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**TO:** Lt. Gen. Rabi Mujung Emmanuel (ITGoNU)  
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**FROM:** The Chairperson, CTSAMVM

**DATE:** January 2022

**SUBJECT: CTSAMVM REPORT 2022/03–RECRUITMENT IN WESTERN EQUATORIA STATE**

Dear CTSAMVM Technical Committee Senior Party Representatives,

Please find attached a report on violations of the R-ARCSS which took place in Western Equatoria State October to December 2021.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.



Major General Teshome Gemechu Aderie

Chairperson

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

## CTSAMVM REPORT 2022/03

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During October and November 2021 in Yambio County, SPLM/A-IO military forces conducted what was termed a 'mobilisation exercise' to round up SPLM/A-IO deserters. During the course of the activity forced recruitment took place after which civilians were taken to the SPLM/A-IO camp at Li-Rangu and onwards to the Maridi Training Centre.

In the course of the recruitment a young girl was taken to Li -Rangu SPLM/A-IO camp and forced to become a 'wife' of an officer. SPLM/A-IO took money from the families of the recruited civilians in order to facilitate their release. Amongst the individuals recruited by the SPLM/A-IO were child soldiers.

It is the conclusion of CTSAMVM that:

By recruiting civilians in the Yambio County area in October and November 2021, the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically article 2.1.8.

By abducting civilians and extorting money for their release the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically 2.1.10. 7.4.

By abducting and placing a vulnerable person, a girl, into the hands of SPLM/A-IO officers the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically 2.1.10.2.

By recruiting civilians under the age of 18 the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically 2.1.10.3.

Throughout the investigation the SPLM/A-IO provided complete access to CTSAMVM and co-operated in every possible way. The co-operation demonstrated by SPLM/A-IO Div 9B should be used as a model for all parties when CTSAMVM conduct investigations of serious allegations.





## RECRUITMENT IN WESTERN EQUATORIA STATE

### Introduction

#### 1. Background:

- a. SPLM/A-IO forces in Western Equatoria State (WES) are under SPLM/A-IO Sector 6. The Sector HQ is situated in Li-Rangu Payam, Yambio County, about 23 km north of Yambio town. The Sector Commander is Lt Gen Alfred Futuyo who is also the Governor of Western Equatoria State and deputised by Maj Gen John Martin Sunday.
- b. SPLM/A-IO Division 9B also has its HQ in Li-Rangu Payam. It is commanded by Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali.
- c. In October 2021 the County Commissioner of Yambio County was informed by the SPLM/A-IO that they intended to collect soldiers who had “deserted” Cantonment Sites and were living amongst the civilian population. This move was welcomed by the County Commissioner because some of these SPLM/A-IO soldiers were allegedly becoming involved in criminal activities and causing problems.

#### 2. Allegations:

- a. On 8 November 2021 the Deputy Governor of Western Equatoria State, Dr Kennedy Goaniko, informed CTSAMVM that his office had received several complaints of abductions and forced recruiting of youths by SPLM/A-IO Division 9B in Li-Rangu. He said that the Yambio County Commissioner could provide more details.
- b. Later on the same day – 8 November 2021 – CTSAMVM was approached by a civilian from a village 5 Km north of Yambio who alleged that on 27 October 2021 his 17year-old nephew had been forcefully recruited by soldiers he suspected to

be SPLM/A-IO from Li-Rangu. He went on to say that his nephew called him on 6 November and declared he was in Maridi Training Centre.

3. Aim: The aim of this report is to present the findings of CTSAMVM investigations into alleged or suspected violations of provisions of applicable agreements, to attribute responsibility for breaches of the agreements, and to make recommendations with regard to compliance actions that will help foster peace and reconciliation.

