

Sudan People's Liberation Army



Office of the SPLA Spokesman

Our Ref: No.SPLA/OSS/022/04/2007

Date: 17/04/2007

Response to Critique by Mr. Alfred Taban

Reference to the article titled “**Reshuffle in Juba**”, written by Mr. Alfred Taban and published by Khartoum Monitor, on Monday, 16th April 2007, in that article, Mr. Taban have touched many vital and important issues. Some of the points raised by Taban are directly hurting the SPLA as an institution.

Firstly, Mr. Taban made a conclusion that SPLA “is proving incapable of fighting the Lords Resistance Army (LRA)”. This conclusion reached by Taban is inconsistent with the facts on the ground. One fact which we believe Alfred is ignorant about is that there are no orders by the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) to the SPLA to fight the LRA. You can not speak of being incapable or capable of executing an order in the absence of the order itself. The mission of the SPLA as came in the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan is to protect the territory and the people of Southern Sudan. We launched the combing up operations on the 9th April 2007 in Magwe with the aim of protecting our people from the repeated attacks and ambushes by the LRA bandits. The LRA is even denying those bandits from its rank and file and is alleging that they are from SAF aligned militia.

We want to inform Mr. Taban and the public that SPLA forces are now pushing out the bandits who are currently running in disarray towards Uganda. The success of military operations is not determined by the number of the enemy soldiers reported killed to the media, it is determined by the achievement of the defined objectives at the beginning of the operations. Vehicles are now moving daily between Nimule and Juba without being ambushed by the bandits since these combing operations started. This is one of the objectives of these operations.

Secondly, Mr. Alfred wrote that “Ugandan and Kenyan traders have been harassed and beaten up by some SPLA soldiers”. This is not accurate. The repeated accusations of harassment and killing of Kenyan and Ugandan drivers and traders, by SPLA is not true and baseless. We have investigated these accusations, found out that they are unfounded and made several press releases to that effect; some of them were edited and published by Mr. Taban in his Khartoum Monitor.

Thirdly, Mr. Taban wrote that members of the SPLA do not “differentiate wrong from right”. This naive outlook about the SPLA is typical of the misconception of the so-called “Awlad Al-Balid” (sons of the land) who see the marginalised rural people of the Sudan as people who do not “differentiate wrong from right” in order to justify their domination. What is wrong and what is right are clearly defined in the SPLA Act of 2003. What is wrong and what is right are enshrined in the cultures of the marginalised people of the Sudan, the population base of the SPLA.

Fourthly, Mr. Taban also wrote that “some members of the SPLA are grabbing land”. There have been repeated accusations in the media of land grabbing by some members of the SPLA. This accusation by Taban is the latest all of them. However, SPLA has never received any official written complaint neither from an institution nor from an individual. One of the VIPs once raised a complaint that an SPLA officer has used a vehicle mounted with 12.7 mm GPHMG for grabbing land. We asked him to put that complaint in writing substantiated with evidences and send to the SPLA General Headquarters. There is no response from that VIP up to now. “Land grabbing by some members of the SPLA” is nothing but propaganda with the aim of discrediting the SPLA.

Mr. Taban, we are fully aware of the objectives of your 5 days March 2007 retreat to Paris organized by France Total Oil Company. One of those objectives is what you have now started by writing this article, namely, to discredit the GOSS and its army the SPLA. However, SPLA will continue to defend itself by all means.

Thanks.

Signed:

Maj. Gen. Kuol Deim Kuol
SPLA Spokesman