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(By Public Information Office)

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Highlights

UN/ Agencies

Guhenno to UNSC: rebel group attacked African forces

(AlRai AlAam)-- The UN Security Council held yesterday a consultation meeting on request from Ghana. Jean-Marie Guhenno, Under-Secretary for Peacekeeping Operations, briefed the meeting on the attack against AU forces in Haskanita. Guhenno informed the Council members that preliminary information suggests that the attack was executed by a splinter group from SLM and a faction from JEM. However, he said, investigations on the incident are continuing.

UN gives SPLA 24 hours to redeploy from South Kordofan

(AlSudani)-- Speaking exclusively to Miraya FM, the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), Lt. General Jasbir Lidder, told Miraya FM that the SPLA was given the date of October the second as a deadline to present the mission with a full detailed report regarding its withdrawal from South Kordofan. "The SPLA provided information which was not very focused," Lt. Gen. Lidder told Miraya FM adding, "it was very "jam-bric" in nature".

He said, "So we have asked them to provide us with exactt information by the second of October".

Lt. Gen. Lidder asserted that the SPLA is not getting serious, "we want to monitor their movement and we want to facilitate its deployment to the south".

The SPLA had earlier made conditions that the Sudan Armed Forces should first withdraw from Rabkona in the Unity State before the (SPLA) withdraws from the areas of Dabab and Abu Matariq in South Kordofan.

Security Council fails to condemn attack on AU in Darfur (ST)

October 1, 2007 (UNITED NATIONS) — The U.N. Security Council failed to issue a formal statement on Monday condemning a rebel attack on an African peacekeeping base in Darfur over the weekend because of a dispute over naming the culprits.

The council's president put off until Tuesday an official statement, which must be approved by all 15 member nations, though he did condemn the assault in comments to the press.

"We could not agree on the language," said the current council president, Ghanaian Ambassador Leslie Kojo Christian.

In the interim he said, "the recent attack on AU peacekeepers in South Darfur was condemned (by all council members) and there was a demand that no effort should be spared that the perpetrators be brought to justice."

The AU says 20 of its soldiers were killed or hurt and nine are missing after the attack, which was blamed on rebel factions. It was the worst assault on AU forces since 2004 when the 7,000-strong mission was deployed to western Sudan.

At issue in the Security Council was a pending investigation by the AU on identifying the culprits, which U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said was not yet complete.

South Africa's Ambassador, Dumisani Kumalo, said many members wanted a reference in the statement to a "terrorist attack" on the AU base at Haskanita in southern Sudan because every report received so far indicated it was done by rebels.

Diplomats said Russia and Qatar agreed with South Africa.

Sudan's U.N. Ambassador Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad said if his government had been involved, the council would have been quick to condemn it. He said that both the AU and Sudan had identified elements of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army as the culprits.

"This is a very ugly action by the rebel groups," aimed at wrecking peace talks scheduled next week in Tripoli, Libya, the ambassador said.

Khalilzad suggested the council should impose sanctions or take other steps to punish the perpetrators once investigations were complete.

He and other council members said the attack showed the need for the planned African Union-United Nations force of up to 26,000 troops and police to be deployed quickly.

"It underscores that the force needs capabilities," he said, stressing that while a joint force would have an "African character" it had to recruit contingents with special skills.

The attack is bound to have an impact on troop contributors. Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade has already warned he would pull out his soldiers if it is determined that the targeted peacekeepers were not equipped to defend themselves.

(Reuters)

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

Al Bashir says international wise-men committed to peace in Darfur

(Al Rai Alam, Alwan)-President Omer Albashir has reiterated the government's commitment to proceed in finalizing the peace process in Darfur and cooperating with the UN-AU to carry out the hybrid operation.

Albashir remarks came Monday when he reviewed with the delegation of the wise-men team, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the positive security and humanitarian developments in Darfur region and the on going efforts to make the coming round of talks in Tripoli a success.

He briefed the team on the implementation progress of the CPA and obstacles confronting the CPA implementation as regards and the failure of the donors to live up to their commitments.

In the mean time, President Assistant and NCP's Deputy Chairperson Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie stressed the government's determination to fully implement all the signed agreements to realize peace and stability in the country.

Dr. Nafie detailed the wise-men team on the government's keenness to abide by the political partnership with the SPLM commending all steps taken for the implementation of the CPA.

