

Satellite Sentinel Project

FRONTLINE ABYEI: EVIDENCE OF MILITARY ESCALATION IN ABYEI REGION

EMERGENCY ALERT PREPARED BY



Harvard
Humanitarian
Initiative

OVERVIEW | 10 MARCH 2011

Following the recent razing of three villages, there has been increased military activity in and around the contested Abyei region of Sudan during the past week. Actors aligned with both the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) appear to have improved their defensive positions and mobilized additional offensive capacity, including, in one case, vehicles consistent with the transport of heavy armor.

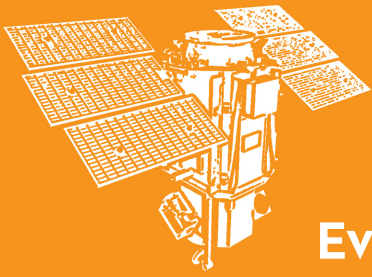
Satellite Sentinel Project (SSP) has determined that in some parts of the Abyei region, elements believed to be aligned with the SAF and SPLA now lie within an approximately 20 to 40 kilometer range of each other. SSP also concludes that the SAF and SPLA appear to now have more units arrayed within 100 kilometers of each other in and around Abyei than at any time in the past two months of SSP's monitoring of the region.

This rapid spike in apparent military movements by armed actors represents a significant deterioration in the human security climate in the Abyei region. SSP has identified a fortified camp consistent with either a Misseriya militia or SAF installation inside the Abyei region at Bongo—approximately 15 kilometers from Maker Abior, one of the recently burned villages. The camp appears to have been built around the road there between February 12 and March 3. Heavy Equipment Transports (HETs) used to move heavy armored vehicles have appeared in the past 48 hours at a known SAF base near Nyama, due north of Abyei. Artillery is still present at that position along with evidence of activity involving light vehicles and heavy trucks. The burned villages of Todach and Tajalei have been very recently fortified with foxholes and other defensive emplacements. Trucks have been seen moving from the south to the north along roads in that area where SPLA and southern police units have been reportedly operating.

The close proximity of northern and southern Sudanese combat-ready units and recently built defensive emplacements to one another poses an urgent threat to the security of civilian populations on both sides of the border. Additionally, UN peacekeeping forces (UNMIS) on patrol have reportedly been denied full freedom of movement by SPLA and southern police personnel in areas affected by recent attacks. SAF-led Joint Integrated Units (JIU) reportedly failed to respond to the February 27 alleged attack by armed Misseriya militia on the Todach police post, which was apparently 400 meters from their position at the time of the assault. The absence of a fully operational and responsive peacekeeping force further heightens the imminent danger to civilians posed by SAF and SPLA units massing in such close range to each other.

Satellite Sentinel Project is conducting regular, intensive monitoring of Sudan to assess the current human security situation and identify potential threats to civilians.

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FINDINGS

- Vehicles consistent with HETs used to transport heavy armor were visible as of March 9 at Nyama, which is located approximately 95 km north of Abyei town. Artillery continues to be present at that camp along with a mix of light vehicles and heavy trucks. Internal fortifications appear to have been improved there over a 48-hour period.
- A camp capable of housing an at least company-sized unit was built around the road at Bongo between February 12 and March 3. Fortifications consistent with foxholes are visible in a horseshoe formation. The camp at Bongo is approximately 15 kilometers from the destroyed village of Maker Abior.
- A circle of fortifications consistent with foxholes is visible around a position in the burned village of Tajalei. Heavy trucks have been seen moving south to north near that position in recent days.
- Fortifications appear to have been built around a suspected southern police post in the burned village of Todach in recent days. Heavy trucks have been recently seen moving south to north near that encampment.

