilian Disarmament Campaign*, Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, (2009), p 10.

campaign disarming both the Lou Nuer and the Murle simultaneously. Chiefs in Akobo were supportive of the disarmament process and helped to promote and organise the collection, as they were “keen to regain authority in their communities and reduce the influence of the White Army”.³² This was followed by a 2007 campaign in Pibor where again community members were used to raise awareness about the disarmament process since undertaking disarmament of the Murle was extremely sensitive. Although hundreds of weapons were collected it was believed that these only represented a fraction of the guns in civilian hands.

Peace processes

Attacks by the Murle on Lou communities from July-August 2011 resulted in up to 1,000 deaths. Following this dramatic escalation in violence there was a widely held expectation that the Lou would launch a large-scale retaliatory attack on the Murle. The subsequent church-led reconciliation process, mandated by the government in the wake of the violence and designed to bring the Lou-Nuer and Murle communities into dialogue, failed to instil ample confidence in the communities to prevent further violence. The process suffered from insufficient engagement with the leaders and main perpetrators of violence i.e. the cattle camp youths. By mid-December 2011 it was clear that negotiations between ethnic groups would not result in the peace agreement planned, and the Lou mounted the major retaliatory attack against the Murle that was anticipated months earlier. The subsequent response by the Sudan Council of Churches in the aftermath of the end of year attacks summarises the key challenges that will affect future peace processes:

- “The Murle community is perceived by most of the other communities in Jonglei State as being a perpetrator of constant raids. Even during the peace process there were reports of raids by Murle. There have already been retaliatory attacks on the Lou by Murle, as well as a reported escalation of the conflict by attacks on the Dinka. The Lou Nuer youth apparently feel that they are justified in defending their community against Murle attacks, in the absence of Government protection and action.
- The conflict has moved far beyond cattle raiding, abductions and revenge. The Lou Nuer expressed a deep-rooted hatred of the Murle. Brutal actions were carried out against non-combatants. Ethnic hatred was expressed verbally, in graffiti left by the attackers, and on the internet, and this could be the precursor to larger-scale atrocities. This dynamic has been growing for some time and is very worrying. It lends a sense of urgency to peace efforts.
- The two communities have moved away from traditional cattle-raiding practices and are using more sophisticated and destructive military tactics, with modern weapons and good organisation, training, intelligence and communications.
- There is a clear disconnect between the youth and both the traditional and political leaders. The tradition of youth respecting and listening to their elders has been lost. Without the youth’s involvement, and their sense of ownership of the peace process, any attempt at peace will fail.”³³

³² Small Arms Survey 2007, p 5.

³³ Statement by Sudan Council of Churches, *The Current Situation in Jonglei State*, 18 January 2012.

Security responses

REGARDLESS OF THE LEVEL of sophistication, and the effectiveness of delivery, security solutions alone will not bring about a lasting peace in Jonglei. Justice, peace and reconciliation, and long-term community development must also form part of a wider and more comprehensive response strategy.³⁴ A pre-condition for the development and effective implementation of a comprehensive response strategy is an overarching planning, decision-making and co-ordination structure, which may involve multiple government and non-government representatives, and which is led from the highest political level. Such a strategy must be developed through top-down as well as bottom-up approaches. While the backbone of the co-ordination structure for such a comprehensive response strategy should be through the state governor working with county commissioners, an effective security planning and decision-making architecture must also be superimposed onto this as a pre-condition for effective security responses.

This section aims to identify an effective security decision-making architecture, which will promote more successful security responses. It subsequently analyses the immediate response by security forces during the initial attacks by the Lou in Pibor County and the planned response options available in the immediate aftermath of the January attacks. It finishes by reviewing more long-term security strategies to enable a lasting peace.

Security decision-making architecture

Forces in both Pibor and Akobo acknowledge the necessity for multi-agency co-operation³⁵ if security plans to prevent further violence are to succeed. However, current command and control arrangements do not necessarily reflect this. In Pibor, command is exercised through the civil architecture, from County Commissioner to State Governor. Command of the security force operation in Pibor is the responsibility of the County Commissioner, an experienced former Brigadier in the SPLA, and the previous Commander of Brigade 47 – the military formation deployed in Pibor County. He is also Murle. The Commissioner reports directly to the State Governor, who is in overall command of operations in his State, and is ultimately responsible for preventing further inter-ethnic violence. In this sense, the Governor has a strategic role as well as ownership of all response planning and implementation, delegating the operational responsibility to county level, through the civil decision-making architecture. In support of this, the Pibor County Commissioner conducts his own planning sessions with his security committee, comprising of subordinate commanders from the SPLA and SSPS and representatives

³⁴ The definition of comprehensive response strategy for the sake of this paper is a plan to achieve a specific objective, of a large-scale over an extended period of time. It co-ordinates many activities and uses of resources involving multiple government organisations and international actors.

³⁵ By 'multi-agency co-operation' we mean 'multi-security agency' co-operation between the South Sudanese security forces and intelligence services in order to address a specific threat.

from Military Intelligence (MI), the Criminal Intelligence Division (CID) of the SSPS and the National Security Service (NSS). This county-level security decision-making structure allows security services operations to be co-ordinated alongside other non-security related initiatives in a more streamlined manner. However, the separate security forces under the control of the commissioner would still rely on their single-service command chains for logistic support (essential commodities such as food and fuel). The security forces may have their loyalties stretched if they get countermanding orders from senior security officers in Bor or Juba, or if the logistic requirements to conduct effective operations are beyond the budgets or capabilities of the forces.³⁶

In Akobo, security decision-making functions through two separate command chains: the county security committee and the SPLA hierarchy. As in Pibor, the SSPS, Prison Service, MI, CID, NSS³⁷ report through the security committee. However, the SPLA battalion in Akobo responds only to orders through the military chain, which goes back to a divisional headquarters in Bor, via a brigade headquarters on the Jonglei/ Upper Nile border. The brigade headquarters is located over 225km away and faces a separate set of security challenges. In this case, the current SPLA command structure is not ideally suited to support operations in southern Jonglei.³⁸

Although both commissioners agree on the nature of future security responses (discussed under ‘What planned security responses are available to prevent further violence?’ below), and oppose forced or coercive disarmament, the implementation of any plan will not be effective if the existing security forces and reinforcements are not fully under the operational control of the civil authorities. In the event that coercive disarmament becomes a reality, it is likely to be the SPLA General Headquarters that has a more prominent role, possibly through the 8th Division headquarters near Pariak (Bor County), or through an ad hoc tactical headquarters comprising of General Headquarters (GHQ) officers deployed to the area of operation. Either way, with this model, security responses are unlikely to be properly co-ordinated with other conflict prevention initiatives that are being directed and co-ordinated through the civil authorities.

