

From: Jake Sullivan [redacted] on behalf of Jake Sullivan
Sent: Sunday, May 29, 2011 6:27 PM
To: H
Subject: Re: Connecting

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So much for Princeton's cautious hopefulness. See latest NYT report:

Sudan Threatens to Occupy 2 More Disputed Regions
By JEFFREY GETTLEMAN and JOSH KRON
Published: May 29, 2011

JUBA, Sudan — The northern Sudanese Army is threatening to seize two more areas along the combustible north-south border, risking war just weeks before southern Sudan is due to split off as an independent country, Western and Sudanese officials said Sunday.

Tensions shot up last week when northern forces stormed into Abyei, a contested region that straddles the border and is claimed by both the northern and southern governments.

Now, according to a letter from the Sudanese military's high command, the northern army, in the next few days, plans to take over Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, two disputed areas with a long history of conflict that are still bristling with arms.

Analysts, local leaders and Western diplomats fear that if the northern army carries through on its threat to push out or forcibly disarm the thousands of fighters allied to the south in these two areas, it could set off a much bigger clash between the northern and southern armies, who have been building up their arsenals for years in anticipation of war.

Malik Agar, Blue Nile's governor, said Sunday night that northern forces had recently moved "dangerously close" to the bases of southern-allied fighters and that he didn't think the southern-allied forces would surrender.

"It's like putting a cat in a corner," Mr. Agar said. "They will fight."

Sudan's border is a dizzyingly complex mosaic of ethnic groups and political loyalties. It is also home to the bulk of the country's crude oil and some of the most fertile land in the country, making the question of how exactly to draw a line across Sudan one of the most explosive issues the nation confronts as it prepares to split in two.

Under peace agreements signed several years ago, joint forces were supposed to patrol some of these disputed areas. The two sides had agreed that Abyei would hold a referendum to decide if it were to join the north or south, a compromise that was essentially blotted out on May 21 when thousands of northern Sudanese soldiers marched into Abyei. Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile were supposed to conduct a less formal, vaguely defined "popular consultation" process that southerners say has not been completed.

Southern Sudan is just weeks away from attaining independence, a goal that has taken more than 50 years and millions of lives. The region, one of the poorest and least developed places on earth, where four out of five adults cannot read, defied expectations in January by holding an orderly, organized referendum on

independence, in which nearly 99 percent voted to split off. In the past week, southern leaders have absorbed the loss of Abyei, complaining bitterly about it but deciding not to respond with military force, saying that could jeopardize all that they had sacrificed for.

On Sunday, southern leaders indicated that they would not fight over Blue Nile or Southern Kordofan either.

“It is not our priority now to get involved in a war,” said Barnaba Marial Benjamin, the information minister for the government of southern Sudan. He also said high-level negotiations were about to begin in Khartoum, Sudan’s capital, over several of these border issues.

But what may be more dangerous this time is that there are many more southern-allied fighters stationed in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan than there were in Abyei — possibly tens of thousands, compared with a few hundred in Abyei who quickly retreated last weekend when faced with a clearly superior northern Sudanese force.