He explained to the team the dimensions of Darfur crisis describing it as a local issue, which was exploited by foreign parties, he did not name, for their private agenda. Meanwhile, the president's senior assistant, Mani Arkoi Minawi, met the delegation and stressed the importance of ensuring success for the Tripoli negotiations for the sake of peace and stability in Darfur. He briefed the delegation on the government's efforts to achieve this and to implement the Abuja Agreement and return the displaced and the refugees to their villages. He urged the delegation to contribute to efforts to incorporate the Abuja holdouts in the coming Tripoli negotiations.

However, the delegation of wise men, which was headed by the Reverend Desmond Tutu, comprising the wife of South African leader Nelson Mandela, Lakhdar Ibrahimi, Algeria's former foreign minister and assistant to the UN secretary-general for political affairs, and former US President Jimmy Carter.

The visiting wise-men team listened Monday to the opposition political parties' view points as regards the problems facing the country.

Umma Party leader, Sadik Almahdi, who spoke to the team on behalf of the opposition political parties, said that the opposition had warned of the current serious situation, indicating the necessity of the international community's contribution in assisting the Sudanese people to overcome the current dilemma.

Kiir warns NCP could rig census if borders unmarked

(The Citizen)-- The NCP could cheat the south of its population if the borders remain unmarked during the upcoming census, the Government of Southern Sudan president Lt. General Salva Kiir Mayardit said yesterday. The South Sudan president's warning comes a week after the cabinet approved a new bill for demarcation of borders.

15 killed, injured in explosion by SPLA personnel in Malakal Church

(AlSahafa)--Six people have been killed and nine others injured on Thursday last week due to an explosion resulting from a bomb which was thrown by a SPLA soldier at Khor Floos Church in Malakal. UNMIS News Bulletin said the incident took place during the evening prayers.

AU: Those implicated in Haskanita attack will not participate in Tripoli talks

(AlAyam)-- The AU Spokesperson Nouredine Mezni said that those who would prove to be implicated in the attack against AMIS personnel in Haskanita will not be allowed to participate in Tripoli talks.

Mezni informed that the tripartite ceasefire committee (GoS, rebel movements and AU) began investigation on the incident. The outcome of the investigations, he said, will be made public.

Sudanese Minister of Justice held the international community the responsibility of the attack against AMIS personnel due to its reluctance to exert pressures on the rebel movements.

Sudan's SPLM urges disarmament of Blue Nile militia (ST)

October 1, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Blue Nile State has called for the disarmament of some militias in the state and for the necessity of keeping weapons in the hands of regular forces.

The SPLM's secretary-general in Blue Nile State, Jabir Bakhit, said the SPLM did not have any militias in the state and called for the formation of a military committee for disarmament.

Meanwhile, the SPLM reiterated its demand for the pro-National Congress Party, paramilitary Popular Defence Forces (PDF) to join the armed forces. He said the SPLM still had reservations about the PDF and further indicated that weapons were still in the hands of some nomadic Arab tribes.

Bakhit further affirmed that 75 per cent of the SPLA forces had been withdrawn to the pre-1956 borders south of Al-Kurmuk and that the remaining forces were awaiting the completion of some procedures. He further reiterated the SPLA's commitment in this regard.

(ST)

Bashir discuss peace efforts with Carter, Tutu's Wise Men Delegation

Text of report by Omdurman Sudan Television In Arabic 1900 Gmt 01 Oct 2007 on 1 October

[Presenter] President Umar al-Bashir has reiterated the state's desire to implement the peace agreement. He was speaking at a meeting with the delegation of wise men

headed by the Reverend Desmond Tutu and comprising the wife of South African leader Nelson Mandela, Lakhdar Ibrahimi, Algeria's former foreign minister and assistant to the UN secretary-general for political affairs, and former US President Jimmy Carter. President Al-Bashir praised the steps taken to implement the peace agreement. The meeting discussed a number of issues related to Darfur peace.

The president's senior assistant, Mani Arkoi Minawi, met the delegation and stressed the importance of ensuring success for the Tripoli negotiations for the sake of peace and stability in Darfur. He briefed the delegation on the government's efforts to achieve this and to implement the Abuja Agreement and return the displaced and the refugees to their villages. He urged the delegation to contribute to efforts to incorporate the Abuja holdouts in the coming Tripoli negotiations.