Ideally, the civil decision-making architecture from county to state level would form the backbone for security decision-making and command. This would mean, for the purposes of an overarching comprehensive response strategy, security forces need to be assigned under county commissioners in Pibor, Akobo, Uror, Nyirol, Twic East and Bor counties. Operational level security planning would include prioritising counties for security force support and the sequencing of tactical actions, which requires robust liaison. This would also require the SPLA to show a great deal of flexibility and abandon their rigid structures and reorganise forces from different divisions and brigades for specific security operations. Known in military terms as ‘task organisation’ (organisation that assigns to responsible commanders the means with which to accomplish their assigned tasks in any planned action), it also requires the SPLA to alter the command relationship of the specific forces assigned to the mission, relinquishing operational control to civil authorities at county and state level. However, the current military structure would still be responsible for logistic support to deployed forces.

There is substantial security knowledge and experience in both Pibor and Akobo commissioner’s offices. The County Commissioner in Pibor is a recently retired brigade commander and the deputy commissioner of Akobo is a well-respected former Colonel in the SPLA with significant security knowledge and experience. However, if the civil command structure is to succeed, there is a need for all commissioners to receive clear guidance on the limitations and constraints of the security forces before developing detailed plans. They need to be clear that a mission oriented approach is necessary, telling the security forces ‘what to achieve and why, rather than what to do and how’ within

³⁶ Discussions with Pibor County Commissioner and members of his security committee, Pibor, January 2012.

³⁷ It is likely the intelligence services get dual tasked and report through both county and national levels.

³⁸ Discussions with Akobo County Commissioner and members of his security committee, Akobo, January 2012.

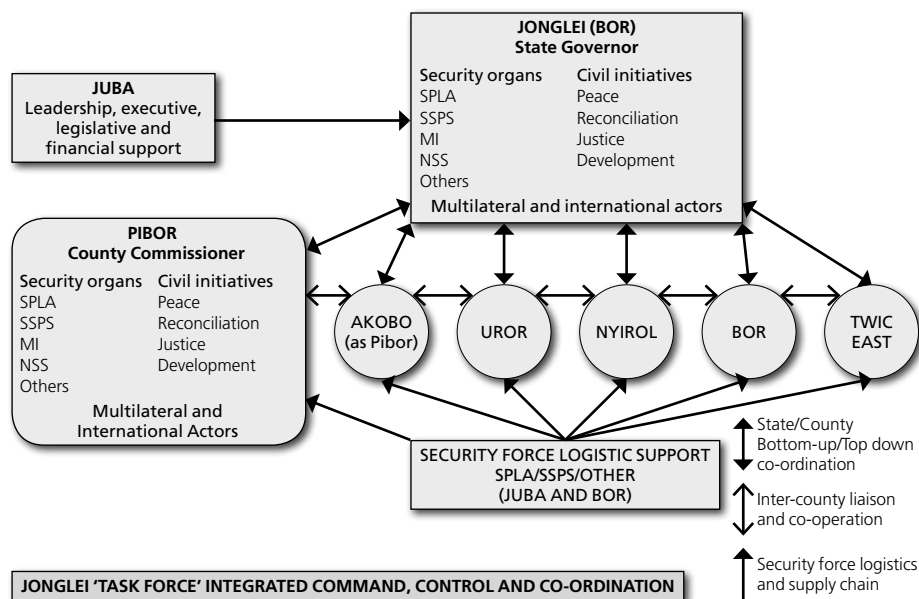
clear guidelines and specific allocation of resources. An example of the type of guidelines required, which must be developed at national level with appropriate legal backing, are rules of engagement including orders for the use of force.

This approach mirrors similar contingency plans in other countries. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK) the army may be called upon to help maintain public order and security when the police alone are unable to control the situation (as is the current situation in South Sudan). In the UK the principle of the supremacy of the civil authorities normally precludes the introduction of any form of martial law to deal with civil strife. The military force always remains subordinate to the civil authority. It may be necessary to introduce special legislation or declare a state of emergency in order to invest the security forces with the necessary powers. This is called Military Aid to the Civil Power.³⁹

A single, multi-agency command chain under civil structures would greatly increase the co-ordination of an overarching strategic response to prevent further inter-ethnic conflict in Jonglei. Such a structure would mean that international advisors, mentors and monitors could connect at county and state level and synchronise their own activities in concert with local plans. A single, civil authority focused command chain would also promote more efficient strategic communication management, bringing together co-ordinated messaging, using all forms of media and with agreement on target audience – all through one control centre. More efficient strategic communication will enhance civil authority influence and set the agenda for the overarching strategic response. The alternative of a purely military chain of command, outside of local civil authority control or influence, and lacking co-ordination and liaison with other security and non-security actors, is potentially disastrous.

UNMISS’ draft ‘Five-Action Plan for Peace and Stability in Jonglei’⁴⁰ advocates the appointment of a ‘Jonglei Task Force’ – a peace team tasked with promoting the cessation of hostilities, the return of abductees and ultimately with taking the lead in facilitating negotiations between communities. Although the UNMISS draft also refers to security and civil disarmament as key points in the action plan, it infers that security responses are planned, co-ordinated and conducted independently outside of the stabilisation and peace initiatives. A better approach may be the inclusion of the security forces in the ‘Jonglei Task Force’, under the control of civil authorities and supporting the other civil initiatives.

The diagram below illustrates the inter-relating components of the security architecture described above:



39 British Army Field Manual, Volume 1 Combined Arms Operations, Part 9, 2000.

40 UNMISS, 'Draft Non Paper on Jonglei: Five-Action Plan for Peace and Stability in Jonglei', February 2012.

Security responses during the initial phase of Lou-Nuer aggression

The main security force in Pibor County and surrounding areas is SPLA's 47 Brigade, which is part of the 8th Division. The brigade is deployed in the area of Pibor town (approximately 1,000 men), with battalions in Boma and Pochalla, and with two companies and a battalion headquarters (totalling approximately 300 men) in Likuangole.

