

Hostilities between Sudan and South Sudan

A Timeline of Recent Events

April 2012

February 11, 2012: Sudan and South Sudan sign a “non-aggression” pact during talks in Addis Ababa agreeing to “respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” and to “refrain from launching any attack, including bombardment.”¹

March 13, 2012: Sudan and South Sudan initial two agreements in Addis Ababa that, if signed, would grant South Sudanese and Sudanese citizens certain freedoms in the other state, and commit the two states to a timeline to demarcate the agreed-upon areas of the North-South border.² The round of talks concludes in a new “spirit of cooperation,” and with the announcement that the agreements would be signed in a bilateral summit attended by the two heads of states in Juba.³

March 23, 2012: Pagan Amum, South Sudan’s chief negotiator in talks with Sudan over outstanding post-independence issues, travels to Khartoum and personally delivers a letter of invitation to the President al-Bashir to join in a summit with Kiir in South Sudan. Bashir accepts the invitation.⁴

March 26, 2012: Clashes break out between Sudan’s and South Sudan’s armies in the disputed oil-rich area of Heglig.⁵ Both sides trade accusations about who instigated the violence. Southern officials accuse Khartoum of bombing southern troops in the disputed border area of Jau and of launching a ground attack on South Sudan bases south of Heglig oil field. Khartoum denies bombing Jau and accuses South Sudan of attacking Heglig with the support of Darfur rebels. Bashir suspends the April 3 summit with Kiir in response.⁶

The same day, a rebel group in South Sudan claims it captured a southern army barrack in Pariang county, Unity state—close to the site of fighting between the two armies.⁷ There is some evidence of Khartoum’s support to rebel groups in the South, a tactic that was commonly used by the Sudanese government against the South during the North-South civil war.⁸

March 27, 2012: Sudan bombs oil fields in Unity state, South Sudan.⁹

The U.S. says it is “alarmed” by fighting along the disputed border area and in South Kordofan, calling on both parties to “exert the greatest restraint in this situation” and for both countries to proceed with plans for dialogue.¹⁰

March 28, 2012: South Sudan troops withdraw from the disputed area of Heglig.¹¹ The Security Council calls upon the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to exercise maximum restraint and sustain purposeful dialogue in order to address peacefully the issues that are fuelling the mistrust between the two countries.¹²

March 29, 2011: The Africa Union and United Nations convene a forum attended by representatives from Sudan and South Sudan, the Security Council, neighboring states, regional and international organizations, and other international stakeholders. The forum “stressed the need” for the two states to convene the planned presidential summit as soon as possible in a communiqué.¹³ Direct talks between Sudanese and South Sudanese officials, originally planned to begin that day, are delayed until March 31.

March 30, 2012: Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North, or SPLM-N, forces in Sudan’s oil-producing border state of South Kordofan launch an assault on Talodi town.¹⁴ Talodi is near the border with South Sudan and the sites of fighting between North and South. Sudan’s army accuses South Sudan of supporting the rebel attack with cannons and tanks. There is some evidence of Juba’s support to the SPLA-N.¹⁵

March 31, 2012: Sudan officials begin to arrive in Addis for talks with South Sudan.¹⁶

South Sudan accuses Sudan of bombing its military positions along the border, saying Sudan intends to invade the oil fields in Unity state.¹⁷

April 1, 2012: Sudan accuses South Sudan troops of launching another offensive into Heglig, an allegation South Sudan denies, while fighting in Talodi between the SPLA-N and Sudan forces continue.¹⁸

South Sudan says its troops clashed with SSLA rebels in Unity and Upper Nile; officials say troops pushed back the Sudan-backed rebels from oil towns in Unity. Southern officials also say that Sudan bombings continued in Unity state, an allegation Sudan officials deny. Amum accuses Khartoum of delaying talks, pointing to the absence of the Defense Minister in Addis.¹⁹

April 2, 2012: South Sudan and Sudan begin direct talks aimed at easing military tensions. South Sudan says bombings by Sudan continue.²⁰

