any remnant unaligned groups were to be labelled criminal and dealt with accordingly. ³

Despite the CPA’s clear instruction on the fate of the OAGs,⁴ the reality on the ground has always been more complicated. Because of the important constituencies that some OAGs represented, it was subsequently recognized that they could not simply be dealt with as criminal entities. As a consequence, a special agreement was required to deal with the SSDF, many of whose commanders wielded considerable local authority. The Juba Declaration of January 2006 between the SPLA and the SSDF set the terms for the group’s official dissolution and absorption, primarily into the SPLA; in the process, SSDF commander Paulino Matieb became the SPLA’s Deputy Commander-in-Chief. Some other SSDF commanders held their options open for as long as possible, returned to the SAF, or remained uncommitted.⁵

As of mid-2008, more than two years since the signing of the Juba Declaration and three since the CPA, armed group activity continues. The two categories of armed groups that call for examination in this Brief are the SAF-aligned remnants of the SSDF that continue to operate in South Sudan, and tribal groups, some of whose members are also operating as pro-government paramilitaries. Even though, as far as the parties to the CPA are concerned, ‘OAGs’ have all been officially absorbed and therefore no longer exist, this is a technicality that should not obscure the more complicated reality on the ground.

The SSDF: the final chapter?

Following Matieb’s transition to the SPLA, only a handful of SSDF commanders and their men refused to follow him. By late 2006 two of these had capitulated and formally aligned with the SPLA: Ismael Konye (a Murle) in Jonglei in October 2006 and Sultan Abdel Bagi (a Dinka) in Northern Bahr el Ghazal in August 2007.⁶ Konye’s forces redeployed from Pibor to Juba in mid-April 2007,⁷ and he became a ‘peace and reconciliation’ adviser to GoSS president Salva Kiir. His troops are in the process of being incorporated into the SPLA or being demobilized.⁸ The troops of Sultan Abdel Bagi, while historically active in South Kordofan around Meiram, are now mostly located in SPLA bases in Aweil and Tonj, Bahr el Ghazal. No further major changes in realignment of remnant-SSDF militias have taken place since.

As the SSDF effectively collapsed, however, some SSDF militia members detached from their leadership and became involved in local, informal tribal-based forces. Their former commanders, unable to continue to supply and motivate them, had little hold

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**Selected Armed Groups of Concern in South Sudan and Border Areas, March 2008**

- Abu Mataq
- Al Fursan Forces
- Abu Sofiya
- Kharasana
- Meiram
- Peace and Development Defence Force (PDDF)
- Abyei
- Pariang
- Akoka
- El Nasser faction
- Rom
- Mading Forces
- Nasser faction

**Legend**

- International boundary
- North-South boundary
- State boundary
- State capital
- Armed group aligned with:
  - SPLA
  - SAF
  - Former SSDF groups
  - Other armed groups

**Note:** The map illustrates the distribution and alignment of various armed groups in South Sudan, including those aligned with the SPLA and SAF, as well as former SSDF groups and other armed groups. It highlights the complexity of the security situation in the region, showing the movement and realignment of forces following the CPA and subsequent developments.