4. Methodology:

- a. Between 8 November and 20 December 2021 CTSAMVM performed an extensive investigation into the allegations of forced recruitment, during which over 26 interviews were conducted in Yambio town, 5 communities in Yambio County, Tindoka Vocational Centre, Maridi Training Centre and the HQ of SPLM/A-IO at Li-Rangu.

b. Interviewees included:

- i. Authorities: The Governor of Western Equatoria State, Hon. Alfred Futuyo; the Deputy Governor of Western Equatoria State, Dr Kennedy Goaniko; the Yambio County Commissioner, Hessien Enoka Ibrahim.
- ii. Victims: 10 young people (9 male and 1 female) whose claimed ages were between 15 and 29 years old. They all claimed to have been forcibly recruited, and had either escaped or had been released following payment by their relatives.
- iii. Civil Society: The Head of the Technical Committee of the Network for Civil Society Organisations; youth leaders in Tindoka and Nangbangi.
- iv. Traditional leaders: 2 chiefs in the Yambio Municipality; village headmen.
- v. Maridi Training Centre: The Acting Chief Instructor, Brig Gen Justin Atari together with the Head of Administration, Col John Agaar Anyan.



- vi. SPLM/A-IO: Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali Solomon, commander of SPLM/A-IO Division 9B and his officers Brig Gen Daniel Abiuda and Brig Gen Francis Bakata.
  - vii. Civilians: Various residents in villages in Yambio County including a local policeman, the principal of Tindoka Vocational Centre, and a member of an International NGO.
  - viii. State Security Committee: CTSAMVM attended Western Equatoria State Security Committee Meetings on 1 and 3 December 2021.
- c. 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, human rights and humanitarian entities and signifies that sufficient facts and evidence have been collected to conclude that an event has occurred.

## Findings

### 5. Local authorities and civil society organisations:

- a. On 10 November 2021 CTSAMVM met with the Yambio County Commissioner, who confirmed that in October 2021 his office had been notified by the SPLM/A-IO that they would be “mobilising” their forces who had “deserted” Cantonment Sites and bases. The County Commissioner said this move was welcomed by the local authorities, because these soldiers had been causing problems in the communities. However, the County Commissioner reported that he soon began to receive complaints from Boma chiefs and village headmen of forceful recruitment by the SPLM/A-IO. He said that people lived in fear of the SPLM/A-IO, and that the majority of youths had fled their villages to take refuge in towns to avoid being abducted. The County



Commissioner provided CTSAMVM with a list of youths allegedly abducted by the SPLM/A-IO.

- b. On 22 November 2021 CTSAMVM met with the Head of Governance Technical Committee of the Western Equatoria State Network for Civil Society Organisations. He repeated what had been said by the County Commissioner, and said Civil Society organisations had received reports of forceful recruitment, particularly in the areas of Saura, Bazungua, Ikpiro, Ndovuru and Akrogbodi Bomas.
- c. On 23 November 2021 CTSAMVM met with one of the Yambio Municipality Chiefs, who corroborated the information given by the County Commissioner. CTSAMVM also met with the Village Headman at Akorogbodi, who reported that in mid-November 2021 seven (07) youths from Tindoka village ran to his house to take refuge because they were being pursued by SPLM/A-IO soldiers who "wanted to recruit them". The Headman said he had received numerous reports of abductions and forceful recruitment by the SPLM/A-IO in the local area.
- d. CTSAMVM then met with the Youth Leader and Village Headman at Tindoka Village. They reported that in about mid-November 2021 SPLM/A-IO soldiers raided the village and "arrested" 16 youths including several children, two of whom were only 10 years old. These youth were taken to Li-Rangu and their families asked to pay money for their release. The Headman said that "quite a number" had been released following payment. The Youth Leader and Headman said that they were expecting another raid, and as a result all the youths had left the village to hide in the bush. CTSAMVM observed no youths in the village.
- e. CTSAMVM met with the village Youth Leader and a local policeman at Nangbangi village. The Youth Leader's brothers had been "arrested" by the SPLM/A-IO but had managed to escape. Both the Youth Leader and the policemen related reports of abduction and forceful recruitment by the



SPLM/A-IO, and that the youths in the area have been traumatised as a result. The policeman said that there was little he could do to prevent such arrests.