The delegation also met with Presidential Assistant Dr Nafi Ali Nafi, the vice chairman of the [ruling] National Congress Party [NCP] for political and organizational affairs. Dr Nafi discussed issues related to peace, the government's efforts to establish peace in the country, and the status of the implementation of the peace agreements. He stressed the government's commitment to the signed peace agreement and its implementation, affirming keenness on political partnership with the [former rebel] Sudan People's Liberation Movement [SPLM]. Dr Nafi dealt with the Darfur issue, its dimensions, and its developments on the political arena, and the attempts at exaggeration by those who have special agendas to tear Sudan's unity apart. Dr Nafi reiterated the government's intention to conduct the elections on time. The delegation's members talked about the importance they attach to Sudan and expressed hope for attainment of peace and stability in the country.

Source: Omdurman Sudan Television in Arabic 1900 GMT 01 Oct 2007
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GoSS

Kiir denies SPLA investment in alleged coup attempt

(Khartoum Monitor)-- President of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), Salva Kiir Mayardit denied involvement of SPLA in a coup attempt to topple the GoSS. This is fabricated news meant to defame the SPLA, he added.

Sudan's SPLM urges disarmament of Blue Nile militia

Sudantribune.com-- October 1, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Blue Nile State has called for the disarmament of some militias in the state and for the necessity of keeping weapons in the hands of regular forces.

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(ST)

Darfur

Attack on AMIS personnel widely condemned

(Sudan Vision)-- By: Mona Al-Bashir, Zuleikha Abdel Razig, Agencies, The African Union has strongly condemned the attacks launched by the non-signatory rebels on 29/2007 that targeted its troops, leaving behind a number of dead, wounded and some missing.

In a statement it issued on Sunday, the AU accused Unity and JEM factions of staging the attack after their occupation of Haskaneeta for over three months during which period they pillaged cars and spread terror among citizens. He added that the government has been fully cooperative regarding exchange of information and provision of security and required assistance to enable the AU to undertake its role.

Meanwhile, the Defence Minister ordered armed forces troops to enter Haskaneeta to provide all required assistance to the AU camp in the area. The official spokesman of the armed forces affirmed that the troops have actually entered the area and secured it.

"The AU condemns in the strongest terms this unprovoked attack. We believe strongly that the group involved should bear the full responsibility of this heinous attack," the AU Security Chief Said Djinnit said.

Rodolphe Adada, the AU-UN Joint Special Envoy for Darfur said earlier he was "profoundly shocked and appalled by the outrageous and deliberate attack" which came just weeks ahead of the Tripoli talks. He said that in addition to being unjustified, the attack represented a stark breach of the ceasefire agreement as well as all international conventions. "The perpetrators of this shameless attack have no wish for peace and do not take into consideration the suffering of the people of Darfur," he said.

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) said at least ten peacekeepers were killed and 50 personnel were missing after the attack.

The Foreign Ministry said the incident will further bolster the government's faith in political dialogue for the sake of citizens of Darfur. It demanded more cooperation

and coordination with the African Union as well as tracking down and bringing to justice the perpetrators of this horrid crime.

In press statements he made yesterday, Justice Minister Mohammed Ali Al-Mardi said that the international community's failure to impose penalties on the rebel factions that refused to negotiate added to premeditated suspension of funds for AU troops have offset the massacre in which ten AU troops died and 50 others got missin

US: UN force must get to Darfur quickly

Source: Agence France-Presse English Wire Date: October 01, 2007 (similar report in **AlSudani**)

WASHINGTON, Oct 1, 2007 (AFP) - The United States said Monday that it wants a planned UN force to reach Darfur "as soon as possible" after at least 10 African Union peacekeepers were killed and 50 went missing in a bloody attack.

Asked whether the raid, the most deadly on the AU force, would delay a joint AU-UN peacekeeping deployment, US President George W. Bush's chief spokeswoman Dana Perino replied: "I have no information about a further delay."

"What the president wants is that UN peacekeeping force to get there as soon as possible because we are committed to ending the violence and providing assistance to people who are suffering," she said.

Increase in incidents of hijacking NGO cars in South Darfur

(**AlSudani**)-- Reliable sources told (**AlSudani** daily) that a joint committee comprising humanitarian NGO's and South Darfur government was set up to probe the increasing phenomenon of carjacking in the region ,which amounted to nine vehicles until last month.

The sources added that the hijacking phenomenon has been increasing from day to day; the last of them was the hijacking of a vehicle affiliated to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) inside Nyala city.

In this context, South Darfur Wali Ail Mahmoud pledged during a meeting with UN agencies and NGOs to take drastic actions to curb the spread of this phenomenon.

