



Ref: CM/2022/12/098

Date: 02 December 2022

TO: Lt. Gen. Rabi Mujung Emmanuel (ITGoNU)  
Maj. Gen. Martin Gama Abucha (SPLM/A-IO)  
Maj. Gen. Jany Kaway Yoakhor (SSOA)  
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FROM: The Chairperson, CTSAMVM

SUBJECT: **CTSAMVM REPORT 2022/23 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING IN  
NORTHER Bahr EL GHAZAL STATE**

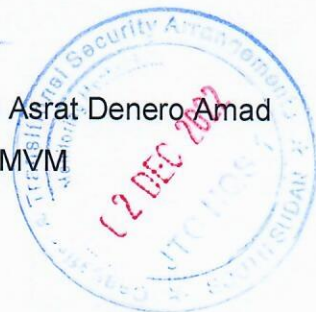
Dear CTSAMVM Technical Committee Senior Party Representatives,

Please find attached a report on violations of the R-ARCSS which have been taking place in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Asrat", is written over a circular blue stamp.

Lieutenant General Asrat Denero Amad  
Chairperson-CTSAMVM



**CTSAMVM REPORT 2022/23**  
**RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING IN NORTHER BAHAR EL GHAZAL STATE**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

CTSAMVM received allegations from a number of sources that young people were being recruited by the SSPDF and trained at Mathiang Barracks in Aweil. There were allegations that some of those recruited were under-age.

The SSPDF claimed that those being trained in Mathiang Barracks were “deserters” who were being called back into the army and given refresher training before being deployed where necessary. However, one SSPDF officer said that “volunteers” were accepted at the barracks for training but did not count as recruits because they were not registered. An official said that some of those being trained were former members of the Mathiang Anyor militia.

There is a long-standing problem with unemployed young people in Aweil who are facing poverty and lack of opportunities. It is seen by some that absorption into the military at least gives them something to do as well as food and clothing.

CTSAMVM obtained first-hand witness testimony that young people had at least been accepted as “volunteers” by the SSPDF in Mathiang Barracks, and received military training and uniforms.

CTSAMVM was unable to obtain sufficient evidence to prove that the SSPDF has accepted Child Soldiers at Mathiang Barracks, although two were identified and dismissed in July 2022.

It is the assessment of CTSAMVM that by accepting “volunteers” at Mathiang Barracks in Aweil the SSPDF has acted in clear violation of the R-ARCSS, and increased the level of militarisation in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State.





## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background

- a. Mathiang Barracks is in Aweil municipality. It is about 2 Km west of the town itself and comes under the command of 3 Division SSPDF in Wunyiiik.
- b. Prior to the signing of the R-ARCSS young men were recruited in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap states and – according to what CTSAMVM has been told – trained in Pantit for what was known as the Mathiang Anyor militia. The Mathiang Anyor was deployed under the command of the SPLA (as it was then) in Central Equatoria State (amongst other areas) and was responsible for violations on the ARCSS and ACOH: CTSAMM (as it was then) submitted 6 violation reports between March 2017 and April 2018 concerning in whole or in part the activities of the Mathiang Anyor. One of them was specifically about the employment of Child Soldiers. There is recent history in Northern Bahr el Ghazal of the recruitment and employment of young people in the military.
- c. There is a long-standing issue in Norther Bahr el Ghazal with unemployed young people – some orphans – who roam the streets of Aweil in gangs and cause problems.

### 2. Allegations:

- a. On 18 July 2022 CTSAMVM was told by the UNMISS Child Protection Unit of concerns about alleged child soldier recruitment and training in Mathiang Barracks.
- b. CTSAMVM made some initial enquiries and was told by a variety of other sources that training was taking place Mathiang Barracks, and that young people were involved.