After the collapse of the November–December 2011 peace negotiations, and unsuccessful attempts by South Sudan's Vice President, Riek Machar to prevent the advance on Likuangole, the Lou Nuer intent was clear: exact revenge on the Murle people by destroying communities and stealing their cattle. However, as the Lou intent unfolded there were no indicators to suggest the SPLA adjusted their deployments in an attempt to protect the citizens of Likuangole – the first major target. Instead, the SPLA only protected civilians that were able to make it to their barracks area. The SPLA unit may not have been able to provide more substantial support because they were massively outnumbered. Reinforcing Likuangole from Pibor was an option, especially given the lead-time from the initial alert, but would have weakened the county's main town. Reinforcing from Boma and Pochalla would also have been possible with foresight and initiative. However, the lack of a proactive approach to the obvious threat was levelled mostly at the overwhelming force facing the security forces, a lack of orders to do anything but defend garrisons and county headquarters⁴¹ and, to a lesser degree, ethnic loyalties – a number of 47 Brigade personnel are Lou Nuer⁴². However, the security forces were mostly complicit by their lack of response though there are allegations suggesting some SPLA personnel took part in the massacre of the Murle.

The story in Pibor town was different. Protected by a battalion of men, plus two extra companies, and the headquarters of 47 Brigade, Pibor was defensible. The main force in the area is Battalion 365, with over 700 men that are located a kilometre to east of the town, across the River Kong Kong, in Lokornyang. On the morning of the first attack on Pibor town on 31 December 2011, at approximately 5.30 am, brigade headquarters ordered the battalion to withdraw into the town in order to prevent them from being isolated and to provide reinforcements. Subsequently, while defensive positions were being dug,⁴³ the security forces⁴⁴ deterred the Lou from crossing the river opposite the county offices, but deflected them south where they were able to cross and subsequently destroy parts of the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital and many houses in the area. However, they were unable to progress any further and withdrew back to the area that Battalion 365 had evacuated earlier in the day.

From 1–3 January 2012 the Lou attacked again, but this time spread across a wide area, attacking bomas on the outskirts of Pibor town and stealing many cattle. They also made one last attempt to attack the town but were repelled by the SPLA and UNMISS at the military garrison, close to the airstrip.

Although the Lou were prevented from repeating the atrocities of Likuangole, the security force perimeter was undoubtedly too close to the main town area; positions were too close to each other, and the defences lacked depth. There was no obvious mobile reserve, which in effect was provided by the UNMISS forces in the town. Despite this, Pibor town was mostly unscathed, but the unprotected outlying areas suffered greatly at the hands of their attackers.

Essentially, the security forces were on the back-foot from the outset. There was little, if any, protection offered communities and the security forces were lucky to hold Pibor

⁴¹ In the authors' experience and observation, SPLA commanders from battalion to General Headquarters tend to stick staunchly to the last order they are given and are not encouraged to use initiative in order to meet higher intent. In the absence of orders SPLA units often do nothing.

⁴² The SPLA is mostly multi-ethnic in Pibor Town, unlike their counterparts in Akobo Town that are predominantly Lou Nuer.

⁴³ When security force personnel were questioned why they waited until 31 December/1 January before preparing improved defensive positions they were adamant that the message they received from the Vice President, who was in negotiations in Likuangole at the time, was the White Army would not continue their advance towards Pibor.

⁴⁴ The security forces comprised both the SPLA and the 27 members of the SSPS based in Pibor town, who were put into the line to cover part of the area facing the river.

town. If there were fewer soft targets to attack in the surrounding areas, and the Lou had massed on Pibor Town, it is likely the story would have been different.

What immediate options are available to the security forces?

Immediate security force responses to the conflict, not requiring in-depth planning or higher-level orders, have mostly focused on static defence of barracks areas and county commissioner's headquarters, offices and vital infrastructure (such as mobile telephone towers). Aside from a withdrawal by the Lokornyang battalion to Pibor, and a number of joint police/military town patrols, responses have been minimal and immobile. The security forces have been totally reactive to situations dictated by both the Lou and Murle.

As an immediate first step, the SPLA needs to become more proactive in its responses, and before considering the conduct of large-scale operations such as the implementation of buffer zones or coercive disarmament, it needs to set appropriate conditions on the ground:

- Encouraging the SPLA and SSPS to be more mobile is fundamental to all future security responses. Increasing security force presence through the introduction of regular patrolling will have an immediate effect. Dominating the ground, winning the confidence of the local population (through 'hearts and minds'),⁴⁵ providing an overt deterrence and gaining vital information are essential tasks if adequate security is to be provided to communities. In addition, these tasks will help set the conditions for longer-term strategies.
- Inter-agency information sharing is also vital. The key intelligence agencies deployed in the conflict areas (MI, CID and NSS) should pool resources and co-ordinate information collection plans, share analysis and ultimately disseminate intelligence to local security force commanders and the civil leadership. Locating, tracking and monitoring of armed groups, and cross border arms supplies, is also vital to establishing the conditions for longer-term operations.
- Identifying, establishing and protecting security force supply routes and essential infrastructure (such as water points), as well as overlaying an effective communications network (particularly in remote areas) are also tasks that are essential to establishing the conditions for current and future operations. The onset of the rainy season in 60–90 days will curtail all security force responses unless detailed contingency plans are developed now. There is evidence to suggest a large degree of high-level planning is taking place with regular commanders meetings in Juba, but there is an absence of bottom-up planning, or at least the consultation with experienced officers in the field.⁴⁶ Local knowledge of the communications footprint and dead-zones, and the effect they may have on operations needs to be taken into account. In vast areas of western Akobo, Uror and Nyirol the only workable form of communication is satellite phones.⁴⁷

The implementation of these measures should have been part of normal security force routine before the escalation of violence and, in most part, is not beyond the capacity of the SPLA (see section 4).

What planned security responses are available to prevent further violence?

Future deliberate security responses will require the deployment of significant reinforcements if stability is to be achieved, civilians are to be protected and the environment set for other non-security force initiatives to be successful. The security forces are simply too thin on the ground currently compared to the perpetrators of

⁴⁵ Separating insurgents/aggressors from their local support, or winning the battle for community hearts and minds, is a key principle that is applicable to the current situation in southern Jonglei.

⁴⁶ Discussions with senior security force officers in Jonglei, February 2012.

