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Small arms ammunition documented at Bentiu mosque, May 2014

24 July 2014– This Tracing Desk report describes ammunition documented at the Kali-Ballee mosque in Bentiu, Unity state, in late May 2014, approximately one month after an alleged massacre of some 200 civilians at the mosque and in surrounding areas on 15 April 2014. Eyewitnesses and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan have attributed the killings to the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) and associated forces. This report describes ammunition documented by Conflict Armament Research at the mosque site, noting its type, country of manufacture, year of manufacture, and commonalities with ammunition previously observed by researchers in Sudan and South Sudan.

Ammunition catalogued at the mosque site consisted of 100 rounds of 7.62 x 39 mm cartridge cases (for AK-pattern assault rifles) and 85 rounds of 7.62 x 54R mm cartridge cases (for general-purpose machine gun, GPMG). Manufacture dates of the cartridges identified at the mosque site vary from 1973 to 2014. Manufacturer markings correspond with manufacturers in China, (then) Czechoslovakia, the Russian Federation, Sudan, and the (then) Soviet Union.

Specific findings:

- Of the thirty-four cartridges with markings indicating manufacture in the last five years (since 2009), twenty-nine had markings consistent with manufacture in China, and five had markings consistent with manufacture in Sudan (including all those with post-2012 manufacture markings).
- Slightly more than half of the 7.62 x 39 mm casings documented at the Bentiu mosque massacre site matched types also observed in AK-pattern assault rifles held by the SPLA in Rubkona. The SPLA stated that they captured these rifles from SPLM-IO forces during the retaking of Bentiu town around 9 May.
- Two of the mosque-site cartridge cases, with features suggesting Sudanese manufacture, were manufactured in 2014.¹ Irrespective of its origins or supply vector, this 2014 ammunition is indicative of extremely recent supply to its user, and with a comparatively direct supply chain. If this ammunition’s markings accurately reflect its date of manufacture, it cannot have been supplied to its user earlier than January 2014, after the defection of SPLM-IO forces from the SPLA in mid-December 2013. This makes it unlikely that the ammunition originated in SPLA stocks taken by defecting SPLM-IO forces, and likely that it was obtained by its user (SPLM-IO or another armed group) from an external source since the start of the current conflict.

¹ One of the two still requires confirmation of its place of manufacture due to some variation in marking practices.

- Forty-four 7.62 x 39 mm cartridges (44% of the 7.62 x 39 mm sample) and fifty-two 7.62 x 54R mm cartridges (more than 60% of the 7.62x54R mm sample) had manufacturer codes matching ammunition previously documented by Small Arms Survey and UN researchers with Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) or militias supplied with ammunition by SAF. Four 7.62 x 39 mm cartridges and twenty-five 7.62 x 54R mm cartridges had both manufacturer and date-of-manufacture codes matching such previously documented ammunition.² One cartridge case in the sample was of a type previously documented in SPLA stocks.³
- Two of the 7.62 x 39 mm cartridges were unmarked but of a design and construction consistent with those known to be manufactured by Homicho Ammunition Engineering Industry in Ethiopia. (There is no suggestion that these have been supplied directly by Ethiopia, and researchers have identified similar Ethiopian-manufactured rounds in the stocks of other armed actors in the region, including ammunition in the possession of SPLM-North captured from the Sudan Armed Forces; and in the stocks of other governments in the region).

Drawing conclusions about origins and supply routes of ammunition in the possession of forces in the current conflict is difficult because of the constant circulation of ammunition between opposing and allied forces in South Sudan and Sudan, and because many forces have previously shared the same ammunition providers. The diversity of the Bentiu sample is reflective of the increasing complexity of patterns of arming in Greater Upper Nile. Whatever their routes into the hands of the perpetrators of the massacre, evidence from the mosque site suggests that direct contributions of new ammunition from outside parties to non-state actors is ongoing in 2014.