6. Civilian witnesses:

a. CTSAMVM visited Saura Boma on 19 November in order to speak to local people as part of the investigation. At Maingbangu Primary School CTSAMVM met with and talked to a group of youths who said:

- i. For the past month SPLM/A-IO soldiers have indiscriminately abducted and forcefully recruited residents of Saura Boma regardless of age. The soldiers move in numbers large enough to surround 3-4 homesteads. They were unable to be more specific about numbers.
- ii. That 38 people from Saura Boma had been arrested the previous day including the village headman.
- iii. Abductees are whipped or beaten if they resist. They are taken to Ri-Rangu in a truck. Some are released following payment by their families of 5,000-10,000 SSP. A list of 5 young men allegedly abducted and not released – including a child of 15 – was given to CTSAMVM.

7. Victims: On 24 and 25 November 2021 CTSAMVM interviewed 10 people who claimed to have been abducted/forcibly recruited by the SPLM/A-IO:

a. Girl held at Li-Rangu: A girl who gave her age as 15 and said the following:

- i. She was taken to the Ri-Rangu SPLM/A-IO base in 2016 when she was 10 years old. At the time she was an orphan living with her grandfather. At Ri-Rangu she was held against her will by SPLM/A-IO Sector 6 and assigned to "Lt George" as a wife. After 5 years she escaped and in November 2021 returned to her grandfather in Saura, and with the help of an International NGO she was admitted to Tindoka Vocational Training Centre TVTC) for a 6-month tailoring course.





- ii. On 18 November she and two other girls were taken by SPLM/A-IO soldiers on their way home from the TVTC and taken to Ri-Rangu. The soldiers said the girls were being taken because they were former SPLM/A-IO soldiers. She was beaten and told not to escape again, then given to "Capt Emmanuel" as his wife. She escaped from Ri-Rangu on 21 November and returned to her grandfather in Saura, where she said she fears for her life if she is captured again.
  - iii. "Captives" at Li-Rangu are kept in tukuls overnight which are so crowded (30-40 people to a tukul) that they cannot lie down. During the day they are subject to military drills and training. By "Captives" the girl referred to recaptured "deserters" and forcibly-recruited civilians.
  - iv. CTSAMVM interviewed the principal of TVTC who confirmed the girl was admitted to the course on 15 November 2019 but failed to turn up on 19 November 2021. CTSAMVM contacted the International NGO involved, who arranged for the girl to be re-admitted to the course and receive psycho-social therapy and support.
- b. 5 young men who claimed to have been "arrested" then released: The young men gave their ages as 21 to 29. They all claimed to have been "arrested" by SPLM/A-IO soldiers between 12 and 18 November and taken to Ri-Rangu by truck where they were held in very crowded tukuls, beaten and subjected to rigorous military drills and training.
- i. One has a job as a storekeeper in a school. He was abducted on 17 November but released unconditionally on 22 November 2021 and given a release letter which he was told to keep with him in order to avoid being arrested again in the future. CTSAMVM has a copy of the letter signed by Capt James William Issa MI Admin Office SPLM/A-IO Div 9B, and Brig Gen James Daduyo Kakpanya Administration Officer at SPLM/A-IO Div 9B.



- ii. One, who had been abducted from his father's homestead on 18 November, was released on 20 November 2021 because he had bad eyes and also because his father paid 2,500 SSP. He also had a release letter dated 20 November 2021 signed by Lt Col Charles Enosa Getek, Div 9B Administration Officer. CTSAMVM has a copy of this letter.
  - iii. The other three all told the same story about how they had been "arrested", taken against their will to Ri-Rangu where they had been beaten and kept in very crowded tukuls during the night and forced to do military drills and training during the day. They had all been released upon payments made by their relatives, one of 5,000 SSP and the other two of 10,000 SSP.
  - iv. One of the victims stated that Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali Solomon, the commander of Div 9B SPLM/A-IO was in the truck that took him and other abductees to Li-Rangu.
- c. 4 young men who claimed to have been taken to Maridi Training Centre then escaped: The young men gave their ages as 15-19 years old. Three of them were brothers. They said:
- i. One, a 17 year-old primary school pupil was "arrested" on 26 October 2021 with other boys and young men and taken to Li-Rangu, where he was detained in very crowded conditions, beaten and subject to military training and drills. On 28 October 2021 he was taken to Maridi Training Centre in a group of 163 young men. On 1 November 2021 he escaped with 3 others (brothers) and arrived back home after walking for 7 days.
  - ii. The other three were brothers aged 15,17 and 19, one of whom – the eldest – was a secondary school student. They said that they were "arrested" by 7 SPLM/A-IO soldiers and taken to Li-Rangu and held in the conditions described above before being taken to Maridi Training Centre on 28 October. The brothers escaped with the other young man (above) and returned to their home by foot. They all said they lived in fear of being