⁴⁷ A school of thought among a number of SPLA and SSPS signallers in Bor was that the security forces would be more effective in these areas where the Lou do not have the use of GSM and therefore unable to pre-empt security force actions.

violence. On one hand the Lou mass in significant strength (in their many thousands), which requires a massed counter response in thousands – at least an additional two brigades (6,000–7,000) – if the White Army is to be deterred from further violence. On the other hand, the Murle operate in small, mobile groups of 10–100 men and are spread across an area over 50,000km². The security assets required to locate, track and interdict the Murle are significant. Furthermore, if the security forces provide only static protection to local communities, the manpower requirements alone will be many thousands. Therefore, the deployment of further reinforcements is key to the success of any future deliberate operations.

Current planning suggests that elements of the 2nd Division (from the Equatorias), elements of the 6th Division (spread across a number of states as they were the former SPLA Joint Integrated Unit formation) and possibly elements of the 1st Division (Upper Nile) will comprise the reinforcements deployed to Jonglei.⁴⁸ The 6th Division is very much multi-ethnic and the 2nd Division comprises a large number of Equatorians. Therefore their deployment to either Lou or Murle territory is unlikely to cause controversy. However, it is likely to take a number of weeks for these units to familiarise themselves with their areas of operation since they are neither from the area nor have operated there recently.

In the coming weeks, there are three deliberate options for security force responses:

- Firstly, focusing on successful delivery of the immediate options already identified. This will help prepare the ground for more long-term solutions. Given the time required to properly deploy reinforcements to more remote areas, it should not be underestimated how long it will take to deliver very basic protection to communities, begin to develop a better understanding of local threats and organise longer-term support requirements. Focusing on community protection, information gathering and confidence building will also provide the foundation for the other tenets of an overarching strategic response – specifically peace, reconciliation and justice. This is the lowest risk option for the security forces, with potentially the best results. Further, it is more likely to dovetail with the other response strands.
- Secondly, the creation of a buffer zone favoured by the Akobo and Pibor county commissioners and clearly stated in the UNMISS ‘Five-Action Plan’. However, perceptions of the nature and purpose of a buffer zone seem to differ between the commissioners and UNMISS. Pibor County Commissioner, along with his security committee developed a detailed plan to deploy security forces to a series of locations on the border of Pibor County with Akobo, Uror and Bor counties. Like UNMISS, he envisages a buffer zone ‘between communities’ which implies that both Lou and Murle raiders return to their respective sides of the zone and are kept apart. As previously argued, this is practically impossible for the Murle leadership that have little control over the numerous small groups already moving in Lou and Dinka territory. Isolating and confining the Murle into their own territory is for them an unfavourable option, especially when their perceived enemies are controlling the county borders.⁴⁹ Therefore, a buffer zone that aims to separate communities is untenable, impractical and could potentially heighten the threat of conflict.

In contrast, the County Commissioner in Akobo sees the deployment of security forces to a buffer zone as a means of monitoring the movements of groups between counties, and as an early warning mechanism of armed youth concentrating prior to raids in bordering counties. Presumably (although this was not clear during discussions) a larger, mobile response force that could contain the raiders while peace negotiations take place would support any buffer zone forces. Neither does the UNMISS ‘Five-Action Plan’ specify who will be responsible for the containment of armed youth on the outskirts of the buffer zone.

⁴⁸ Discussions with senior security force officers, Jonglei State, January and February 2012.

⁴⁹ In early February 2012 the Murle attacked both the SPLA and SSPS in Pibor County in an open expression of distrust for the national government and security forces.

The principle of monitoring, tracking and, where possible containing groups to allow peace negotiations to progress, is valid. The basing of security forces at key locations on county borders to support this approach may also be applicable. But, by definition, a buffer zone designed to segregate regions will not be implementable or perceived by the Murle youth as a viable option, even if it attempts to protect their communities from Lou and Dinka violence.

During the colonial period the British administration worked to create and later attempted to impose tribal boundaries in the areas between the Bor Dinka, Lou Nuer, and Murle. This was largely explained as an effort to protect the other groups from the stereotypically aggressive Nuer tribe.⁵⁰ Ostensibly intervening on behalf of the Dinka, and similarly the Murle, attempts at containing inter-ethnic violence through buffers and boundaries have been largely unsuccessful.

- Thirdly, the option of coercive civilian disarmament: Defined as administered exclusively by security structures – including formal law enforcement, military, or peacekeeping personnel⁵¹ – an attempt at simultaneous coercive disarmament is possibly the most controversial and challenging security force response. Recent options promulgated by both UNMISS and the Sudan Council of Churches support voluntary disarmament as part of a negotiated solution with incentives. The latter advocates for “disarmament issues [to be handled] sensitively and comprehensively, in a manner and at a time that will promote peace rather than exacerbate conflict, and provide adequate security for those communities which are disarmed.” Although this approach implies some security force involvement it is primarily focused on peace, reconciliation and mutual confidence building, which should be key components of a comprehensive response strategy discussed earlier in this paper. But, voluntary disarmament will only be the result of a long-term strategy, whereas coercive disarmament is being proposed by the Government as a solution in the short-term.

The CPA provided comparatively little guidance on the question of disarming civilians. Yet civilian disarmament is an essential step to bringing security to South Sudan. Therefore, the SPLA, and to a much lesser degree the SSPS, has been actively conducting it for several years. Studies have indicated that in many instances security force efforts while conducting disarmament operations have had devastating consequences for human security.⁵² For example, the human costs of disarmament in northern Jonglei during the 2006/07 campaigns were high. Though it is impossible to establish the exact numbers, an estimated 1,200 White Army and 400 SPLA soldiers were killed over the course of the campaign. Officials from Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) Nyirol County reported at least 213 civilian deaths. There was persistent looting and houses were burned in many villages that were perceived as the centres of resistance. Another unanticipated consequence of the coercive disarmament was chronic food shortages: the White Army raided cattle and goats from the community while the SPLA also lived off the land during their interventions.⁵³

In the last four months coercive disarmament campaigns have taken place in Warrap and Lakes states resulting in over 10,000 weapons being recovered.⁵⁴ It is likely that the quality and serviceability of the weapons is poor and there are never any reports of the recovery of ammunition, which is obviously a vital component to the effectiveness of a firearm. “Weapons are easy to replace and we have many. Ammunition is short, so we never give it.”⁵⁵ There is also strong evidence that Nuer in Unity State were able to take advantage of their disarmed neighbours in Warrap resulting in over 70 fatalities in late

50 Johnson D, ‘The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and the Origins of a Stereotype’, *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1981), p 518.

