

The Sudan Consortium

African and International Civil Society Action for Sudan

The Impact of Aerial Bombing of Civilian Settlements in Southern Kordofan November 2013

The Sudan Consortium works with a trusted group of local Sudanese partners who have been working on the ground in Southern Kordofan since the current conflict began in late 2011. All the attacks referred to in this report were launched against areas where there was no military presence and which were clearly identifiable as civilian in character. **We believe that this information provides strong circumstantial evidence that civilians are being directly and deliberately targeted by the Sudanese armed forces in Southern Kordofan.**

Violation of Humanitarian Cease-Fire

Against the backdrop of extensive discussions around a planned polio vaccination drive, the UN Security Council issued a press statement on 11 October 2013 in which it expressed “grave concern at the imminent threat of the spread of polio through South Kordofan, and the continuing outbreak of polio in the Horn of Africa.”¹ The Council called on the Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and the government of Sudan to resolve their differences and to make the necessary arrangements to allow the campaign to go forward on 5 November as planned. On 17 October, the government of Sudan agreed to implement a ceasefire from 1-12 November.²

The ceasefire was to go into effect several days before the polio eradication campaign was to begin in order to build confidence on the part of the population which would need to gather at immunizations sites. However, reports received from human rights monitors on the ground since the ceasefire supposedly came into force indicate that the government of Sudan is violating the ceasefire and is continuing to launch aerial bombing attacks against civilians in Southern Kordofan.

Specifically, on Saturday 2nd November, Antonov aircraft of the Sudanese Air Force dropped a total of 10 bombs on Umsedeba and Abu Hashim areas in Um Dorein County. No casualties were reported in either attack. However, on Tuesday 5th November, one woman was killed, and one child and two men injured when the Sudanese Air Force attacked civilian population centres in Tunguli, Abri and Kolrna localities in Delami County.

¹ UN Security Council, “Security Council Press Statement on Polio Vaccination in Sudan,” 11 October 2013.

² Sudan Tribune, “Sudan Agrees to Cease Hostilities in South Kordofan for Polio Campaign – UN,” 17 October 2013.

Update – October 2013

During October 2013, prior to the purported “ceasefire” described above, the Sudanese Air Force dropped at least 40 bombs in 11 separate attacks carried out against civilian areas in Southern Kordofan.

Since the conflict began in June 2012, the effect of such targeting has been both to destroy substantial amounts of newly planted and/or mature crops, but, more significantly, to deter farmers from cultivating their fields at critical times during the crop cycle, for fear of being killed or injured in an air attack.

Whilst the civilian population in Southern Kordofan has developed its own protection strategies to mitigate the effects of these air attacks (including digging “foxholes” in which they can seek shelter) significant numbers of civilians continue to be killed or injured in these attacks, and indeed the number killed is increasing.

Although the number of bombing attacks in October was the same as that recorded in September, in recent weeks the Sudanese Air Force has increasingly deployed fast attack aircraft rather than the slower and less accurate Antonov bombers which have previously been the main platform used by the Sudanese Air Force in their bombing campaign against the civilian population. It is notable that all five air attacks launched against civilian objects in Delami County and some of those carried out in Um Dorein during October were carried out by fast attack aircraft.

In recent weeks, these fast jets (which are reported to include up to 12 Sukhoi SU-24 aircraft recently acquired by the Government of Sudan from Belarus)³ have been used deliver a larger payload of more sophisticated and powerful ordnance against civilian areas than had previously been possible from the Antonov bombers which the Sudanese Air Force has previously relied on almost exclusively for its attacks on the civilian population.

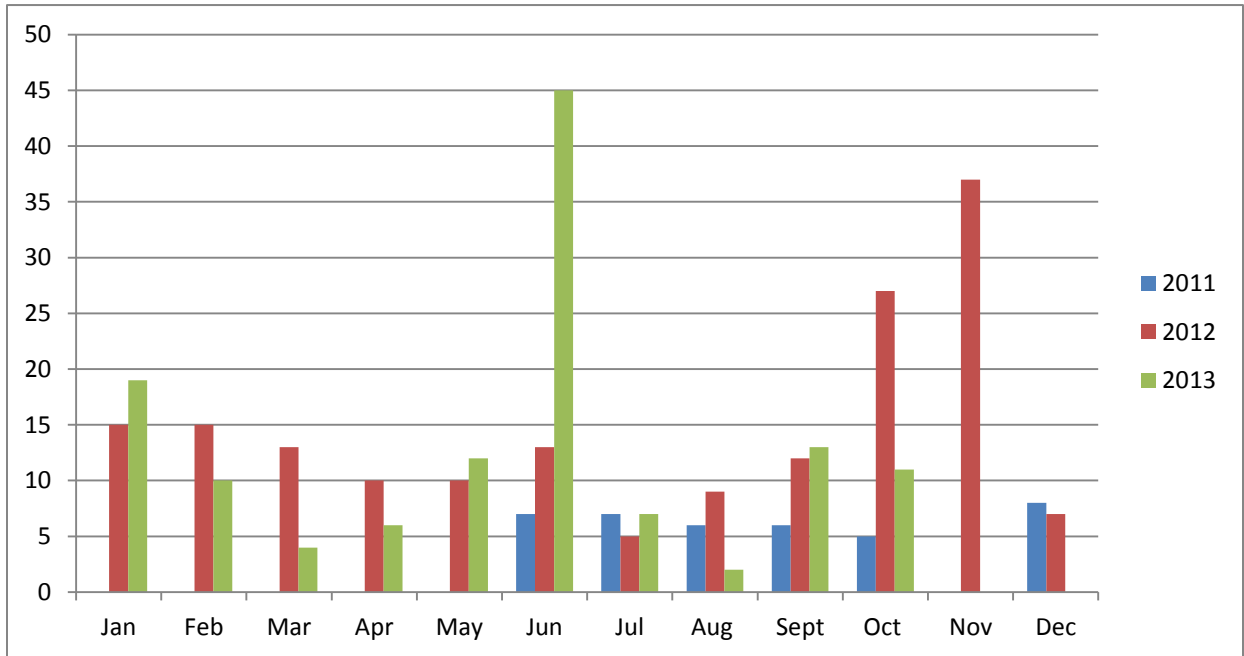
As a consequence of the increased willingness of the Sudanese Air Force to direct this more sophisticated weaponry against the civilian population, the number of recorded civilian casualties in October increased significantly, with two killed and 14 injured in October (compared with one killed and five injured in September). 13 of the casualties inflicted in attacks during October were women and children, including one 85 year old and one 70 year old female.