Darfur rebel JEM denies responsibility of attack on AU peacekeepers (ST)

October 1, 2007 (LONDON) – Darfur rebel Justice and Equality Movement has denied attack against African Union position in northern Darfur on Sunday. However the group insinuated Sudanese government responsibility of attack.

JEM spokesperson, Ahmed Hussein Adem, condemned attack against the AU troops in Haskanita where ten AU are killed by unknown attacker. He also dismissed reports that JEM troops had carried out the attack on the AU peacekeepers in the area.

He confirmed what Sudan Tribune published yesterday that JEM troops were evacuated Haskanita since one week after continual aerial bombardments by Sudanese army.

"The coward and callous attackers knew that JEM forces were not in the area having engaged them and learnt another lesson from them four days ago, several hundreds of miles away north of Alkuma town." He said.

Nevertheless without designating explicitly the responsibility of the Khartoum, Ahmed said "intelligence available to us points to Government army backed by their allied Janjaweed who were closing on Haskanita area from three fronts in the past few days."

"Their original aim was to avenge the embarrassing Haskanita defeat at the hands of JEM." He underlined.

At least 10 AU soldiers died in the assault. More than 20 were still missing last night, some 48 hours after the attack. Originally 50 had been unaccounted for.

According to London based The Independent, United Nations personnel based in Darfur have been prevented by the Sudanese government from evacuating their African Union comrades following Saturday's attack which killed at least 10 AU troops.

The UN mission in Sudan tried to send a rescue team to the AU's base in Haskanita, North Darfur, in the hours following the attack. But they were denied access by Khartoum and it was several hours before the Sudanese armed forces sent their own troops to Haskanita to evacuate the remaining AU soldiers.

The AU base at Haskanita is strategically important. It is about 12 miles (19 kilometers) from the boundary between Darfur and the neighboring region of Khordofan. The Darfur rebels have been trying to link up with new rebel groups in Khordofan, where there are large fields of Sudan's proven oil reserves.

Most of the 157 peacekeepers on the base were Nigerian but there were also military observers from Botswana, Senegal and Mali.

The attack came amid increasing violence in Darfur, where government and rebel forces appear to be fighting for positions ahead of the peace negotiations set to open in Libya on Oct. 27. The government and most of the main rebel factions have said they will attend.

(ST)

US threatens more sanctions after Darfur killings (ST)

October 1, 2007 (WASHINGTON) — The United States on Monday threatened more sanctions on those in Sudan who targeted civilians or blocked a United Nations-led peace efforts and strongly condemned the weekend killings of African Union peacekeepers in Darfur.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack called for a full investigation of the attack on the Haskanita base in Darfur.

"We are prepared to apply additional sanctions against those who target civilians or peacekeepers and those who block the political process," McCormack said in a statement.

The AU says 20 of its soldiers were killed or injured and nine are still missing after the attack, blamed on rebel factions. It was the worst single assault on AU forces since the 7,000-strong mission was deployed to western Sudan in 2004.

McCormack did not provide details on what kind of sanctions might be imposed or when. But he said they would likely be targeted punitive actions, involving travel bans on individuals deemed belligerent as well as some financial restrictions.

Last May, President George W. Bush tightened U.S. sanctions on Sudan and asked for support for an international arms embargo to end what he calls genocide in Darfur.

International experts estimate 200,000 people have died in Darfur, with 2.5 million driven from their homes as mostly non-Arab rebels took up arms in early 2003 accusing central government of neglect. Khartoum mobilized mainly Arab militias to quell the revolt.

Since then, the fighting has become more complicated, with the splintering of rebel groups into dozens of factions.

McCormack said the United States remained concerned that neither rebel factions nor the government of Sudan were adhering to a cease-fire and urged all parties to stop hostilities immediately.

"The conflict in Darfur will only be solved by a negotiated settlement. We urge all parties to fully participate in the peace process under the leadership of the United Nations and the African Union," said McCormack.

He also called for the rapid deployment of a hybrid U.N./African Union peacekeeping force, which is expected to be 26,000 strong at its peak.

(Reuters)

Nigeria may withdraw troops from Sudan's Darfur (ST)

October 1, 2007 (ABUJA, Nigeria) — A Nigerian army spokesman said the deadliest attack on peacekeepers in Darfur could prompt his country - which leads the mission in the strife-torn Sudanese region - to reconsider its commitment to the trying to calm the continent's hotspots.

