

150,000 combatants to be demobilized in eight years

Written by Oscas Gama
Tuesday, 17 January 2012

Up to 150,000 members of the armed and organized forces will be demobilized by the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC) over the next eight years.

The forces to be demobilized are 80,000 Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers and 70,000 from the organized forces comprising of the police, prison, fire fighters and the wild game rangers.

The program is scheduled to begin as a pilot in April with a target of 4,500 in the first year.

"This trial phase is starting in April this year in three transition facilities for 3,000 SPLA and 1,500 organized forces," SSDDRC said in a report.

Ministry of Defense DDR Liason officer Col Benjamin Makuer told participants at an opinion leaders workshop in Torit recently that DDR policy documents adopted in September 23rd 2011 states that a National DDR council and a National DDR Coordination secretariat shall be created.

It will be comprised of the presidency, DDR Commission, ministry of defense, ministry of Interior, other line ministries and the United Nations agencies.

Col. Benjamin said a successful DDR relies on the inter-agency cooperatives for operational efficiencies, further economic development, agricultural development, vocational institutes and educational programs for veterans.

He added that this is to provide various services at reintegration facilities, such as medical, security and mental health.

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The communications director of South Sudan DDR Commission, Elia Kamilo further outlined that eligibility will be for active members of the SPLA and organized forces whose names are in the payroll.

Kamilo said South Sudanese combatants in foreign armed groups like LRA abductees are among the group who will meet the criteria to be developed by the defense and veteran affairs ministry in collaboration with the ministry of interior.

He revealed that external monitoring and oversight agent will establish monitoring and evaluation system and train South Sudan DDRC staff and implementing partners in using the system for implementation modalities.

The opinion leaders' workshop was organized by the SSDDRC in collaboration with United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in order to share information on the new DDR program.