SPLA-N rebels in Blue Nile state claim to kill 21 Sudanese soldiers during an ambush.²¹

President Obama urges both parties to show restraint, calling South Sudan President Salva Kiir to urge him to ensure South Sudan's forces are not involved in nor support fighting along the border with Sudan, especially in South Kordofan state.²²

April 4, 2012: Talks between Sudan and South Sudan officials in Addis Ababa end after Khartoum asks for time to consider an African Union proposal that South Sudan accepted.²³ The proposal called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of armed forces from each other's territory, an end to negative media campaigning on both sides, and a presidential summit.²⁴ Reportedly, the key dispute separating the two parties is over Khartoum's request that South Sudan end support to SPLA-N, which South Sudan denies.

South Sudan says it shot down a Sudan MIG-29 jet flying over its territory, which Sudan denies.²⁵

U.N. Chief Ban Ki-Moon pleads with Sudan and South Sudan to withdraw troops and police from the disputed Abyei region amid international fears that repeated border clashes between the neighbors could escalate to war.²⁶

April 6, 2012: The A.U. High-Level Implementation Panel announces that Bashir will meet his South Sudanese counterpart, Salva Kiir, to defuse tensions between the neighbors after an initial summit was postponed.²⁷

April 9, 2012: Hundreds of South Sudanese are stranded at Khartoum airport after being denied permission to board their flights to the south in a dispute over their legal status.²⁸ Khartoum says it cannot allow southerners to board without proper documentation.²⁹

April 10, 2012: South Sudan's army retakes control of the disputed area of Heglig, the government says in response to continued bombings and an attack on the border town of Teshwin by Sudan forces.³⁰ South Sudan officials also say that bombings by Sudan³¹, targeting a strategic bridge, injured four civilians in Unity state.³² The Sudanese government says it will discontinue talks with South Sudan and declares a general mobilization.³³

The U.S. "condemns" South Sudan's retaking of Heglig, calling the move "an act which goes beyond self-defense" and Sudan's continued bombings of South Sudan.³⁴ The press release also calls on an unconditional cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of forces, an end to support to armed movements in the other state, and the resumption of talks. The African Union and the United Nations call on both parties to return to talks and on South Sudan to withdraw from Heglig.³⁵

South Sudan declares that as of 9th April 2012, all Sudanese nationals living in South Sudan are foreigners but will be "given time to correct their immigration status."³⁶

April 12, 2012: South Sudan President Salva Kiir tells the national parliament that the army will not withdraw from Heglig “not because we are interested in war. But because we would resolve this problem once and for all.” In the speech, Kiir conveys disappointment at the international community’s recent engagement on North-South issues, leaves open the potential for continued war, and reiterates the government’s invitation to President Bashir to come to Juba to talk.³⁷ South Sudan is “prepared to withdraw its forces from Heglig if a clear mechanism and guarantee can be provided that Heglig will not be used to launch another attack against South Sudan,” such as deploying a U.N. peacekeeping force and that “is willing to resume negotiations immediately in order to resolve all outstanding issues.”³⁸

One South Sudan official says Sudan’s bombing of Unity state kills one civilian and injures another.³⁹

April 13, 2012: Sudan’s army says it is advancing on Heglig to push South Sudan’s forces out.⁴⁰

South Sudan officials say a SAF Antonov flew over the South Sudan capital of Juba; Sudan says this did not happen.⁴¹

April 14, 2012: Sudan and South Sudan forces clash between the border towns of Kharasana and Heglig.⁴² South Sudan officials say Heglig is heavily bombarded by Sudan, warning oil facilities could be destroyed. Sudan bombings kill five people in the Unity state capital of Bentiu.⁴³ Officials say the bombs were targeting a strategic bridge. Officials also say neighboring Warrap state was bombed.

April 15, 2012: South Sudan officials say Sudan forces have yet to reach the disputed town of Heglig, but continue to bomb the area.⁴⁴ Fighting between rebels and South Sudan forces take place in northern Upper Nile, close to the North-South border.⁴⁵

The Egyptian Foreign Minister begins a tour to Khartoum and Juba to push the two sides toward a peaceful resolution.⁴⁶

Insurgents from a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army loyal to Minni Minnawi based in Darfur claim that they destroyed a Sudanese military base and take control of town.