Col. Solomon Giwa Amu, an army spokesman, said nine Nigerians died after Sudanese rebel forces briefly overran an African Union base in Darfur late Saturday. One Malian, one Senegalese and one Botswanan in the AU force also were confirmed

dead, bringing the death toll to at least 12. Peacekeepers were searching for more than 20 missing members of their force Monday.

Senegal had cautioned it could pull troops out when five of its soldiers were killed in Darfur in April - until this weekend, that had been the deadliest attack on the AU force since it deployed in June 2004. After the weekend violence, Senegal's foreign ministry issued a statement saying it "reserves the right to consider its responsibility if the security of its contingent and those of other African troops in general are not guaranteed."

The Senegalese statement also called for the immediate deployment of a proposed hybrid AU-UN force and appealed to all sides to halt attacks on "forces that are keeping the peace and which are impartial."

The 7,000 member AU force is to be merged into the more powerful hybrid U.N. force that, at Sudan's insistence, was to be largely African. The first units of the 26,000-strong joint AU-U.N. force are due to be deployed this month and the new mission is expected to assume responsibility for the area on Dec. 31.

Nigeria has one batallion, or about 800 troops, on the ground in Darfur and has said it will likely send another batallion to join the AU-UN force. The current military commander of the AU force is a Nigerian, Gen. Martin Agwai.

Amu, the Nigerian army spokesman, called the weekend attack "unfortunate and tragic," and linked the high toll to the beleaguered force's weak mandate and the unprecented nature of the fight, which saw hundreds of rebel attacking the installment where some 150 AU troops, mostly Nigerian, were based.

"We are not there for war," he told The Associated Press. "We went there for peacekeeping."

Asked if he expected the attack would cause some shift in official policy, Amu said: "I won't be surprised if it does."

(AP)

Senegal threatens to pull out troops from Darfur (ST)

October 1, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade said on Monday he would pull his country's troops out of Darfur if it was determined that African peacekeepers who were killed at the weekend were not equipped to defend themselves.

Twenty AU soldiers were killed or injured and nine missing after a "deliberate and sustained" assault on the Haskanita base in Darfur on Saturday night by armed men in 30 vehicles, who looted and destroyed the base, the African Union said.

The attack, which is being blamed on rebel factions, was the worst single attack on AU forces since the 7,000-strong mission was deployed to western Sudan in 2004.

"If they died because they didn't have the arms to defend themselves, I will withdraw all the Senegalese ... I am not going to send people to be slaughtered," he said, adding he had ordered an investigation into the attack.

The AU has long complained of a lack of equipment in Darfur, including attack helicopters and rapid response vehicles. They have also said their force was too small to contain the conflict in the vast and arid region the size of France.

Senegal has one of the largest contingents in Darfur and has taken casualties in the past. Most of the infantry in Haskanita was Nigerian but military observers were from various countries.

AU spokesman Assane Ba said seven of those killed were Nigerian, one Senegalese, a Malian and one from Botswana.

"AU peacekeepers will remain in Darfur until the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation will be deployed," he said from AU headquarters in Ethiopia.

Officials said that around 50 soldiers were missing but most were found on Monday night with nine still unaccounted for.

While AU convoys and individuals have been ambushed — around 40 killed in the three years prior to the Haskanita attack — this was the first time an entire base was targeted.

AU force commander Martin Luther Agwai said the mission was making contingency plans and reassessing security. But he said little more could be done without getting desperately needed additional equipment and troops into Darfur.

"People did deployment on the premise that there was an (peace) agreement and they were coming to inspect and act as observers — there was no planning for people to be able to defend themselves," Agwai said.

URGENCY

Experts estimate 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million driven from their homes as mostly non-Arab rebels in Darfur took up arms in early 2003 accusing the government of neglect. Khartoum mobilised mainly Arab militias to quell the revolt.

The AU mediated a peace agreement between the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels in May 2006 but only one of three rebel negotiating factions signed the deal. Since then, rebels have split into a dozen factions.

The violence, which includes militias and tribal conflicts, has severely curtailed the world's largest aid operation.

Saturday's attack casts a shadow on AU-U.N.-mediated talks due to begin in Libya on Oct. 27. Condemnation of the attacks came in from around the world.

White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said the violence underscored the urgency of the AU-UN mission.

"Obviously what the president (George W. Bush) wants is that U.N. peacekeeping force to get there as soon as possible because we are committed to ending the violence and providing assistance to the people who are suffering there in Darfur," she said.

