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B. IIR 6 830 0125 06

Classified By: Charge A.I. Janet Wilgus for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative in Addis Ababa and other embassy contacts confirmed mid-April reports of Ethiopian troop movements along the Sudanese border in the Gambella region of western Ethiopia, but deemed media reports of widescale attacks against the Anuak ethnic group



"exaggerated."

2. (SBU) The UNHCR sub-office in Gambella told emboffs that under a reported agreement with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) troops have regularly crossed over the border to disarm Anuak refugees in Sudan. The Ethiopian government claims armed Anuak rebel forces are an "anti-peace element" in the Gambella region. UNHCR staff in Gambella, local clerics, and embassy RSO contacts, reported that in mid-April ENDF troops were seen moving across the border with Sudan in the direction of the Pochalla refugee camp, which is home to over 10,000 Anuak refugees and located 45 kilometers within Sudan. According to UNHCR, military forces confiscated approximately 50 firearms during the movement across the border, but stopped short of entering the Pochalla refugee camp and did not/not attack any refugees. Embassy RSO investigators and the World Health Organization noted that ENDF troops have since returned to Ethiopia but continue to block vehicular access to Pochalla.

3. (SBU) According to UNHCR officials in Gambella, reports by some media outlets and the British-based NGO Aegis Trust that the ENDF's operations in Sudan included a number of killings and rapes were "exaggerated." The Deputy Representative for UNHCR commented that the joint action between the ENDF and SPLA has "contributed to the peace efforts" in the area and has gone "very smoothly." (Note: As part of the Ethiopian-Sudanese agreement, SPLA forces are disarming ethnic Nuers in Ethiopia. End Note.) Embassy contacts report, however, the military operations have not been entirely peaceful; a pastor at the Evangelical Church in Gambella recalled the death of three Anuak men during one of these disarming operations.

4. (C) ENDF Chief of General Staff Lt. General Samora Yonus acknowledged to DATT that the ENDF had conducted operations in southern Sudan and Gambella against rebels, with Sudanese government approval (reftel). Samora said, however, that the ENDF did not/not attack refugee camps. Samora stated the ENDF had not conducted disarming of tribes, but rather had conducted counter insurgency operations against the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) two weeks ago in Sudan. He said the OLF had received arms, training, and supplies from Eritrea. He added Sudan remained concerned about Eritrean support to Sudanese dissident groups as well; therefore Ethiopia had Sudanese approval for the operations.

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