51 Small Arms Survey 2007.

52 *Ibid*, p 3.

53 *Ibid*, p 4.

54 SPLA reports indicate that over 9,000 weapons were recovered by the 3rd, 5th and 6th divisions in Warrap and Lakes by mid-October 2011, and a further 1247 weapons from Gogrial East county in late November 2011.

55 Lou Nuer youth to the author, Akobo, May 2011.

January 2012. Ending conflict in Jonglei and elsewhere requires communities to have confidence that the government will provide adequate security. If civilian disarmament is not coupled with protecting civilians from their neighbours, and building confidence in security force capabilities, communities will always re-arm for self-defence.

The immediate and often only security response from the government after inter-ethnic violence has been attempts at coercive civil disarmament. But there is no evidence to suggest that disarmament campaigns alone have had any long-term effect on community security in South Sudan. As previously identified, attempts at merely locating Murle groups in Lou and Dinka territory in the short-term will be futile. Furthermore, any attempt at forcibly disarming the Lou in their masses is potentially disastrous. Historically, there have never been any substantial attempts at disarming the Twic or Bor Dinka groups as this could potentially cause a major political backlash. Given this, the risks of implementation are very high and any attempts are likely to fail. Ultimately, none of the ethnic groups will agree to disarm without clear evidence their neighbouring rivals have disarmed, and simultaneous disarmament (as discussed) is not realistically feasible. Furthermore, any attempts at coercive disarmament will undoubtedly undermine any civil led campaigns designed at building inter-community dialogue, peace and reconciliation.

Any attempts at a hybrid solution, combining voluntary and coercive approaches, are unlikely to produce effective results either. The Akobo disarmament experience of March-August 2006 highlights the confluence of coercive and voluntary disarmament. Designed as a voluntary process, Akobo residents held no illusions about what might happen should they refuse to participate voluntarily. The current situation is vastly different: the security forces do not currently present a sufficient threat to either group to force them to voluntarily disarm. Therefore, any future hybrid disarmament solutions will be thwarted by the same challenges the security forces face with coercive disarmament.

What, if any, are the long-term security strategies available to the government?

Concurrent and mutually supporting to the other elements of a comprehensive response strategy, the options for long-term security strategies would focus on protection and deterrence, border control and de-militarising security responses.

The foundation of a longer-term protection and deterrence strategy would be a greater presence of security forces in conflict areas. Not just the deployment of short-term reinforcements for specific operations. One option would be the permanent basing of an SPLA training establishment in the Pibor/Akobo area so that threatened areas could be reinforced if required. The rotation of infantry units through the training base, perhaps to focus on peace support operations or operations other than war, would not only provide immediate reinforcements but would also be a deterrent factor for the perpetrators of inter-ethnic violence.⁵⁶ Basing would require significant support, which would only be achievable through the development of infrastructure – particularly the roads linking Akobo, Pibor and Bor.

A second option, favoured by Commissioner Goi from Akobo, is the development of territorial protection groups. This approach requires the formal establishment of localised forces under county-level command and control, but with national oversight – as part of an SPLA or paramilitary police reserve. It would require territorial forces to agree to training, greater personal and organisational accountability, tight arms control and restricted areas of operation. Territorial protection groups might form part of a national security force reserve, and would be financially incentivised to protect their own communities and not act offensively against others. As with the basing concept, there would be a requirement to raise additional capital in order to develop infrastructure for the ‘home-guard’ but Goi also hinted at the introduction of a poll tax to raise over 5m SSP

⁵⁶ Discussions with senior security force officers, Jonglei, February 2012.

to support infrastructure development. Commenting on the lack of rationale between the issue of state funds by central government, he was quick to add that Jonglei with a population of over 1.4 million was much greater than other States, with Bor County alone having a larger population than Western Bahr El Ghazal. Yet, both States received equal budgets from Juba. Ultimately Goi is advocating for a change in the approach to state and county budget allocations as a precursor to long-term security and development.⁵⁷

Future security responses also need to focus on the source of firearms and ammunition. Although strong evidence suggests the Lou received a substantial number of arms from the militia leader George Athor in late 2010/early 2011,⁵⁸ with support from Khartoum, and there are allegations that the Murle received arms via a similar route but through David Yauyau's militia, this is not the main supply route any longer. Trading cattle across the border with Ethiopia for weapons and ammunition, and cash, has become a significant business. Current rates are estimated at 1–3 cows per rifle, which is down from 15 cows a year ago. Ammunition however, is still an expensive commodity with the cost of one round estimated at 5 South Sudanese Pounds (SSP).⁵⁹

Control of the border through greater regional co-operation, information sharing and the deployment of a border force in South Sudan is a crucial component of any future security response. The long-term responsibility for borders rests with the Ministry of National Security and plans need to be developed and implemented as soon as possible to prevent further arms transfers.

Finally, the long-term de-militarisation of future security responses is required. Further development of the SSPS and their deployment in much greater numbers is an urgent requirement. There are currently only 109 police personnel deployed in Akobo County on a full-time basis (out of a promised 250) and only 39 in Pibor County. Reinforcements totalling almost 1,000 in Pibor County are currently attempting to provide increased security to communities. In late 2011 Akobo County identified 70 additional SSPS recruits but they are still waiting to be transported to Bor for training.⁶⁰ In total it is estimated that a minimum of 500–600 adequately trained and resourced police are needed in each of the main conflict stricken counties (Pibor, Akobo, Uror and Nyirol), in order to start replacing the SPLA.

In addition, the profile of the police needs to be considered. The deployment of the Auxiliary Force, or 'bean police'⁶¹ as they are known in Juba because of their orange coloured camouflage uniforms, resembled an SPLA deployment with heavy weapon systems and military formations. Admittedly, this paramilitary type response was required at the height of conflict, and is certainly welcomed by communities in the immediate term. But, in the long-term, the SSPS needs to focus on public perceptions and image, which is a complex issue in a militarised society. Overall image, perceptions of police responsibilities and processes require focus and local sensitisation if the SSPS is to de-militarise security responses in Jonglei. Aligning police activities with the rule of law and justice sector initiatives, rather than continuing to mirror purely military approaches, which are often perceived to be above of the law, is crucial if the SSPS is to assume complete responsibility for public safety and security in conflict areas.