Suleiman Jamous of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) Unity faction, one of two groups accused of the attack, said if his faction was involved it was a local - not leadership - decision.

"I have asked the leadership of SLA Unity to withdraw all the troops from the area, to where they can be under the direct control of the military command," Jamous said.

SLA Unity and a breakaway faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) led by Bahr Idriss Abu Garda have forces in the Haskanita area.

SLA Unity political head Abdallah Yehya denied any of his forces were involved, blaming militias allied to the army.

"All my forces are now far away from the area. This was the government and militias," he told Reuters.

The attack preceded a visit of "elders" to Sudan, including South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ex-U.S. President Jimmy Carter, veteran peace mediator Lakhdar Brahimi and women's and children's rights advocate Graca Machel. On Monday they met Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

(Reuters)

African Union begins probing Darfur Haskanita attack (ST)

October 1, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — The African Union on Monday began probing an unprecedented attack on one of its bases in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur that left 10 peacekeepers dead and 25 missing, vowing to punish those responsible.

"The inquiry is underway and we will make its conclusions public. Those who carried out this attack will be strongly sanctioned," African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) spokesman Noureddine Mezni told AFP, declining to speculate on who carried out the attack.

The attack by a large, organised group of heavily armed men who overran southern Darfur's Haskanita camp in 30 vehicles took place on Saturday night, the worst assault on the under-manned force since it deployed in July 2004.

The AU said that 21 of the missing were Nigerian, as were seven of the dead. The other dead troops were from Mali, Botswana and Senegal. The AU said eight people were seriously wounded and the death toll might rise.

Mezni said 17 other peacekeepers who were earlier reported missing in the raid were discovered to the south of the base, apparently unharmed.

Amid international outcry over the brazen assault, the United States called for a planned AU-UN force many times stronger than the current mission to reach Darfur "as soon as possible"

"What the president wants is that UN peacekeeping force to get there as soon as possible because we are committed to ending the violence," US President George W. Bush's chief spokeswoman Dana Perino said.

"The human disaster that we face in that area is very troubling, it's something that needs to be addressed by the international community, including the UN peacekeeping force."

UN chief Ban Ki-moon condemned the killings and called on Darfur's warring sides to recommit to a settlement, citing peace talks scheduled for Libya on October 27 and preparations for the joint deployment of AU-UN troops.

Ban urged all parties "to recommit as a matter of the highest priority to a peaceful resolution to the conflict."

AU-UN joint envoy Rodolphe Adada, who flew to the main Darfur town of Al-Fasher to personally supervise the inquiry into the attack, said he was "appalled by the outrageous and deliberate attack."

The under-equipped African force of around 7,000 troops from 26 countries patrolling Darfur, a region the size of France, is due to begin being replaced later this year by the hybrid 26,000-strong AU-UN force.

Five Senegalese AU peacekeepers were killed in an attack in April.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which Khartoum blamed on rebels.

"Such irresponsible attacks constitute a serious violation to the ceasefire agreement," the new commander of the hybrid force, General Martin Luther Agwai, said, implicitly blaming rebels.

"Rebel groups, who indulge in such random violence and bloodshed, undermine their own credibility on any negotiation table."

However, one rebel group which last month called for a ceasefire ahead of the deployment of the new hybrid force blamed the government, saying only that the charge was based "on initial information gathered on the ground."

"The Sudan Liberation Movement condemns this senseless attack on the AU base in Darfur," said Nouri Abdallah, top aide to Ahmed Abdel Shafi, a key Darfur rebel faction leader based in Kampala.

Abdallah said he believed the attack was planned to "create havoc in Darfur ahead of the deployment of the AU-UN hybrid force... and an attempt to derail the political process."

Agwai also said it was regrettable that the attack happened ahead of the peace talks due in Tripoli later this month in an attempt to broaden a Darfur peace agreement signed by only one rebel faction in May last year.

Conflict and famine in Darfur have left at least 200,000 people dead and two million displaced since Khartoum enlisted Janjaweed Arab militia allies to put down an ethnic minority revolt in 2003.

(AFP)

Russia condemns attack on AU force in Darfur (ST)

October 1, 2007 (MOSCOW) — The Russian Foreign Ministry has condemned Saturday's attack by militants on the base of the African Union's mission in Sudan.

"Moscow strongly condemns this criminal sortie aimed at destabilizing the situation in western Sudan and at disrupting efforts by the international community to promote a political settlement of the Darfur conflict.