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. The investigations were undertaken with the full participation of two National Monitors. There was not an SSPDF National Monitor available to the team during the investigations as he was away in Juba.
- b. During the period from 9 September to 21 October 2022 the CTSAMVM Monitoring and Verification Team (MVT) based in Aweil met with a total of 21 local witnesses, including:
  - i. SSPDF: The Commanding Officer and officers at Mathiang Barracks; Chief of Operations and Adjutant of 3 Division SSPDF.
  - ii. Training Centre: The Commander of Pantit Training Centre.
  - iii. State Government and Authorities: Minister for General Education and Instruction; Director for Planning and Director of Gender, Child and Social Welfare; DDR Coordinator; Chairperson RRC.
  - iv. Religious Leaders: Chairperson of the Islamic Council; Aweil Roman Catholic Parish Priest; Church Council Chairperson and members.
  - v. Civil Society: Youth Union; Woman's Empowerment; Aweil Civil Engagement Centre.
  - vi. Police: Chief Inspector, Maper Police Station.
  - vii. UN: Human Rights and Child Protection Officers.
- c. CTSAMVM did not interview actual recruits in order to avoid the possibility of reprisals.





- d. 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 human-rights- and humanitarian- entities and signifies that sufficient facts and evidence have been collected to conclude that an event has occurred.

## FINDINGS

### 1. SSPDF:

- a. The commander of Mathiang Barracks, Lt Col Garang Garang Ngor, said there are 460 soldiers stationed there including 38 female soldiers. He said they were ex-soldiers from SSPDF 3 Division and 16 and 17 Brigades. He also said that some looked young but that was characteristic of South Sudanese who have an inadequate diet.
- b. One of the officers at Mathiang Barracks told CTSAMVM that the soldiers in the barracks were there for refresher training in order to be ready to deploy to military units when necessary.
- c. The Commander of 3 Division SSPDF was not in barracks when CTSAMVM visited. However, the MVT met with the Chief of Operations and the Adjutant, who said that 3 Division does not have the power to recruit soldiers; recruitment is done at the strategic level. He also said that 3 Division has had forces in Mathiang Barracks for some years to ensure a quick response in Aweil town if necessary.
- d. CTSAMVM met with the Brigadier who is the Chief Instructor at Pantit Training Centre and also responsible for all military training in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State. He said:



- i. There are three categories of soldiers at Mathiang Barracks:
  - 1. Ex-soldiers/deserters undergoing refresher training.
  - 2. 'Reinforcements' from 3 Division SSPDF send to Aweil in case they are needed.
  - 3. "New volunteers".
- ii. That there are large numbers of unemployed young men in Aweil who are facing hardship, and that if he has the budget to take in such young men and train them he would do so in order to improve their lives. He confirmed that "new volunteers" do sometimes come to Mathiang Barracks but those who joined were not recruited per se because they are neither registered nor paid.
- e. CTSAMVM observed that the female soldiers they met at Mathiang Barracks appeared to be in their early 20's at the most, and did not look like ex-soldiers who had returned for refresher training.

**2. State Government and authorities:**

- a. CTSAMVM met with two state ministers, who both said that the "growing number" of soldiers in Mathiang Barracks is not due to the recruitment of street children as has been alleged. They said that they were soldiers as young as 24 who had "abandoned camp" in 2018 and had been called up by the SSPDF for refresher training in order to inculcate them with military discipline prior to integration in military units.
- b. The Director of Gender, Child and Social Welfare told CTSAMVM that there had been allegations of the recruitment of Child Soldiers at Mathiang Barracks since July 2022, and that officials from the Ministry visited the barracks in October 2022 and found no Child Soldiers. A ministry official told CTSAMVM that a letter had been written by the Director to the Governor to tell 3 Division SSPDF not to recruit children; this had led to a visit to the Mathiang Barracks.





- c. The Chairperson of the DDR commission said that he had visited Mathiang Barracks on 24 September 2022 together with UNMISS Child Protection Unit officers. He went on to say that in 2015/2016 “a group called Mathiang Anyor” had been recruited and trained in Pantit but had since been abolished (see paragraph 1b above), and it was members of this group who were undergoing refresher training. He said that he had seen “children” in military uniform in Aweil, but the commander of Mathiang Barracks told him that these would have got the uniforms from family members.
- d. The Chairperson of the Northern Bahr el Ghazal Relief and Rehabilitation Commission said that the issue of the growing number of “street children” in Aweil needs to be addressed with humanitarian intervention or vocational training, because poverty is pushing them into enlisting in the army. He said that the soldiers from Mathiang Barracks can be seen running in the morning and everybody knows about ongoing recruitment: “you can ask anyone in the town, it’s not a secret”. He also said that 383 soldiers were trained and “graduated” in August 2022 and that 400 soldiers are currently undergoing training.