⁵⁷ Discussions with Pibor County Commissioner, January 2012.

⁵⁸ Discussions with Lou Nuer youth, Akobo, May 2011.

⁵⁹ Discussions with Lou Nuer youth, Akobo, May 2011 and national/international development staff, Akobo, January 2012.

⁶⁰ Discussions with Pibor and Akobo county commissioners, January 2012.

⁶¹ Translated from Juba Arabic. The Auxiliary Force was formed from recruits that were trained at the infamous Rajaf West training camp in Juba. The 5–6,000 Rajaf West recruits were taken from every state and were to return to form the nucleus of state level police departments. However, most were grouped into the paramilitary Auxiliary Force under national control.

4

Providing an effective response: the challenges facing the security forces in South Sudan

THE SECURITY FORCES of South Sudan are currently engaged in significant reform and development processes in order to increase their ability to respond to current and emerging threats, while concurrently being affordable and accountable. While both internal and external threats have seemingly increased since secession, and the pressures on the security forces to respond effectively have amplified, it is difficult to see how major development of security sector capabilities can be achieved without greater stability. Consequently, what can the security forces achieve in the face of increasing inter-ethnic violence, and what challenges will they face if they attempt to implement some of the approaches discussed in Section 3? This section looks at the evolution of the security forces since the CPA in 2005 in the context of the Jonglei situation, as well as major resource challenges. It questions whether the SPLA in particular has the versatility to respond to a range of threats by analysing the basic and specialist skills they require, as well as the logistical shortfalls they face.

The process the security forces are currently undergoing is best described as evolutionary. The fledgling SSPS and the prisons and wildlife services were born out of the CPA in 2005/6 and the formation of NSS was a result of secession and a break from the Khartoum controlled National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) in 2011. Arguably, the SPLA was never a truly coherent guerrilla force, and it is currently evolving, rather than transforming into a professional army (not necessarily of a conventional nature) to meet the defence requirements of the new country. While under tremendous international pressure to reform, particularly in terms of affordability, security forces are under constant pressure to downsize while at the same time facing increased threats. Some security sector specialists argue that an escalation of inter-ethnic violence could not have come at a worse time for the security forces. Given the increasing North/South tension along the border, accusations of cross-border support for SPLM-N, incursions by SAF – particularly air attacks – and a potentially serious economic crisis because of the cessation of oil production, it is highly unlikely that security challenges in Jonglei will be resolved in the short-term.

Not yet a truly conventional army,⁶² and no longer a guerrilla force, the SPLA's versatility is currently being tested to its limits. Defence transformation efforts have, to some degree, instilled a mindset of 'conventionality' and the current structure and organisation of the does SPLA resemble a conventional force designed exclusively to deal with defence related threats. Evidence of this is displayed in the SPLA's reluctance to march great distances and live in the field, like the perpetrators of inter-ethnic violence.⁶³ Accounts of the SPLA pursuing the Lou deep beyond the borders of Jonglei State during a 2005–2006 disarmament campaign are unlikely to be repeated given the current mindset and the desire to move only with vehicular support. In the 2005–2006 example, the pursuing SPLA carried out widespread looting but drove the predominantly Lou White Army into retreat towards Dolieb Hill in Upper Nile State where they eventually capitulated to disarmament.

The lack of mobility is currently a major problem for the SPLA, particularly as motor transport assets are mostly deployed to border areas in support of much needed defensive tasks. In addition, a lack of mobility is compounded by a reactive, rather than proactive approach to security challenges. The reactive mindset is most likely a continuation of the approach during the CPA period: react to security incidents only after they have occurred and a tendency to blame the North for all security problems. Continuing to demonise the North and blame Khartoum for everything was, in part, a way of ensuring a unanimous vote for secession. Admittedly, Khartoum was the architect (directly or indirectly) of most security issues during the CPA period, but there is now a need for the South's security forces to become more proactive to potential security challenges and focus on prevention rather than solely on response.

Recently there have been encouraging signs of pro-activity from the SSPS in the deployments of the Auxiliary Force. Warned about deployment to Pibor from Bor, before the major Lou attacks, a thousand men from the Auxiliary Force would have made a significant difference in Pibor County if basic administrative procedures had been quicker and their deployment order not delayed until 1 January 2012. Furthermore, 200 additional members of the Auxiliary Force were sent to Lakes State in January 2012 in anticipation of inter-ethnic conflict. However, as already discussed, SSPS resources are thinly spread. States have only 3,000 policemen, and although the size of the SSPS is currently estimated at over 50,000 many thousands are un-deployable.⁶⁴ The prison and wildlife services are also used for community protection duties, but only in the aftermath of inter-ethnic conflict. In the absence of sufficient police or military the County Commissioner in Dut Padiet was quick to concentrate all available security forces in response to reprisal attacks from the Murle in mid-January 2012. Effectively, both the prison and wildlife services, wherever they are deployed, are paramilitary reserves that can be called upon to support security operations unrelated to their formal duties. However, their skill levels are basic and this severely affects their employability on anything more than basic protection tasks.

To some extent, the same is true for the SPLA and the paramilitary forces of the SSPS. Any training they have received is basic and is not necessarily followed by refresher or continuation training in the units they are deployed.⁶⁵ Weapon training, fieldcraft⁶⁶ and minor tactics⁶⁷ are considered some of the fundamental skills taught to soldiers as part of initial training. Although security force weapon skills are mostly adequate,

⁶² Rands R, *In Need of Review: SPLA Transformation in 2006–10 and Beyond*, HSBA Working Paper No. 23, (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, 2010).

⁶³ Discussions with senior SPLA officers, Juba, October to November 2011.

⁶⁴ Discussions with security advisors, Juba, December 2011

⁶⁵ SPLA units in both Pibor and Akobo did not have an ongoing training programme. One unit mentioned that occasionally, on Mondays, they would do some form of training.

⁶⁶ Fieldcraft is a term used in military circles to describe the basic military skills required to operate stealthily and the methods used to do so, which can differ during day or night and due to weather or terrain. These skills include camouflage, navigation, understanding the difference between concealment, from view and cover from fire, using the terrain and its features to mask ground movement, obstacle crossing, selecting good fire positions, lying up positions, camping positions, effective observation, camouflage penetration and detecting enemy-fire.

