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**FROM:** The Chairperson, CTSAMVM

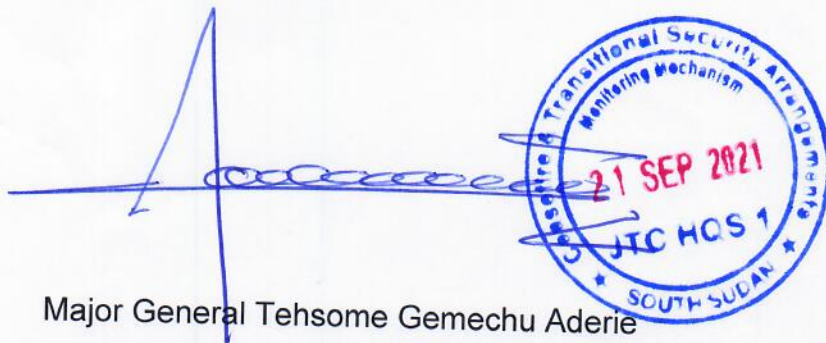
**DATE:** 21 September 2021

**SUBJECT: CTSAMVM REPORT 2021/12 – ALLEGED NAS ATTACKS IN  
CENTRAL AND WESTERN EQUATORIA STATES APRIL TO JUNE 2021**

Dear CTSAMVM Technical Committee Senior Party Representatives,

Please find attached a report on alleged attacks by NAS in Central and Western Equatoria States from April to June 2021.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.



Major General Tehsome Gemechu Aderie

Chairperson

**Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification  
Mechanism**

## **CTSAMVM REPORT 2021/12**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The continued activities of NAS in Central and Western Equatoria States have led to clashes with the SSPDF, and the suffering and displacement of the civilian population.

CTSAMVM has reasonable grounds to believe that from April to June 2021 NAS prosecuted at least 6 attacks against the SSPDF (four in Central Equatoria State and two in Western Equatoria State, including an attack against the SSPDF unit at Loka West which left 11 SSPDF soldiers dead). These attacks were in clear violation of the ACOH of December 2017, and have been conducted after the signing of the Rome Declaration and Resolution, and whilst the Rome process is ongoing.

There were also other armed attacks reported against military and civil authorities, as well as civilian targets, where CTSAMVM has so far been unable to confirm whether or not NAS was involved, since there is also criminal activity in the area.

CTSAMVM recommends that NAS adheres to the ACOH, and implements the provisions of the Rome Declaration and Resolution of 2020.





# ALLEGED NAS ATTACKS IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN EQUATORIA

## Introduction

### 1. Background:

- a. Since the signing of the R-ARCSS, CTSAMVM has submitted 12 reports attributing violations of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access in the Republic of South Sudan of 21 December 2017 (ACOH) either directly or jointly to NAS (TC). This is over 20% of the total number of reports submitted, and all refer to incidents in the Equatorias.
- b. Despite these reports, and the ongoing mediation by The Community of Sant'Egidio, violence has continued. This has led to the displacement of civilians and worsening of relations between communities and the SSPDF, who only too often blame local people for supporting NAS and take heavy-handed measures as a result.
- c. Ongoing clashes between alleged NAS forces and those of the SSPDF are continuing to cause suffering amongst the people of the Equatorias. Although NAS is not a signatory of the R-ARCSS, it did sign the ACOH of December 2017 which remains in force. NAS can be held accountable for violations against the ACOH.
- d. Because the provisions of the Rome Declaration and Resolution of 2020 have yet to be implemented, CTSAMVM has no formal liaison with NAS, and as a result often finds it difficult to fully investigate incidents allegedly involving NAS. Nevertheless, the provisions of the ACOH compel that those investigations regarding alleged violations of the ACOH take place.