### 3. UNMISS Child Protection Unit (CPU):

CTSAMVM met with the CPU Team Leader who said the CPU visited Mathiang Barracks on 24 September 2022:

- a. The team saw 75 soldiers on parade, one of whom looked visibly young although it was proved he has 25 years old.
- b. They found that in July 2022 there were two under-age soldiers at Mathiang Barracks, and showed CTSAMVM a letter signed by the Child Protection Coordinator at 3 Division SSPDF dismissing the boys from the barracks.



#### 4. Civil Society:

CTSAMVM engaged with the leadership and members of a wide range of Civil Society and religious organisations as listed above. A summary of finding from these groups is as follows:

- a. Most of those spoken to by CTSAMVM emphasised that there is a lot of poverty and unemployment in Aweil, and it is this that drives young people to join the army at Mathiang Barracks. There were also numerous reports that soldiers are seen running in squads in the morning.
- b. One witness told CTSAMVM that her 18-year-old nephew left school and volunteered to join the Army at Mathiang Barracks. When his mother went to try and get him to return to school she found him with 3 other boys of about the same age or younger. The witness said that the boys were not paid, but given food, training and uniforms.
- c. A religious leader said that he was saddened to see “children aged 14/15/16” in uniform. He said he saw 5 coming out of Mathiang Barracks who he claimed were 15/16 years old. Another religious leader said that “...these street children cannot support themselves and end up joining the military [Mathiang Barracks] that provides them with their basic needs”.
- d. One witness said a colleague of his in his 30’s had volunteered and joined the army and he knew of another woman who had also done so.
- e. Members of a religious group said that their “neighbours and relatives” have joined the training at Mathiang Barracks. They also said that “women are enlisting because they are widows, and children are enlisting because they are orphans”. They again said that volunteers received no salary. They gave the names of two women who had recently enlisted, one in her 30’s and the other was 20, and said that “children as young as 15-17 and 20-year-old adults are enlisting”.





## ASSESSMENT

1. CTSAMVM was given contradictory information by the SSPDF. However, the SSPDF clearly stated that it has been calling people who had previously been in the army to return and receive refresher training.
2. It is the assessment of CTSAMVM that the SSPDF has been accepting 'volunteers', young people who have joined the Army at Mathiang Barracks. CTSAMVM has eye-witness testimony that some of these volunteers are too young to have ever been in the army prior to the signing of the R-ARCSS. It is also evident that these young people have received training.
3. CTSAMVM has been unable to substantiate allegations of Child Soldiers being in Mathiang Barracks, although it has seen evidence (the letter from the 3 Division Child Protection Coordinator) that there were at least two child soldiers prior to July 2022.
4. There are very few opportunities for young people in Aweil. Many face poverty and hardship, and, even if they are not paid, volunteering for the army means they are at least fed and clothed.



## CONCLUSIONS

1.CTSAMVM concludes that:

By accepting and training volunteers in Mathiang Barracks the SSPDF is acting in violation of the R-ARCSS, specifically article 2.1.8: "All Parties agree to cease security forces recruitment and the training of late recruits".

## OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Parties were supposed to declare all forces after the signing of the R-ARCSS in. To increase the number of forces above those which were declared, either by recruitment or the training of "volunteers" goes against the spirit and word of the Agreement.
2. CTSAMVM is concerned by claims by the DDR Commissioner that former members of the Mathiang Anyor have been or are being re-trained at Mathiang Barracks.
3. There is no doubt that young people face poverty and lack of opportunities in Aweil. However, providing them with military training may create problems in the future by further militarising society, especially when the military in South Sudan faces so many challenges in creating a suitably-sized professional army.