⁶⁷ Minor tactics are described as fire team (4–5 men) or squad level (8–11 men) military actions including collective patrol skills, reaction to contact, and offensive and defensive capabilities.

including the safe operation of firearms, marksmanship skills are mostly poor since they rarely fire their weapons in training and do not have the tools to 'zero' their rifles. This means that most rounds are fired indiscriminately in the general direction of an aggressor, which is not ideal in the presence of civilian communities.

Naturally good at many fieldcraft skills, security force personnel still need to practise regularly to maintain skill levels. It was evident, from the poor personal defences dug by soldiers in Pibor, that they had forgotten some basic skills.⁶⁸ Similar challenges face the SPLA with the application of minor tactics. Effective patrolling is a skill that requires regular training and rehearsals. A reluctance to conduct basic foot patrols in the absence of orders or vehicular support, has promoted significant skill-fade in many SPLA units.

However, these challenges are easily rectified. With recent training, Task Force 1 of the SSPS Auxiliary Unit in Pibor was patrolling its base location and around the town. It would not have taken much for them to extend their range to many outlying communities. In contrast, the SPLA battalion in Akobo was reluctant to do anything except protect their own base and the county headquarters in the absence of additional orders and vehicle support.

Ultimately, the SPLA and SSPS paramilitary units have sufficient grounding in basic skills and, in the case of the former, extensive experience in the implementation of these skills in operational environments. With clear orders, refresher training and planning assistance they are certainly capable of implementing the immediate, protection-oriented, options described earlier in this paper.

Effective implementation of the deliberately planned and long-term security responses however requires more advanced specialist skills, requiring specific training and dedicated support. Adoption of the principles of peace support operations, and 'operations other than war', is fundamental to success, but conflicts with the SPLA's conventional role, which is based on defending borders against external aggression. To overcome this conflict, the SPLA should consider training and dedicating specific forces to deal exclusively with internal security challenges. Ideally, this role is suited to the SPLA's commando units. Secondly, planning processes (at all levels), need to be improved. This includes the use of maps – which no unit, SPLA or SSPS, in either Pibor or Akobo possesses – to ensure delineation of areas of responsibility, to track security forces and the movement of raiding groups. Greater analysis and deduction of information needs to support decision-making and there is a requirement for improved negotiation and mediation techniques when dealing with local communities.

More importantly, security force units need specific training in internal security techniques such as cordon and search operations and more advanced patrolling operations, including area searches and static surveillance. As operational sophistication increases there is equally a need to ensure the legal basis for specific missions is maintained. At the lowest levels this means clear rules of engagement, including simple rules for opening fire, which need to be understood by all security force personnel. It should not be underestimated how much training is required to ensure that security force personnel understand the basic rules for the application of force as well as the principles of the International Law of Armed Conflict. Leaders require additional training in these important aspects in order to assume responsibility for the forces they command.

A lack of appropriate equipment and logistic support also poses significant challenges to security force responses. The lack of vehicles, needed to provide logistics in remote areas where units deployed on operations, could be overcome by a relocation of assets from Juba (where there are an abundance of vehicles used to transport soldiers to

68 Author's first hand experience and professional view.

and from the SPLA headquarters in Bilpham). However, the limitation on security force operating budgets often curtails, or delays operations because of an inability to purchase fuel and other essential commodities.

Although security force communications have improved in recent years, there is still no tactical communications system that links battalion and company size units with higher-level formation headquarters. Elements of the Auxiliary Force of the SSPS have vehicle mounted radio systems deployed at the equivalent of battalion level, which ideally is required by all SPLA units as a minimum, in order to support security force responses.

In summary, the security forces face numerous challenges especially when faced with attempts at more sophisticated operations, including coercive disarmament. However, with some reorientation, they are more than capable of providing protection-related duties. More deliberate operations however require a long lead-time to properly prepare specific forces and allocate additional resources. Long-term strategic security solutions will also require a change in transformation and development planning. The current SPLA transformation strategy identifies a key objective as 'support to the civil authorities in internal security operations in any part of the country',⁶⁹ but there is little evidence to support the implementation of this objective through specific organisational structures, training, preparation and tasking.

⁶⁹ Discussions with international advisors, Juba, December 2011.

Support from UNMISS and other significant international actors

WHEN COMMENTING ON the role played by the UN during the height of the fighting in December 2011/January 2012, UNMISS Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) identified three tasks which were achieved by the Mission: “Sounding the alarm and urging the Government to mobilise additional forces; deployment of half the ‘combat ready force’ (approximately 1,200 security force personnel out of a total of over 4,700); provision of early warning to citizens via local authorities.”⁷⁰

Despite these achievements, UNMISS has been criticised for not doing more to protect communities and deter further violence. Over 550 UNMISS personnel, with armoured personnel carriers,⁷¹ were deployed to protect Pibor town and local UN assets. However, there is little evidence to suggest there were any attempts at protecting outlying communities. A military force of this size should have been capable of deploying sub-units to areas within 3–5km of Pibor, but the risk to the UNMISS force would have increased significantly. A number of other incidents undermined the reputation of UNMISS during the recent crisis, not least when Russian pilots were prevented from flying much needed UN helicopters because of a lack of security. There was also open criticism from politicians in Jonglei that UNMISS was displaying a bias towards Pibor and the Murle community.⁷² However, there are more deep-rooted issues facing UNMISS, which are focused on a lack of mutual trust between the UN military forces and the South’s security forces.

Fundamentally, the majority of South Sudanese security force personnel do not see UNMISS as any different from its predecessor UNMIS. The latter was utterly distrusted, mainly because its headquarters was in Khartoum and because it was perceived that UNMIS reports on southern security issues were going straight into the hands of the South’s enemy. On occasions, this led to the SPLA deliberately misleading UNMIS forces or being unco-operative.⁷³ There has been little sensitisation of southern security forces as to the new mission, its structure, capabilities and mandate so the distrust remains. It

⁷⁰ Comments by Hilde Johnson on *Hard Talk*, BBC, February 2012.

⁷¹ BMP tracked armoured personnel carriers were used as a psychological deterrent as they resemble small tanks with their turret and armour.

⁷² Discussions with Jonglei State Assembly members, Bor, February 2012.