2. Aim: The aim of this report is to:
  3. Outline incidents allegedly involving NAS from April to June 2021 that have been reported to CTSAMVM, and which CTSAMVM has endeavoured to investigate.
  4. Attribute responsibility for violations of the ACOH and R-ARCSS where appropriate and possible, and to make recommendations.
5. Methodology: The information in this report is based on:
  - a. Inputs from CTSAMVM MVT routine reports.
  - b. An investigation undertaken by the CTSAMVM MVT based in Yambio which included visits to the areas of Maridi, Mundri and Kediba in Western Equatoria State from 25-28 July 2021.
  - c. An investigation undertaken by the CTSAMVM MVT based in Yei which involved visits to Loka West, Lainya and Limbe in Central Equatoria State from 25 to 28 August 2021.
  - d. During these investigations CTSAMVM interviewed a wide range of civil leaders, SSPDF officers and civilians.
  - e. Limitations:
    - i. Due to the reasons stated above (paragraph 1.d), CTSAMVM was unable to interview representatives from NAS.
    - ii. Local people are reluctant to talk about NAS. For example, CTSAMVM interviewed a young man who had been abducted (allegedly by NAS) and held for several weeks and made to carry loads through the bush. He was unable – or unwilling – to positively identify his abductors as NAS.



- f. Standard of proof: The standard of proof used by CTSAMVM to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to verify that a Party is not in compliance with the provisions of the Agreements is "reasonable grounds to believe that the incident that is the subject of the investigation occurred." This is in accordance with accepted practice for monitoring mechanisms and humanitarian entities and signifies that sufficient facts and evidence have been collected to conclude that an event has occurred.

### **Allegations and findings**

6. Western Equatoria:

a. CTSAMVM had received information that:

- i. On 14 May 2021 an alleged NAS force attacked an SSPDF base at BAHR-OLO in Mundri West County, killing 3 soldiers and a girl.
- ii. On 17 May 2021 at TAPI in Maridi County there was an attack by alleged NAS against the SSPDF, which left 5 SSPDF and 7 NAS dead.
- iii. On 2 June 2021 alleged NAS personnel ambushed NSS vehicles at TAPARU BRIDGE, killing 3 officers.
- iv. On 4 June 2021 alleged NAS killed 2 SSNPS police officers at LUI, Mundri West.

b. CTSAMVM found that:

- i. There was attack at BAHR-OLO on 14 May 2021. CTSAMVM was briefed by the SSPDF Company Commander at Mambe Junction, one of whose platoons was attacked at BAHR-OLO, that about 37-40 NAS were involved in the attack, and that a prisoner had been taken who confirmed that NAS were operating from the DRC border. At BAHR-OLO

CTSAMVM were shown burnt tukuls at the garrison. The SSPDF commander at BAHR-OLO said the attackers took 4 AK47 rifles and 1 RPG, and after burning the barracks they fled. One SSPDF soldier, one SSNPS officer and a girl of 14 were killed during the incident.

- ii. This incident at TAPI on 17 May was not as originally reported. The acting commander of 6 Division SSPDF, Major General Justin Alfred, said that some of his soldiers were ambushed – allegedly by NAS - at TAPI when they were returning from a resupply task to RASSOLO. There were no casualties.
- iii. The attack at Lui took place on 2 June 2021. According to the SSPDF Battalion Commander in Lui a group of SSPDF soldiers were attacked between a police check point and the hospital. One was killed and the others wounded. After the attack the SSPDF reportedly followed the tracks of the attackers and found their assembly point where they recovered a document from NAS General Headquarters signed by Thomas Cirillo. This was given to CTSAMVM: it was a NAS communique about the commitment by NAS "to prevent and respond to Conflict-related Sexual Violence".
- iv. CTSAMVM was unable to find any information about the alleged attack at TAPARI BRIDGE.
- v. Ambushes of civilian vehicles: During these investigations CTSAMVM was given details of several ambushes on civilian vehicles which were attributed by the authorities to NAS, but with no evidence to suggest this was the case.