April 16, 2012: Aerial bombardment by Sudan continues in Unity state, killing nine civilians, according to the South.⁴⁷ A U.N. peacekeeping base in Unity state in proximity of a SPLA base was also bombed but no casualties occurred.

Sudan’s parliament voted unanimously on Monday to brand the government of South Sudan an enemy, after southern troops invaded the North’s main oilfield.⁴⁸

April 17, 2012: According to both northern and southern officials, fighting breaks out at a site along the South Kordofan-Northern Bahr-el Ghazal border.⁴⁹ Southern officials say fighting was triggered when a South Sudanese soldier who went to collect water was shot dead.⁵⁰ Sudan says it repulsed an attack by the SPLA.⁵¹

The United Nations Security Council announces that it is considering imposing sanctions on the governments of Khartoum and Juba.⁵²

April 18, 2012: President Omar Hassan al-Bashir announces that the government’s “main goal is liberation of the southern citizens from the SPLM” and that there would be “good news” from the border region in a few hours.⁵³ Bashir sends a special envoy to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to ask Ethiopia to intervene and mediate in the conflict.⁵⁴

Kenya’s President, Mwai Kibaki, calls on the East African Community to jointly find ways of diplomatically addressing the situation between Sudan and South Sudan.⁵⁵

April 19, 2012: South Sudan says southern forces repelled four attacks launched by Sudan’s army—three on April 18, and one on April 19.⁵⁶

Appearing in front of a large rally in the Sudanese border province of North Kordofan, President Bashir vows to teach South Sudan a “final lesson by force.”⁵⁷ It is unclear whether Bashir was making a formal declaration of war or merely ramping up pressure on the United States and other Western and regional powers to persuade South Sudan to leave Heglig.

April 20, 2012: President Kiir orders the withdrawal of South Sudanese troops from Heglig.⁵⁸ In doing do, President Kiir announces that South Sudan will “undertake a critical review of the present mediation/facilitation mechanism,” a reference to the AU High-Level Implementation Panel.

April 21, 2012: President Kiir says the SPLA is still in full control of the area of Heglig despite the statements from Khartoum saying that Sudan’s forces have recaptured the area.

South Sudan welcomes the announcement made by the chief of Uganda People’s Defense Forces, or UPDF, that his forces will intervene if the fighting between Juba and Khartoum escalates into an all-out war.

President Bashir announces that his country will not allow South Sudan to export oil through the pipelines in the north.⁵⁹

The U.S. President Barack Obama makes a personal appeal to the governments in Khartoum and Juba to end the fighting.⁶⁰

April 22, 2012: South Sudan's Vice President, Riek Machar, confirms that the Sudan Armed Forces entered Heglig town on Friday evening, April 20.⁶¹

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Mun issues a statement in reaction to Juba's announcement to pull its troops out of Heglig area. Ban Ki-Moon says he "takes note" of South Sudan's announcement on the matter and urges both sides to resume negotiations on the outstanding issues between them.⁶²

Sudan's presidential assistant, Nafie Ali Nafie, accuses South Sudan's government of deceiving its people by saying that its army withdrew from Heglig. Khartoum alleges that SAF had defeated the SPLA.