CONCLUSIONS

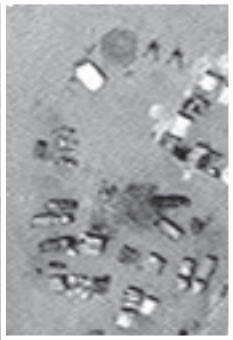
- Recent activity at the known SAF facility at Nyama suggests the potential recent movement of armor in the vicinity of that position.
- The camp at Bongo is consistent with a potential SAF or Misseriya militia encampment due to its location and the position of its fortifications. The foxholes appear to face towards southern-aligned positions and the area facing SAF-controlled territory is left apparently undefended. Its appearance approximately two weeks prior to the attacks on three villages near that location corroborates reports received by SSP claiming that alleged staging areas for those attacks were present in that area.
- The recent appearance of heavy trucks and new fortifications at Tajalei during a period when UN-MIS patrols were denied access to that area suggests that SPLA forces and/or southern police were reinforcing their position at Tajalei.
- Recent reports that UNMIS patrols were blocked from accessing Todach by actors allegedly aligned with the SPLA are consistent with the time frame in which the fortifications there were apparently constructed.

Analysis prepared by HHI and UNITAR/UNOSAT. Imagery collected and additional analysis provided by DigitalGlobe.



ARTILLERY AND APPROXIMATELY
ONE DOZEN LIGHT AND HEAVY
VEHICLES

3 VEHICLES CONSISTENT WITH
HEAVY EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTS
(HETs)



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9 MARCH 2011

INCREASED ACTIVITY AT SAF CAMP | NYAMA



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NEW FOXHOLES
APPEARED BETWEEN 3 MARCH - 6 MARCH

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EVIDENCE OF RECENT FORTIFICATION - CENTRAL SECTION | TAJALEI



NEW FOXHOLES
ALONG PERIMETER

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14 FEBRUARY 2011
IMPROVED FORTIFICATIONS | TODACH

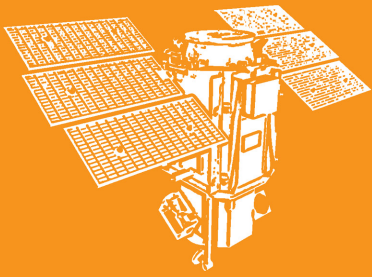
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9 MARCH 2011
IMPROVED FORTIFICATIONS | TODACH



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ABOUT THE PROJECT AND THE PARTNERS

THE WORLD IS WATCHING BECAUSE YOU ARE WATCHING.

The Satellite Sentinel Project – conceived by George Clooney – combines satellite imagery analysis and field reports with Google's Map Maker technology to deter the resumption of war between North and South Sudan. The project provides an early warning system to deter mass atrocities by focusing world attention and generating rapid responses on human rights and human security concerns.

This project is the result of an unprecedented collaboration between Not On Our Watch, the Enough Project, Google, the United Nations UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT), DigitalGlobe, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, and Trellon, LLC.

The project works like this: Commercial satellites passing over the border of northern and southern Sudan are able to capture possible threats to civilians, observe the movement of displaced people, detect bombed and razed villages, or note other evidence of pending mass violence.

UNITAR/UNOSAT leads the collection and analysis of the images and collaborates with Google and Trellon to design the web platform for the public to easily access the images and reports. Harvard Humanitarian Initiative provides system-wide research and leads the collection, human rights analysis, and corroboration of on-the-ground reports that contextualizes the satellite imagery. The Enough Project contributes field reports, provides policy analysis, and, together with Not On Our Watch, and our Sudan Now partners, puts pressure on policymakers by urging the public to act. DigitalGlobe provides satellite imagery and additional analysis.

The Satellite Sentinel Project marks the first sustained, public effort to systematically monitor and report on potential hotspots and threats to security along a border, in near real-time (within 24-36 hours), with the aim of heading off humanitarian disaster and human rights crimes before they occur.

Not On Our Watch – co-founded by Don Cheadle, George Clooney, Matt Damon, Brad Pitt, David Pressman, and Jerry Weintraub – has provided seed money to launch the project. To support the Satellite Sentinel Project, donate at www.satsentinel.org.

Press Inquiries: Contact Jonathan Hutson at jhutson@enoughproject.org | 202.386.1618



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