

South Sudan plans to disarm 150,000 soldiers from security forces

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By Ngor Arol Garang

September 24, 2011 (JUBA) - The government of the Republic of South Sudan on Friday unveiled plan targeting 150,000 soldiers to be removed from the active military and police services.

UN regional coordinator for South Sudan, David Gressly, estimated in June 2011 that the SPLA had between 150,000 and 200,000 soldiers, and that "probably more" than half should be demobilized after secession.

The UN officials said the SPLA absorbed different groups since the signing of the 2005 peace agreement and stressed that a small army can be better professionalized and disciplined.

"We are targeting 80000 from Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and 70000 from other armed forces which are police, prison service, fire brigade, wild life and other armed security organs to be demobilized," said Major General Madut Biar Yel, Minister of Telecommunication and Postal Services, in a briefing to the media shortly after the weekly cabinet meeting at the Council of Ministers in Juba on Friday.



Yel, who was speaking as acting minister of information and broadcasting, said the decision was part of the government policy in line with provision of the 2005 peace deal which requires the government of South Sudan to reduce the size of its army and to make it professional.

The senior government official said under the 2005 peace accord known as Comprehensive Peace Agreement which ended the over two decades long civil war between the north and south, both sides agreed to reduce their armies by 90,000 soldiers each. However, the program in the south was faced with a lot of challenges including logistics and financial resources to execute the process.

He underlined that 90,000 combatants are supposed to be demobilized from the former rebel movement into civilian life by 2012 as it was agreed in 2007. Actually only about 10,000 soldiers were removed from active military services.

"This is far beyond the target. The target was 90,000 soldiers," he said. . Officials including William Deng Deng, chairperson of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration commission have often cited challenges facing the process, some of which include administrative issues.

Earlier minister Yel said the council also received a report on expansion of Juba International Airports to 700 meters and upgrading of the run way into full international land site by both domestics and international airlines.

The weekly cabinet was chaired by acting president Riek Machar Teny. Teny is also the vice president of the government of south Sudan.

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