re-arrested; they also said that on the way to Maridi they had been taken past "the Governor's office" and told if any of them tried to jump they would be shot.

8. Girl found at Maridi Training Centre: As well as the information given to CTSAMVM by the girl abductee (paragraph 7a) above, CTSAMVM was also given information by the Deputy Governor of another case of a 15year-old girl who was on a list of abducted people. The Deputy Governor said that during a visit to Maridi Training Centre one of his bodyguards recognised the girl and that he took her from the Training Centre and brought her home.
  - a. On 7 December 2021 CTSAMVM visited Maridi Training Centre and interviewed Brig Gen Justin Atari, the Acting Chief Instructor. He knew of the case, and said that the Deputy Governor had removed the girl from the training centre because she was only 15, although the training centre recorded her age 17.
  - b. On 10 December 2021 CTSAMVM met with Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali Solomon, commander of SPLM/A-IO Div 9B. He said that the girl had "been their soldier since 2016 and that the Deputy Governor's actions were purely political shenanigans". On the same day CTSAMVM met with the Governor, Hon. Alfred Futiyo, who again said that the girl had been with him in 2016, she was not a minor and had willingly re-joined the SPLM/A-IO.
  - c. CTSAMVM was unable to interview the girl in question, but has been told by the Deputy Governor that she is with her parents who deny she was ever a soldier.
9. The State Security Committee: CTSAMVM attended the Western Equatoria State Security Committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Governor Dr Kennedy Goaniko, on 1 and 3 December 2021:
  - a. 1 December 2021: Top on the agenda for this meeting was alleged forceful recruitment by the SPLA-IO. However, the meeting was adjourned until 3 December 2021 because the SPLM/A-IO commanders – who had been invited



– did not turn up. On 2 December 2021 CTSAMVM met with Maj Gen Simon Ali Solomon, commanded of SPLM/A-IO Div 9B with his officers Brig Gen Daniel Abiuda and Brig Gen Francis Bakata. At this meeting CTSAMVM suggested to Maj Gen Simon the importance of attending the State Security Committee meeting and he said he would do so.

b. 3 December 2021: The State Security Committee meeting convened with the attendance of state security representative and senior SPLM/A-IO officers with CTSAMVM as observers. Key points were as follows:

- i. The Chairman, the Deputy Governor of WES (Hon Dr Kennedy Goaniko) reminded the meeting that alleged recruitment by the SPLM/A-IO was the key agenda issue. He said that the WES Governor, Hon. Alfred Futiyo, had admitted that there was forceful recruitment, and that 120 people were arrested and taken to R-Rangu. Of the 120 some 60 were found to be civilians and that he (the Governor) had directed they should be released.
- ii. The Chairman discussed the issue of the young girl who he had removed from Maridi Training Centre (see para 8 above).
- iii. Maj Gen Simon Ali Solomon SPLM/A-IO refuted the claims of recruitment and insisted the SPLM/A-IO were just “mobilising their soldiers who had deserted from their Cantonment Sites”.
- iv. The State Security Committee agreed that all forms of recruitment should stop forthwith. It was also agreed that SPLM/A-IO would be facilitated to publicise their “mobilisation exercise” through the FM radio station. The SPLM/A-IO were also advised to engage local and religious leaders.
- v. The committee agreed that complaints of forceful recruitment should be made to the Yambio County Commissioner, who would share them with CTSAMVM. Further the SPLM/A-IO should liaise with organised security forces to address the issue of armed soldiers hiding in communities.



