

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL ADDENDUM

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(Accompanies the press release, *South Sudan: Evidence of violations and illicit concealment of arms must spur UN to renew arms embargo*)

South Sudan has been covered by a comprehensive European Union arms embargo since July 2011, following its secession from Sudan. The embargo encompasses not only the supply of arms by EU member states, by their nationals, or on ships and aircraft flagged in their jurisdictions; but also the provision of technical advice and assistance relating to embargoed weapons, and financial assistance for arms supplies. The global Arms Trade Treaty, which came into force in December 2014, prohibits the transfer of weapons which carry a substantial risk of being used for war crimes, such as attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such – principles that are also enshrined in many domestic arms control laws.

The UN arms embargo on South Sudan was instituted on 13 July 2018. The resolution legally obliges all UN member states to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms and related material – including ammunition, military vehicles and spare parts – from entering South Sudan. This includes using ships that sail under their flag or aircrafts. The embargo also extends to technical support, training, financial or other assistance related to military activities.

Amnesty International researches violations of all three arms control regimes.

The vast majority of the hundreds of small arms observed by Amnesty International investigators during their time in South Sudan were either two standard Kalashnikov variants—Russian AKMs and Chinese Type 56s—or Chinese CQs, a copy of the American M-16. Investigators also recorded a small number of Israeli Galils in the security details of senior government officials. All of these weapons were most likely imported into the country prior to the UN arms embargo.

This finding is consistent with other surveys of small arms and light weapons undertaken in South Sudan by outside monitoring organizations, including Small Arms Survey, Center For Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS), and Conflict Armament Research, the latter of which produced the most thorough and complete dataset of weapons in the country to date in its November 2018 report [Weapon Supplies Into South Sudan's Civil War](#).

However, Amnesty International investigators documented several weapons, held by members of the SSPDF and SPLA-IO, which do not appear in any of these databases. At one training site, near the border in the south-west, several SSPDF soldiers were armed with MPi-KMS-72 rifles manufactured in the former East Germany. The MPi-KMS-72 is identifiable from its side-fold triangular stock and distinctive “plum furniture,” or purplish pistol grip and front hand-guards. In addition, at an SPLA-IO camp in Western Bahr el Ghazal State, in the north-west of the country, where clashes with government forces took place from December 2015 until January 2019, and at a nearby training site that hosted both government and SPLA-IO

forces, Amnesty International investigators identified several PM md. 90 carbines, manufactured in Romania. The PM md. 90 is identifiable from its side-fold triangular stock and distinctive wooden front pistol grip.

Neither the East German MPi-KMS-72s nor the Romanian PM md. 90s appear in any published inventory or survey of South Sudanese small arms, including the detailed Conflict Armament Research iTrace database. While these weapons are not newly manufactured, it is reasonable to believe they are newly shipped to South Sudan, which would constitute a violation of the UN arms embargo. Multiple sources confirmed to Amnesty International that South Sudanese government forces and armed groups were seeking older Eastern European arms from illicit arms traffickers, as they were available in quantity and, because of their date of manufacture, less obviously a UN arms embargo violation. However, note that sales from Eastern Europe would also constitute a violation of the European Union embargo.

In addition, Amnesty International has acquired detailed photographs of the ammunition cartridges fired at Luri. The photos show 7.62x39mm cartridges, standard ammunition for Kalashnikov-style rifles, with a headstamp of 811_16. This indicates that the ammunition was manufactured at Chinese State Factory 811 in 2016.

This finding is significant. As detailed in the 2018 Conflict Armament Research report, the majority of the 7.62x39mm cartridges they documented in South Sudan were manufactured in Chinese State Factory 811 in 2013, and so bore the headstamp 811_13. Conflict Armament Research also documented a small number of 811_14 headstamps, the latest date that appears in their dataset. These cartridges most likely came from two large shipments of 20 million rounds from China in May 2014. [Amnesty International protested the sale at the time](#), correctly predicting that the shipment by China would fuel human rights violations and war crimes. Significantly, China [claims that it has not sold arms or ammunition to South Sudan since September 2014](#), saying it would be “inappropriate.”

If the NSS acquired the ammunition directly from China, then either the Chinese government broke the arms embargo or sold the arms after pledging not to, but before the UN Security Council imposed the arms embargo on the territory of South Sudan in July 2018. If the NSS acquired the Chinese ammunition from a third-party seller, then they either broke the embargo or illicitly diverted the ammunition.

In 2015, South Sudan purchased at least four Mi-24 attack helicopters from Ukraine. When the UN arms embargo was instituted in July 2018, these helicopters were in disrepair and unserviceable, unable to fly. Any provision of spare parts to maintain these helicopters would constitute a violation of the arms embargo. In addition, Ukraine is signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty. As a signatory, Ukraine is bound not to undermine the treaty’s object and purpose, which includes “contributing to international and regional peace, security and stability”.

At the start of the embargo, satellite imagery indicates that two of the helicopters were based at Luri and two at Juba International Airport (JIA). Amnesty International consulted a series of 308 satellite images to build a detailed timeline of the specific locations of the four helicopters since the imposition of the embargo. This analysis demonstrates that the helicopters have been undergoing maintenance, moving between sites at Luri and JIA, and flown for other purposes, including possibly in support of ground combat, since the July 2018 arms embargo.

In October and November 2018, several months after the embargo was implemented,

satellite imagery shows maintenance and movement of the two helicopters on the southern military ramp at JIA. Similarly, in October 2018 one of the helicopters at Luri underwent maintenance and moved to JIA, where it remains until today. The last Mi-24 at Luri does not have its rotors installed, and appears to be in a long-term state of disrepair, though in the last month new rotor blades have been placed near the airframe, indicating refurbishment is possibly imminent.

For the majority of the time since, the three Mi-24s at JIA have stayed in the same parking locations, except for two cases.

On two separate occasions, on 4 March and 10 March 2019, two of the helicopters were missing from JIA. Satellite images show that the helicopters returned to the ramp on 8 March. There are many reasons the aircraft could have flown, but it is noteworthy that at that time, fighting took place against the National Salvation Front in Yei, in the southern part of the country. In addition, one of the helicopters was missing on 10 February 2020. Amnesty International investigators personally observed that on 12 February 2020, one of the Mi-24 helicopters lacked its standard cloth windscreen, which is placed on the aircraft during non-flying times to protect the glass from weather and debris. The lack of the windscreen is another indication that the helicopter had recently flown.

Amnesty International believes that flight operations are the only reasonable explanation for the helicopters to be missing from the ramp. The nearby hangars are blocked from the ramp by concrete barriers, and in any case have doors too small to accommodate the helicopters. The helicopters also do not appear on the rest of the grounds of JIA, which are reserved for civilian and UN aircrafts.

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