⁷³ Author’s first hand experiences in South Sudan since 2006.

is not just the security forces that lack confidence in the new UN mission. Comments from the Jonglei State government indicated that there are concerns that UNMISS interference in security responses by the SPLA could affect the success of operations.

Despite a mandate to “advise and assist the Government of the Republic of South Sudan, including military and police at national and local levels as appropriate, in fulfilling its responsibility to protect civilians, in compliance with international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law”⁷⁴, security forces in Pibor intimated that UNMISS only acted in self-defence during recent Lou attacks. Moreover, it was perceived that UNMISS forces ‘had their own plan’ and did not form part of an integrated defence.⁷⁵ This may not be true, but it is certainly the perception. Mutual trust is greater between UNPOL and the SSPS since levels of interaction are much greater. The former plays a significant role in police development throughout the country. Not part of the mandate, aside from the development of a military justice system, UNMISS plays a largely insignificant role in the transformation of the SPLA.

Building genuine mutual trust between UNMISS military forces and the SPLA will take significant efforts. Primarily, the leadership of both organisations should issue clear orders to interact far more at the lowest levels. Offers of advice and training from the UN, as well as the planning and conduct of combined operations will help increase reciprocal confidence. In late January 2012, the SPLA battalion in Akobo asked UNMISS forces what they intended to do in order to increase local protection. They suggested the UN deploy checkpoints on the outskirts of the town in order to intercept armed youth. UNMISS, with less than 60 men, clearly did not have the resources to conduct this task alone. But, instead of proposing a combined UN/SPLA operation whereby the SPLA provide static checkpoints and the UN, using their armoured personnel carriers, provide a mobile response force, the UNMISS troops failed to capitalise on the opportunity. Furthermore, relations at a local level remained strained.⁷⁶

Clearly there is a need for more imaginative responses using the limited resources available. Greater combined engagement is required to maximise the capabilities of both UNMISS and the South’s security forces if the aspirations of the Sudan Council of Churches are to be met:

To the UN, particularly UNMISS:

- To continue to deploy armed peacekeepers in Jonglei State in numbers sufficient to exercise their Chapter VII responsibility to protect civilians.
- To continue to monitor the situation and provide information in a timely fashion to all stakeholders.
- To continue to support the Government in its responsibility to protect its citizens.⁷⁷

In addition to contributions by the UN, there are numerous international security sector advisory projects being implemented in South Sudan. These focus mostly on policy level development and major reform processes. Very few of these projects are sufficiently flexible to respond to the real-time challenges facing the security forces. There are however sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced security sector advisors in South Sudan who could be deployed to conflict areas in order to guide and mentor security force personnel – the SPLA particularly. Donors should be encouraged to redirect advisors to conflict areas when major security responses are required. For example, the UK is currently assessing the feasibility of building capacity within the Joint Operation Centre in Pibor in order to enhance security force command and control capabilities. The County Commissioner and security force representatives have welcomed this approach.

⁷⁴ www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/mandate.shtml

⁷⁵ Discussions with senior security force personnel, Pibor, January 2012.

⁷⁶ Discussions with UN military personnel and SPLA officers, Akobo, January 2012.

⁷⁷ Statement by Sudan Council of Churches, ‘*The Current Situation in Jonglei State*’, 18 January 2012.

6

Conclusion

THE SPLA AND OTHER security forces face enormous operational challenges, but they are more than capable of protecting communities, and containing and suppressing inter-ethnic violence if they approach the situation in the right manner. Future plans need to be underpinned by a clear command structure controlled by civil authorities, with security responses inter-linked with a broader comprehensive response strategy. Immediately, security forces need to conduct protection-related tasks while setting the conditions and shaping the area of conflict for stabilisation and subsequent longer-term interventions. If this approach is adopted success is far more likely. The Government and security forces need the advice and support of UNMISS and other international SSR actors to develop and implement plans quickly and effectively. Any attempts at wide-scale coercive disarmament will fail and potentially trigger further violence and humanitarian suffering.

Furthermore, the approaches suggested in this paper can be replicated in other states where inter-ethnic violence is prevalent – not least on the borders of Warrap, Unity, and Lakes states. Although the situation in these areas is not founded on the same level of ethnic animosity as in Jonglei, and cannot just be labelled as purely ethnic violence, security force responses still need to focus on protecting communities and preparing the ground for longer-term interventions. Otherwise, raiding will continue to be an annual occurrence at the cost of many more lives. This paper does not advocate for generic solutions for all areas affected by inter-ethnic violence. But, given the security response options available to forces that face numerous internal challenges and external influences, it suggests that the lessons learned from Jonglei can be applied effectively elsewhere. In line with this approach, there are two important tasks that need to take place concurrently, in the short term, if inter-ethnic violence is to be contained and prevented before the next dry season. Firstly, detailed contingency planning needs to be done for security responses in areas traditionally (and annually) threatened by inter-ethnic violence, and secondly specific forces need to be prepared and trained in both the SPLA and SSPS. Security force actions need to be proactive, rather than reactive, if communities are to be protected and inter-ethnic violence prevented.

At the time of writing, another security response option was looking more likely. The alternative response is focused on doing very little other than unsubstantial security force reinforcement and minimal community protection, and attempts at coercive disarmament on a limited scale. This approach is likely to be undermined by the onset of the rainy season. Reports indicate that disarmament will probably go ahead on a limited scale when the appointment of an SPLA commander has been made and additional troops deployed. Although it seems the disarmament will initially be voluntary, through traditional leaders, the threat and implementation of force will likely be used as a negotiation tool as in the March-August 2006 campaign. This response will not bring about any significant long-term change.

There has been considerable and heated debate among government and international actors regarding the pros and cons of coercive disarmament, and other security force responses. However, the slow response to the problems in Jonglei indicates that the security forces have little intent to conduct any large scale operations in the short-term. Arguably, increased North/South tensions in border areas and the continued crisis over oil production, transit fees and economy are distracting the Government from the continuing internal challenges South Sudan faces. Potential austerity measures are also likely to curtail large-scale security force operations in Jonglei. Ultimately, in the absence of a coherent, well-planned response, focused on the implementation of tasks that can be realistically achieved by the security forces, ethnic violence in Jonglei is likely to continue unabated with further disastrous consequences.

Saferworld works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others.

COVER PHOTO: SPLA soldiers guard weapons confiscated during the 2010 disarmament campaigns in Jonglei State. © PETE MULLER



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