10. Maridi Training Centre: CTSAMVM visited Maridi Training Centre on 7 December 2021 and met with the Acting Chief Instructor, Brig Gen Justin Atari and the Chief Administrator Col John Agaar Anyan. In answer to CTSAMVM's questions they stated that:

- a. On 30 October 2021 a total of 95 soldiers arrived at the Training Centre, aboard SPLM/A-IO vehicles from Li-Rangu. The departure order from Ri-Rangu indicated 117, the training centre staff believe that 22 must have "escaped" on the way.
- b. Of the 95 who arrived on the trucks, only 86 were taken onto the training strength at Maridi. Five passengers were part of organised forces based in Juba and were in transit. Two of the personnel who were taken to Maridi Training Centre were respectively from Prisons and Wildlife service based in Yambio county and had been abducted by the SPLM/A-IO on the journey to Maridi. They were issued with departure orders and released back to Yambio County.
- c. Upon arrival at the Training Centre, all the soldiers' bio-data were taken, including their age, level of civilian education and military training at the cantonment site. The ages ranged from 17 to 40 years old, there were three 17 year-old personnel registered.
- d. With reference to the statements given by the 4 young men who claimed to have been forcibly recruited and escaped from Maridi Training Centre (see paragraphs 7c), and the name of the nephew given to CTSAMVM on 8 November 2021 (see paragraph 2a), Brig Gen Justin Atari denied that any of these men had arrived at the Training Centre. He presented CTSAMVM the list of arrivals which did not include their names.

11. SPLM/A-IO Division 9B: On 10 December 2021 CTSAMVM visited Li-Rangu and met with Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali Solomon, commander of SPLA-IO Div 9B, along with his Deputy Brig Gen Daniel Abiuda and other senior SPLA-IO. Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali Solomon said that:



- a. He denied that there had been any recruitment conducted by SPLM/A-IO Division 9B.
  - b. The SPLM/A-IO were granted authority to mobilise their deserters who were living mainly in Yambio County. Some of the soldiers had turned into criminals and were terrorising residents.
  - c. The mobilisation exercise was stopped on 31 October 2021, and challenged the MVT to bring any who claim to have been forcefully recruited.
  - d. He admitted that the release orders which were issued to some victims were from SPLM/A-IO Div 9B Headquarters, and that some of his officers might have extorted money from victim's families but this was without his knowledge.
  - e. CTSAMVM was not shown the list of those sent to Maridi Training Centre on 28 October 2021. Maj General Simon insisted it would be the same as that shown to CTSAMVM at the Training Centre.
12. The Governor: CTSAMVM met the Governor of Western Equatoria State, Hon. Alfred Futiyo, on 10 December 2021. He stated that:
- a. There was no forceful recruitment in Yambio County, but only mobilisation of SPLM/A-IO deserters, and the exercise was stopped before his recent visit to Juba. He accused the MVT of biased reporting.
  - b. The information given at the State Security Meeting by the Deputy Governor that he had ordered the release of 60 civilians who had been illegally arrested was not true. He said he was aware that 120 soldiers had been taken to Maridi Training Centre, and that another 120 had remained in the Cantonment Sites.

## **Assessment**

13. Forcible recruitment: The mobilisation conducted by SPLM/A-IO Division 6B of Sector 6 based in Ri-Rangu was intended to round up SPLM/A-IO deserters. However, the activity also resulted in forcible recruitment in the Yambio County



area in October and November 2021. This is evidenced by victim statements and by information given by citizens and local authorities/traditional leaders. Further evidence is provided by the Acting Chief Instructor of Maridi Training Centre who said he had to release two members of fire and wildlife services who had been "abducted on the way [to the Training Centre]". In addition, CTSAMVM identified two other individuals who were recruited but subsequently released, one of whom was released after his family paid money to SPLM/A-IO Div 9B.