## 7. Central Equatoria:

- a. Reports: CTSAMVM received numerous reports of attacks, abductions, ambushes and banditry attributed to NAS. These included:



- b. An alleged NAS attack on the SSPDF camp at GOLI on 3 April 2021.
- c. An alleged NAS ambush on 3 April 2021 of an SSPDF vehicle on the same day near BEREKA which resulted in the deaths of 4 SSPDF soldiers.
- d. On 6 May 2021 there was an alleged NAS ambush on an SSPDF commando unit vehicle at a place called Company in Bereka Boma. 3 SSPDF soldiers were killed.
- e. A clash between the SSPDF and NAS on 11 May 2021 in the Kajo-Keji area resulting in the deaths of two civilians.
- f. On 14 May 2021 the convoy of the Governor of Central Equatoria State was ambushed – allegedly by NAS – on the border of Lainya and Juba Counties. 4 Security personnel were reportedly killed.
- g. On 17 May 2021 4 civilians were killed in an attack in Mugwo payam. NAS were blamed for the incident.
- h. On 18 May 2021 CTSAMVM was informed by the SSPDF commander in Morobo that on 17 May suspected NAS forces attacked a civilian vehicle. The SSPDF responded to the attack killing a suspected NAS soldier.
- i. On 19 May 2021 the convoy of the Governor of Central Equatoria State was again ambushed on the way to Nyori IDP camp. Again NAS was blamed. One bodyguard was injured.
- j. On 24 May 2021 there was an alleged NAS ambush on a unit of SSPDF 3 Brigade Ground Forces at on the Limbe-Lainya road.
- k. On 10 June 2021 there was an alleged NAS attack on the SSPDF unit at LOKA WEST.



I. CTSAMVM found that:

- i. The attacks at GOLI were a continuation of the attacks and counter-attacks between the SSPDF and NAS which started on 17 March 2021 when SSPDF forces from MORSAK attacked NAS forces in OMBASI Boma as described in CTSAMVM report 2021/06.
- ii. There was an ambush of SSPDF forces on 3 April near BEREKA. CTSAMVM spoke to one of the survivors who claimed the attackers were NAS.
- iii. The ambush on 6 May 2021 at a place called Company in Bereka Boma did take place and 3 SSPDF soldiers were killed. There was no direct evidence to suggest that the ambush was perpetrated by NAS, but all the officers involved stated it was carried out by NAS.
- iv. The ambush against an SSPDF vehicle on 24 May did take place. There were no casualties.
- v. There was a dawn attack against the SSPDF base at LOKA WEST on 10 June 2021 which resulted in the reported deaths of 11 SSPDF soldiers and the displacement of many of the local people. A surviving officer interviewed by CTSAMVM described the attack: the fighting reportedly started at 04.00 Hrs. The SSPDF unit at LOKA WEST withdrew towards 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade HQ SSPDF in LIMBE and with reinforcements repulsed the attackers. The action was over by about 07.00 Hrs. Both the surviving officer and the commander of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Ground Forces SSPDF were insistent that NAS perpetrated the attack. The Brigade Commander said that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between NAS soldiers and local civilians.
- vi. CTSAMVM has so far been unable to find any information to support the allegations that NAS was involved in attacks against civilian vehicles, and



the other incidents described above and not included in the findings of this report.

8. The situation since June 2021: There have been fewer incidents reported since June; however, several incidents were reported in August which allegedly involved NAS and which are being investigated by CTSAMVM

### **Assessment**

9. Since the signing of the R-ARCSS the activities of NAS have been the major cause of insecurity in southern Central Equatoria, and a significant cause of insecurity in Western Equatoria.
10. Although it is difficult for CTSAMVM to obtain conclusive evidence of NAS involvement in incidents, there are reasonable grounds to believe that NAS have been involved in planned attacks against SSPDF units, and the ambush of SSPDF personnel.
11. As criminal elements may be operating in the area, not all incidents that may be blamed on NAS can necessarily be attributed to NAS.

### **Conclusion**

12. It is the conclusion of CTSAMVM that from April to June 2021 NAS were responsible for at least 6 attacks against the SSPDF in Central and Western Equatoria States, and that these attacks constituted hostile military actions in clear violation of the ACOH, specifically Article Three.

### **Observations and Recommendations**

13. The attacks by NAS outlined in this report were not only in clear violation of the ACOH of December 2017, but were also conducted after the signing the Rome

Declaration and Resolution and whilst the Rome process is ongoing. This is unacceptable and unfair.

14. CTSAMVM recommends that NAS instructs all its units to cease all offensive military operations in accordance with the ACOH and the Rome Declaration and Resolution.
15. CTSAMVM recommends that all Parties involved move forward and implement all the provisions of the Rome Declaration and Resolution with the continued mediation of The Community of Sant'Egidio.