April 23, 2012: SAF warplanes carry out an intensive bombardment of the Unity state capital town of Bentiu and neighboring Rubkona.⁶³

The African Union's Peace and Security Council announces to hold a meeting this week in response to continued fighting on the border. The AU calls for Sudan and South Sudan to renew discussions on outstanding issues and end the conflict.⁶⁴

South Sudan's government will no longer export crude via neighboring Sudan and all future negotiations between the two countries will exclude oil, says Pagan Amum, South Sudan's chief negotiator.⁶⁵

Endnotes

- 1 Aljazeera: <http://aje.me/ypC2qy>
- 2 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/yp6gVI>
- 3 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/yp6gVI>
- 4 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/H7CaVH>
- 5 CNN: <http://bit.ly/HUpat7>
- 6 Reuters: <http://bit.ly/HTJgWG>
- 7 AllAfrica: <http://bit.ly/H3G5n9>
- 8 Small Arms Survey: <http://bit.ly/HglsZC>
- 9 Reuters: <http://bit.ly/Hc6ILK>
- 10 WhiteHouse.gov: <http://1.usa.gov/HFTBTP>
- 11 Bloomberg: <http://bloom.bg/GYeoii>
- 12 United Nations Press Release: <http://bit.ly/GZAb5Z>
- 13 AFP: <http://bit.ly/HzVvpq>
- 14 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/HwOktV>
- 15 Small Arms Survey: <http://bit.ly/HglsZC>
- 16 AFP: <http://bit.ly/H061ls>
- 17 Money Control: <http://bit.ly/Hwo7Ob>
- 18 AFP: <http://bit.ly/H85kKQ>
- 19 VOA: <http://bit.ly/HSPAMO>
- 20 AFP: <http://bit.ly/HInOy1>
- 21 Bloomberg: <http://bloom.bg/HNTtzj>
- 22 VOA: <http://bit.ly/HCM0oj>
- 23 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/IAx4Yx>
- 24 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/IAx4Yx>
- 25 Mercury News: <http://bit.ly/HgqqTR>
- 26 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/Hi989m>
- 27 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/HQZcUt>
- 28 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/HusDPK>
- 29 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/HXNuvc>
- 30 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/ljGW8J>
- 31 Sudan Tribune: <http://bit.ly/HHTbHb>
- 32 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/IAx4Yx>
- 33 Sudan Vision Daily: <http://bit.ly/HCgF4Q>
- 34 State Department: <http://1.usa.gov/llzfic>
- 35 Africa Union: <http://bit.ly/IMdTJo>, United Nations News: <http://bit.ly/HNKzyz>, Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/IGlf6>
- 36 South Sudan Press Release: <http://bit.ly/IBtzwp>
- 37 The New Nation: <http://bit.ly/l5wBZd>
- 38 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/l9s7k9>
- 39 Sudan Tribune: <http://bit.ly/lztxun>
- 40 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/HOG1fs>, Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/l9s7k9>
- 41 New York Times: <http://nyti.ms/HIKSil>, Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/l9s7k9>
- 42 New York Times: <http://nyti.ms/HQBASR>
- 43 Kansas city Star: <http://bit.ly/HTBI30>
- 44 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/l9s7k9>
- 45 Sudan Tribune: <http://bit.ly/HWVDcU>
- 46 AllAfrica: <http://bit.ly/HYC83K>
- 47 AFP: <http://bit.ly/J4le7o>
- 48 AFP: <http://bit.ly/J4le7o>
- 49 Enough Said: <http://bit.ly/l9s7k9>
- 50 AP: <http://bit.ly/J10FLS>
- 51 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/IPvtxG>
- 52 Aljezeera: <http://bit.ly/JE36Ot>
- 53 Chicago Tribune: <http://trib.in/J11kgo>
- 54 TheAfricaReport: <http://bit.ly/HSU71x>
- 55 Bernama: <http://bit.ly/HR7EBC>
- 56 AP: <http://bit.ly/HW1kgD>
- 57 Washington Post: <http://wapo.st/HKHZeD>
- 58 Washington Post: <http://wapo.st/lsJkHV>
- 59 Reuters: <http://reut.rs/l7Aj6H>
- 60 AllAfrica: <http://bit.ly/lf65zZ>
- 61 Sudan Tribune: <http://bit.ly/l3H4ZI>
- 62 Sudan Tribune: <http://bit.ly/JifC7K>
- 63 Christian Science Monitor: <http://bit.ly/lslN9H>
- 64 AllAfrica: <http://bit.ly/HZxofU>
- 65 Bloomberg: <http://bloom.bg/JrdNcx>