



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit
Communications & Public Information Office

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPDATE ON UNMISS PATROLS IN PIBOR COUNTY – 13 September 2013

Why does UNMISS intensify patrols in Pibor county now?

- It was not possible to conduct patrols while SPLA military operations were underway, and when there were ongoing inter-communal attacks.
- New developments have facilitated the patrol campaign, the biggest factor being the lull in the fighting between the SPLA and David Yau Yau armed group which has allowed UNMISS to patrol in the bush outside towns
- Patrols were launched on 9 August. They have gained significant momentum since.

What is the environment in which patrols are operating?

- Patrols operate in a sensitive, volatile and risky environment. As a reminder, on 9 April, 12 km east of Gumuruk – where patrols currently take place – an UNMISS resupply convoy protected by Indian peacekeepers was ambushed by armed elements. Despite a two-hour fight against the armed elements, the attack resulted in the death of 5 Indian peacekeepers, 2 UNMISS civilian staff members and 5 additional civilian contractors.
- As for the terrain, the environment is frequently impassable with few paths and muddy dirt-roads. Vehicles can hardly make it out of the towns.

What are the objectives?

- To locate civilian populations around Pibor and Gumuruk, reassure them and gain their confidence.
- To help create a safe and secure environment that will facilitate freedom of movement and ultimately a free and informed choice if and when to return to population centers.
- To establish an environment in and around both towns that will facilitate the safe provision of assistance by the aid community.

How are patrols conducted?

- Mainly on foot and with vehicles where possible.
- In and around Pibor, patrols are conducted by the Indian and Nepalese contingents. In and around Gumuruk, they are conducted by the Indian contingent.
- Patrols take place almost daily, mostly on foot and at a speed of 3 to 5 km per hour due to the extremely poor and muddy conditions of the environment.
- Language assistants accompany patrols to facilitate interaction with civilians. Language assistants have proven of invaluable help.

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Pictures can be downloaded on Facebook, UNMISS page

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- Interacting with civilians facilitates the collection of information regarding the identification of corridors used by civilians to reach population centers, as well as other locations to be visited and where civilians may be found.
- Patrols, when longer, may also be a combination of patrols by vehicle (when and as far as possible) followed on foot. Longer patrols can cover up to 20km.

Which areas are covered by the patrols?

- There are two areas covered: (a) within Pibor and Gumuruk towns; (b) patrols beyond both towns.
- Patrols are going as far as 20 km out of the towns, like Chindura outside of Pibor.
- So far, long distance patrols have focused north along the Pibor-Likuangole axis, south and southwest of Pibor, as well as east of Gumuruk.

What are the main findings of the patrols?

- As of the first five weeks, patrols have engaged with over of 2,000 people and more than 10,000 people have been observed in and around Pibor and Gumuruk.
- Many civilians appear to be living around Pibor town and along the rivers, but there does not seem to be big concentrations of them.
- In general, civilians appear in good health, considering they are in need of food, medical support and shelter.
- Civilians, almost exclusively women and children, move in and out of both towns to receive food aid, but tend not to overnight and go back to the bush in the evening, probably due to the still fragile security situation.
- Few men were observed. Women indicated that they were looking after their remaining herds of cattle on higher ground and reportedly feel unsafe to move into Pibor town; however, during the third week, a group of 85 to 00 civilian men was observed.
- Some civilians are starting to rebuild huts in Pibor town.
- None of the civilians encountered to date have spoken about mass killings.

What will be done next?

- On 11 September, UNMISS started integrating within patrols civilian staff of other UNMISS sections and UN civilian agencies so they can assess the situation themselves.
- One of the objectives of enhanced patrolling, a routine operation, is to build momentum, continue to increase the area of coverage and spread across Jonglei

Do you talk with the South Sudanese authorities and local groups?

- All parties and armed actors on the ground have been made aware of and agreed to the patrols.
- The patrol campaign is supported by robust political advocacy at all levels of the government to promote a peaceful resolution in Jonglei which will include full accountability of all involved in violations of human rights and other grave abuses against civilian populations in Jonglei.