

Civilian Destruction in Jonglei: Khartoum's Role in Arming David Yau Yau's Militia
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There is a great deal of biased attention when it comes to international assessments of the ongoing ethnic strife in Jonglei. UN reports from the ground, primarily from the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), suggest a recent diminishment of violence, and humanitarian access may be improving. Both UNMISS and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) are performing more effectively, and a very recent UN assessment indicated that tensions between the SPLA and civilians was diminishing. Certainly the situation is far from stabilized; ethnic tensions remain high, particularly between the Murle and the Lou Nuer; and it must be emphasized that the previous behavior of the SPLA has entailed very serious violations of human rights and a failure to distinguish between Murle civilians and those Murle who have joined David Yau Yau's rebellion.

But let us be clear as to why Yau Yau's group has been able to create the havoc it has, why it has been able to engage in a kind of provocative guerilla warfare that makes distinguishing civilians and combatants particularly difficult, and why it is unlikely to cease action despite the generous offer of amnesty from Juba. This rebel group, deep in South Sudan's Jonglei State, has been repeatedly armed by Khartoum as part of a larger effort to destabilize the South. Armaments have come overland, but also have been airlifted by Khartoum's Antonov aircraft to Yau Yau. Again, this effort is an extension of a broader war of attrition that has as its goal the collapse of the state of South Sudan. Certainly Jonglei would not present nearly the challenges it does without the activities of Yau Yau's group; and Yau Yau's group would not be able to operate—without a political agenda and trading almost exclusively on ethnic grievances—without substantial military support from Khartoum.

Despite these facts, international condemnation over developments in Jonglei has fallen almost exclusively on Juba. I have myself been publicly critical of SPLA human rights abuses in Jonglei (<http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=4108>), but would hope such criticism is seen within the broader assessment of the causes of violence against civilians in Jonglei. That so little is said on this score by the UN, the U.S., the EU, the African Union and others signals both expediency and disingenuousness.

I have discussed at length the evidence that Khartoum is supporting Yau Yau's group and—by contrast—the complete absence of evidence for the regime's claim that South Sudan is supporting rebel groups within Sudan ("**The arming of rebels in Sudan and South Sudan: What is the evidence?**" 17 June 2013, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=4059>). I survey a great deal of evidence from recent years, and little has change in the intervening months to change the conclusions reached.

Moreover, a new study by the **Small Arms Survey** provides even more detailed evidence that armaments used by Yau Yau's group are purposefully sent by the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party in a desperate effort to undermine South Sudan before Sudan's own continuing economic implosion sweeps this corrupt and desperate regime from power. Although relatively brief, the detail and authority of the evidence and conclusions is overwhelming. It is also clear that Khartoum has begun an aggressive effort to disguise the origins of weapons by grinding off identifying numbers. I can do no better than to cite the key findings of this critical report (see website for high resolution photographs; all emphases are added)—

Small Arms Survey, "Weapons Captured from David Yau Yau's Militia, July 2013"

<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/arms-ammunition-tracing-desk/HSBA-Tracing-Desk-Yau-Yau-July-2013.pdf>

During the first half of 2013, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forces operating in Jonglei seized a variety of weapons and ammunition from rebel forces under the command of David Yau Yau. The Small Arms Survey previously documented weapons with a group of Yau Yau's men who defected under the leadership of James Kubrin in December 2012.

This report expands on the findings of the initial fieldwork. The Small Arms Survey and the independent research group Conflict Armament Research visited SPLA divisional headquarters in Paryak, Bor County, on 5 July 2013 to view a range of weapons that the SPLA had captured subsequent to the February site

visit. These weapons, which are described below, are identical in type to those documented earlier in the year. They also include many of the same weapon and ammunition types that have been documented in the hands of Khartoum-backed rebel forces elsewhere in South Sudan, including the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army (SSDM/A) under the leadership of George Athor, and Johnson Olony's Shilluk militia.

Among the most striking findings of the July fieldwork in Jonglei was the significant increase in the number of weapons seen with removed serial numbers and factory marks. The most logical explanation for the increase is that actor(s) in the supply chain wish to obscure their sourcing. These designs are consistent with types observed in the Survey's February 2013 site visit of weapons. They are also of the same type observed with returning South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA) forces in Mayom (May 2013), Johnson Olony's forces in Lul, Upper Nile (July 2013), those collected from George Athor's forces (February 2012), and seized from the SSLA in April 2011. ***In all cases, respective rebel forces report that the weapons have been supplied through Khartoum, though this cannot be independently corroborated. The weapons are similar in design to Iranian RPG-7-pattern models.***

The trigger assemblies feature no viable identifying marks although a serial number (formerly positioned on the launch tube above the sight bracket) appears to have been removed by grinding and later painted (see images below). One example of many Chinese CQ assault rifles viewed, with associated 5.56 x 45 mm magazine and ammunition (addressed below). The rear sight housing/carry handle of the weapon has been deformed by a bullet impact. In all cases observed, identifying factory marks—which typically appear on the left-hand side of the magazine housing—have ***been removed by milling, indicated by the bright metal observable in the images above and below.*** In the left-hand image below, black paint was evidently applied after milling, although the paint has abraded with use. ***The weapons, and mode of milling, are identical to examples documented with Yau Yau's forces (February 2013), returning SSLA forces in Mayom (May 2013), and Johnson Olony's forces in Lul (July 2013). A number of these rifles were seized in Pibor [Jonglei] in July 2013.***

This weapon is identical to PKM-pattern weapons documented in service with a range of Khartoum-backed rebel forces in South Sudan. Weapons of this kind have been identified bearing the model designation 'M80' (see **HSBA Tracing Desk Report 'Weapons seized from the forces of George Athor and John Duit,' December 2012**) although this particular ***weapon's model designation and additional marks have been removed by grinding*** (see images below). This 5.56 x 45 mm small-calibre ammunition is identical to types documented with Yau Yau's forces. [end]

Of an international community that is bringing pressure to bear on Juba over its military actions in Jonglei and failing to take seriously the implications of such authoritative findings—and in turn bringing appropriate pressure to bear on Khartoum—we must say again that this represents shamefully expedient accommodation of a regime that survives only because of its unlimited capacity and willingness to generate vast human destruction.