The increase in civilian casualties in October (despite the reduction in the actual number of attacks) may partly be explained by the fact that the use of fast jets (rather than high level bombers whose approach can be more easily identified on the ground) has allowed the Sudanese Air Force to launch these attacks suddenly and without warning. Therefore civilians – particularly the elderly or those with young families - have had less time to seek shelter in improvised fox-holes and have been more vulnerable to injury or death during these attacks as a result.

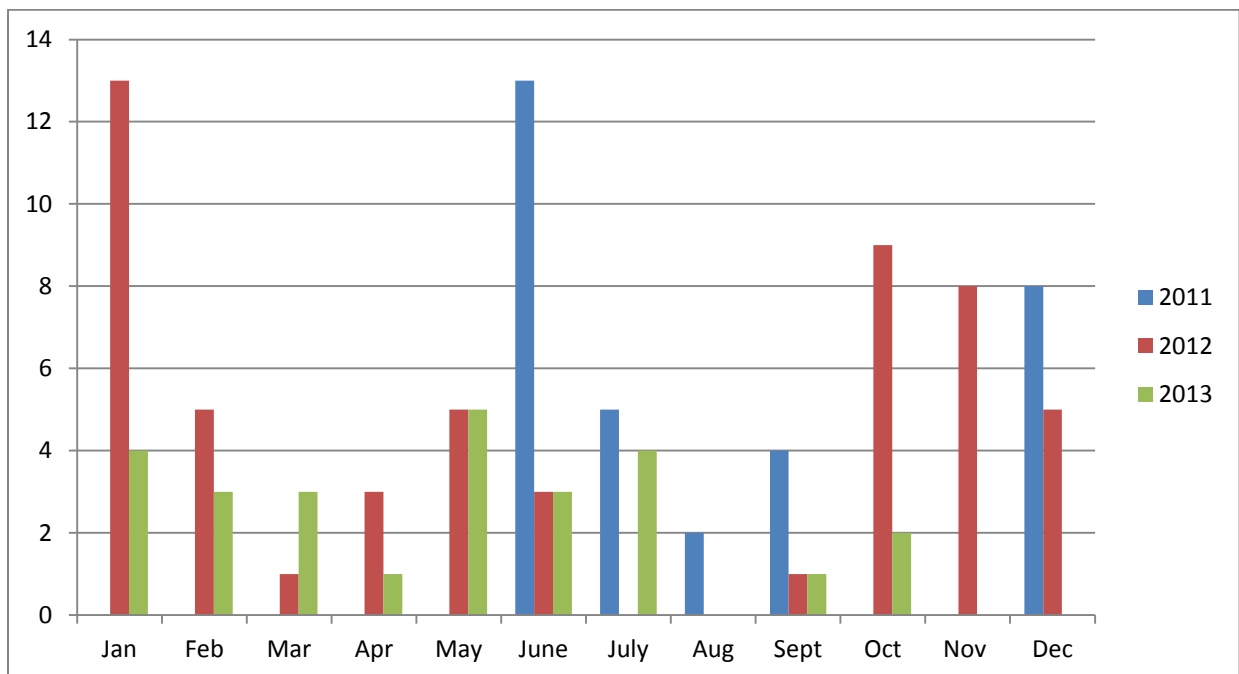
³ Cenciotti, David, “Sudan gets second hand Belarusian Su-24 Fencer attack planes,” *The Aviationist*, 19 August 2013.

The fast jets also allow the delivery of more powerful and more accurate bombs than can be dropped by the Antonovs. It is notable that an increase in the capability of the Sudanese Air Force to drop its bombs accurately has increased the level of civilian casualties rather than reduced them.

Bombing attacks on civilian settlements: June 2011-October 2013



Civilians killed by aerial bombardment in Southern Kordofan: June 2011 – October 2013



Civilians injured by aerial bombardment: June 2011 – October 2013