14. Scale of Recruitment. Allegations were made that there was large scale forced recruitment underway in Yambio County. CTSAMVM is not able to verify the scale of recruitment, there are conflicting accounts on the numbers involved. The statement made by the Deputy Governor at the State Security Committee meeting that 60 forcefully recruited civilians had been taken to Li-Rangu could not be substantiated. However CTSAMVM conducted extensive engagements with Boma chiefs, village headmen, and youth leaders and it is assessed that the recruitment was greater than the specified cases outlined in Para 13.
15. Duration of recruitment: The "mobilisation exercise" carried out by the SPLM/A-IO did not finish at the end of October as claimed by the commander of SPLM/A-IO Division 9B. This is evidenced by victim and witness statements, and also by the fact that the release letters held by CTSAMVM are dated 20 and 22 November.
16. Extortion: The SPLM/A-IO has been extorting money from civilians abducted in Yambio County. This is evidenced by statements made by witnesses and victims, and also by the statement by Maj Gen Simon Samuel Ali Solomon, who admitted that "some of his officers might have extorted money from victim's families".
17. Fear: People in Yambio County are scared of being forcibly recruited. This is evidenced not only by statements recorded by CTSAMVM, but also CTSAMVM's observations on the ground.
18. SGBV: The case of the young girl allegedly forcibly taken to and held at Ri-Rangu (paragraphs 7a) is a strong indicator of SGBV, in particular forced marriage. The evidence for this is that she clearly said that she had been given as a "wife" to an



SPLM/A-IO officer. It is of concern that, according to her statement, she was abducted along with two other girls. The case of the 15 year-old girl at Maridi Training Centre (paragraph 8) is also of concern.

19. Underage trainees at Maridi Training Centre: The Acting Chief Instructor at Maridi Training Centre freely admitted that 3 of the SPLM/A-IO trainees were 17 years old.

## **Conclusions**

20. CTSAMVM concludes that

- a. By forcefully recruiting civilians, including minors, in the Yambio County area in October and November 2021, the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically articles 2.1.8, 2.1.10.3 and 2.1.10.4.
- b. By abducting civilians and extorting money for their release the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically 2.1.10. 7.4.
- c. By abducting and placing a vulnerable female minor into the hands of an SPLM/A-IO officer in a form of forced marriage the SPLM/A-IO acted in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically 2.1.10.2.

## **Observations and Recommendations**

21. General: It is apparent that an agreed exercise by the SPLM/A-IO to “mobilise” “deserters” in order to remove them from communities and return them to Cantonment Sites, turned into forced recruitment of civilians who had no military training and had not been in the SPLM/A-IO.



22. Follow-up information from Saura Boma: On 20 December 2021 CTSAMVM conducted a follow-up visit to Saura Boma, where they spoke to a traditional leader who told CTSAMVM that:

- a. That the situation in his Boma is returning to normal. Ever since CTSAMVM moved around the area making inquiries, there have been no further cases of forced recruitment. The Youths are slowly gaining confidence and returning back to their villages.
- b. That two weeks previously an escapee from Maridi Training Centre returned to the area. He had never been a member of the SPLM/A-IO. He reported there were further civilians at Maridi Training Centre who were being held against their will. *Note: CTSAMVM has the name of the escapee and will follow up.*

23. Recommendations: CTSAMVM recommends that:

- a. Action is taken by JDB to stop recruitment throughout the country.
- b. The SPLM/A-IO takes the necessary measures to instil discipline in Division 9b, and ensures that those guilty of recruitment are held accountable.
- c. That the SPLM/A-IO investigates the case of the young girl allegedly given as a "wife" to an officer at Li-Rangu (paragraph 7a).
- d. The WES security committee is congratulated for highlighting the concerns raised over recruitment and for its pro-active stance to stop the recruitment and mobilisation.
- e. The investigation into the circumstances of recruitment in Yambio County was complex and covered a number of sensitive areas. Throughout the investigation state officials and the leadership of SPLMA/IO Div 9B and the Maridi Training Centre cooperated fully with CTSAMVM. Access to conduct interviews and patrols was provided unconditionally, there were no denials of



access or information. CTSAMVM believes the behaviour and action of those being investigated is a model of how parties should assist CTSAMVM in fulfilling its mandate. It is regrettable that some other parties do not render the same level of cooperation and access to CTSAMVM.

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