

Sudan army says it recaptured area in Blue Nile from SPLM-N rebels
By The Sudan Tribune
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(KHARTOUM) – The Sudanese army announced on Monday that it has reclaimed back an area in the border state of Blue Nile from the rebels of the Sudan People Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N).

The army spokesperson Colonel Al-Sawarmi Khalid Sa'ad was quoted by Sudan official news agency (SUNA) as saying that they liberated Mafo which lies in the southwest part of the state.

Col. Sa'ad went on to say that the army flushed out SPLM-N rebels which he estimated its size there as equivalent to a battalion adding that they had tanks, artillery and Land Cruiser vehicles.

He said that SPLM-N rebels suffered large losses including 66 fighters, 4 tanks, 4 Land Cruiser vehicles and 2 tractors.

Around 70 who were injured from the rebels have moved to South Sudan including 3 senior officers while other groups fled to Wadka and Aura, Col. Sa'ad added. He acknowledged that an unspecified but "small" number of Sudanese soldiers were killed and injured.

Last Sunday the SPLM-N Secretary General Yasser Arman said that the Sudanese army launched an aerial and ground attack in Mafo thus forcing around 8,000 to civilians to flee closer to the Ethiopian and South Sudanese border.

The conflict in Blue Nile started in September 2011, a few months after neighboring South Sudan seceded under a 2005 peace deal that ended decades of civil war. Few months earlier a similar conflict broke out in South Kordofan which also lies on the borders with South Sudan.

The SPLM-N fought as part of the southern rebel army during that war, but were left on the Sudanese side of the border after partition. Khartoum accuses Juba of backing the rebels and is making suspending support to them a prerequisite to implementing a number of deals they signed last year including one on oil exports.

The Sudanese government refuses to negotiate with SPLM-N rebels fearing that it could be forced to accept wealth and power sharing arrangements similar to the ones included in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed with the south.

The UN Security Council's (UNSC) resolution number 2046 ordered Sudan and the SPLM-N to cooperate in order to end the conflict in the two regions. Under the resolution, two parties are supposed to negotiate on the basis of the 28 June 2011 agreement they signed in Addis Ababa before it was scrapped by Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir.

The African Union mediation team has called on the Sudanese government and the SPLM-N to meet in Addis Ababa on in mid-March to hold direct political talks to end the conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.



Soldiers from Sudan's army rest after gaining control of the area, at the Blue Nile state capital al-Damazin, September 5, 2011 (Reuters)