This is also an attempt to impede preparations for a joint Afro-UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur to be launched until the end of the year under UN Security Council resolution 1769," the ministry said in a statement posted on its website on Monday.

It called for consolidated steps to end the Darfur crisis through the political process, peacekeeping, assistance in fighting acute humanitarian problems and post-conflict reconstruction.

"In the run-up to the Tripoli talks, in which all main rebel groups should take part if they really care for the destiny of Darfur people, it is necessary to encourage all sides to show maximum restraint, prevent armed clashes and decisively curb attacks on peacekeepers, humanitarian organizations and civilians," the statement says.

"As a member of a multilateral contact group on Darfur, Russia will actively assist in these efforts," the ministry said.

(Interfax)

Rights watchdog says peacekeeper killings are war crimes (ST)

October 1, 2007 (NEW YORK) — The killing of 10 African Union peacekeepers in Darfur is a war crime and should be promptly investigated by the United Nations and the African Union, Human Rights Watch said today.

On September 30, unidentified forces attacked an African Union base in Haskanita, North Darfur, killing 10 AU peacekeepers and civilian police. At least eight other

personnel from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) were seriously injured and approximately 40 remain missing, according to AU statements. Unconfirmed reports say the attack was carried out by unidentified rebel forces. The loss of life was the worst suffered to date by the under-resourced AU force.

“Deliberately attacking peacekeepers is a war crime,” said Peter Takirambudde, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “The Sudanese government and the rebel groups should cooperate fully with an independent investigation into the dreadful attack in Haskanita.”

Customary laws of war and the statute of the International Criminal Court prohibit directing attacks against personnel and objects involved in international peacekeeping missions, so long as they are not directly involved in hostilities.

The AMIS force in Darfur comprises approximately 7,000 troops and civilian police. For now, it is virtually the only force on the ground in Darfur providing civilian protection. A 26,000-member AU-UN hybrid operation, UNAMID, was authorized in July 2007 and is to be deployed in early January 2008.

AMIS’s mission has been to monitor the Darfur Peace Agreement and several other ceasefire agreements. Its peacekeepers patrol a harsh, desert region the size of France, much of it barely accessible by road.

Attacks on AMIS personnel have increased in the past year. Since the force was deployed in 2004, more than 25 soldiers and staff have been killed and dozens injured. On April 17, 2007, unknown armed assailants killed five AMIS soldiers guarding a water point in Um Baru, North Darfur. A Nigerian commander who was kidnapped outside the AMIS compound in Al Fashir has been missing since December 2006.

The attack on Sunday took place as preparations are underway for the deployment of UNAMID and a new round of peace talks in Tripoli, Libya, on October 27.

(HRW)

FACTBOX-Reaction to attack on AU peacekeepers in Darfur

France condemns attack on AU peacekeepers in Darfur

Source: Xinhua Date: October 01, 2007

PARIS, Oct 1, 2007 (Xinhua) -- France has strongly condemned the attack against African peacekeeping forces in the troubled Sudanese region of Darfur, which resulted in a heavy loss for the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

On Saturday evening, AU peacekeeping forces in Haskanita, South Darfur, came under deliberate and sustained attack by a large and organized group of heavily-armed men.

"France condemns the attack, which was perpetrated against peacekeeping troops at an AMIS-run camp in Haskanita, in the strongest words possible," the French foreign ministry announced in a statement.

"France reaffirms its confidence and support to the African Union in the difficult task that it's fulfilling in Darfur on behalf of the international community," according to the statement.

In addition, "France is calling on all the parties to the conflict to exercise restraint in order to facilitate peace negotiations, which are planned for Tripoli in October and the future deployment of a joint UN/AU peacekeeping force in conformity with resolution 1769 of the United Nations Security Council," the statement says.

Though the AMIS peacekeepers fought bravely to defend their positions, the heavily armed attackers eventually broke into the camp, killing 10, seriously injuring seven and leaving a further 50 missing, according to official reports.

The attackers seized, looted and vandalized AMIS equipment including vehicles and property, according to reliable sources.

The attack, by far the worst single incident since African peacekeeping forces were deployed in Darfur in 2004, came a few months after the UN Security Council voted unanimously to authorize the deployment of a joint UN/AU peacekeeping force in Darfur.

EU condemns attack on AU peacekeepers in Darfur

Source: Agence France-Presse English Wire Date: October 01, 2007

BRUSSELS, Oct 1, 2007 (AFP) - The European Commission on Monday condemned the "outrageous" weekend attack on African Union peacekeepers in Sudan's troubled Darfur region, which left 10 dead and 40 missing.

"I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the families and colleagues of the soldiers killed in this outrageous attack," said EU Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel.

"I was greatly saddened to learn of these tragic deaths of African Union soldiers who were committed to bringing peace and stability to this troubled region," He added.

The African Union on Monday began probing the unprecedented attack on one of its bases in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur that left 10 peacekeepers dead and 40 missing, vowing to punish those responsible.

The attack by a large, organised group of heavily armed men who overran southern Darfur's Haskanita camp in 30 vehicles took place on Saturday night, the worst assault on the under-manned force since it deployed in July 2004.

Conflict and famine in Darfur have left at least 200,000 people dead and two million displaced since Khartoum enlisted Janjaweed Arab militia allies to put down an ethnic minority revolt in 2003.

FACTBOX-Reaction to attack on AU peacekeepers in Darfur

KHARTOUM, Oct 1 (Reuters) - Condemnation poured in on Monday after a weekend attack on African Union peacekeepers in Darfur left 20 dead, several injured and dozens missing.

It was the worst attack on AU peacekeepers in western Sudan since they were deployed in 2004.

The following is a sampling of statements reacting to the attack:

ARAB LEAGUE

"Such criminal acts will not weaken the international and African determination to resume the negotiations between the (Sudanese) government and the armed movements in Tripoli on October 27."

BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY DAVID MILIBAND

"These are soldiers who have gone to the region to protect the innocent from violence. Attacking them is a callous and destructive act. This latest atrocity underlines the need for all sides in the conflict to commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities and to join the political process. This can be the only route to lasting peace in this traumatised region."

EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AHMED ABOUL GHEIT

"This confirms the need to send the African and the hybrid troops as soon as possible," the official Middle East News Agency quoted him as saying.

FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER BERNARD KOUCHNER

France "condemned the attack most strongly", calling it a "murderous and unacceptable" act. "The international community should work tirelessly to ensure that those responsible do not go unpunished," the statement said.

U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON

"The (U.N.) Secretary-General condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent attack on African Union peacekeepers in Haskanita, South Darfur and calls for the perpetrators to be held fully accountable for this outrageous act. He called the attack "brutal and shocking."

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TOM CASEY

"We condemn this attack. Obviously there is no reason for any forces, whether they are aligned with the government or the rebels to be attacking AU peacekeepers.

"This is a deplorable act. I know that the AU has not at this point attributed the attack to any specific individuals but whoever is responsible should be held accountable."

^REUTERS@ Reut11:54 10-01-07

Sahel-Saharan community condemns attack on African peacekeepers in Darfur

Text of report by Libyan news agency Jana

Tripoli, 1 October: The General Secretariat of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States has condemned the attack which took place the day before yesterday [29 September] in the village of Haskanita in Darfur and in which 10 members of the African peacekeeping force were killed.

In a statement released today, the secretariat said it was necessary to bring the perpetrators of this attack to justice so that they receive the punishment they deserve. It also reiterated the community's readiness to continue its work through its institutions and on the instructions of the leader Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi, chairman of the Presidential Council and the eminent and permanent sponsor of peace, in order to create the suitable circumstances which will ensure the success of the final negotiations for peace in the province. These negotiations are scheduled to be held in the Great Jamahiriya on 27 October this year.

Here follows the text of the statement:

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States deplores this development and strongly condemns this serious, unjustified and unacceptable act carried out by the enemies of peace in Darfur who are trying to obstruct progress and hamper the efforts aimed at restoring security and peace in that region. The community insists on the need to bring the perpetrators of this act to justice so that they receive the punishment they deserve.

The General Secretariat of the community reaffirms its absolute support to the African Union in its numerous attempts aimed at providing a climate of peace and permanent and continuous concord in Darfur Province. It also reiterates the community's readiness to continue its work through its institutions and on the instructions of the leader Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi, chairman of the Presidential Council and the eminent and permanent sponsor of peace, in order to create the suitable circumstances which will ensure the success of the final negotiations for peace in the province. These negotiations will be hosted by the Great Jamahiriya at the end of October [27] 2007.

The community extends its heartfelt and sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of the martyrs killed in action and wishes the wounded a speedy recovery. It also expresses its solidarity with their countries of origin.

Source: Jana, Tripoli, in Arabic 1512 gmt 1 Oct 07

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