This paper's analysis comes shortly after media reports of the delivery of large volumes of Chinese-made military equipment, including small calibre ammunition destined for South Sudanese armed forces. The Small Arms Survey has reviewed the documentation of these transfers (including bills of lading, packing lists, and Norinco invoices related to the equipment loaded in Dailan and Zhanjiang ports). The consignments of ammunition that were off-loaded in transit at the Mombasa port in mid-June, for subsequent overland transport to Juba, included, among other items, 23,145,000 rounds of 7.62 x 39 mm (Type 56) ammunition and 2,000,000 rounds of 7.62 x 54R mm (Type 53) ammunition.⁴ These formed part of government-to-government contracts concluded between Beijing and Juba in 2011 and 2013. It is the first major transfer of arms and ammunition to the Juba government publicly documented in the post-secession period, though other transfers may have taken place.

² For relevant previous reports, see the list on page 5.

³ This may be due to the fact that SPLA stocks have been much less well documented publicly than SAF and SAF-backed armed group stocks.

⁴ Type 56 and Type 53 refer both to the ammunition and the Chinese-manufactured small arms chambered for this ammunition (the 'Type 56' series of AK-pattern assault rifles, and the 'Type 53' general purpose machine gun).

Ammunition samples from Bentiu mosque



7.62 x 39 mm unmarked cartridge. © Conflict Armament Research



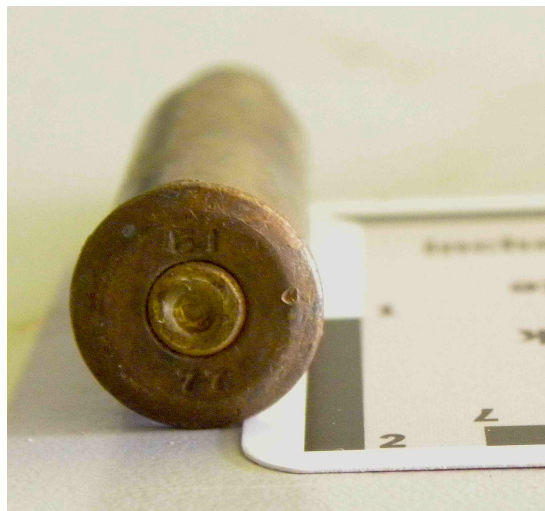
7.62 x 39 mm cartridge case, headstamp 1_14_39. © Conflict Armament Research



7.62 x 39 mm cartridge case – headstamp 1_39_14. © Conflict Armament Research



7.62 x 54R mm cartridge case – headstamp 945_10. © Conflict Armament Research



7.62 x 54R mm cartridge case – headstamp 61_77. © Conflict Armament Research



7.62 x 54R mm cartridge case – headstamp code 9611_78. © Conflict Armament Research



Unmarked 7.62 x 54R mm cartridge cases. © Conflict Armament Research

Relevant previous reports:

Gramizzi, Claudio and Jerome Tubiana. 2012. *Forgotten Darfur: Old Tactics and New Players*. HSBA Working Paper 28. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. July 2012.

<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP-28-Forgotten-Darfur.pdf>

--. 2013. *New War, Old Enemies: Conflict Dynamics in South Kordofan*. HSBA Working Paper 29. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. March.

<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP29-S.Kordofan.pdf>

Leff, Jonah and Emile LeBrun. 2014. *Following the Thread: Arms and Ammunition Tracing in Sudan and South Sudan*. HSBA Working Paper 32. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. May.

<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP32-Arms-Tracing.pdf>

Small Arms Survey. 2011. *Materiel Seized from Peter Gadet's Forces*. HSBA Arms and Ammunition Tracing Desk Report. October.

<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/arms-ammunition-tracing-desk/HSBA-Tracing-Desk-Gadet.pdf>

--. 2012. *Weapons Seized from the Forces of George Athor and John Duit*. HSBA Arms and Ammunition Tracing Desk Report. December.

http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/arms-ammunition-tracing-desk/Weapons_seized_from_George_Athor_and_John_Duit.pdf

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<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/arms-ammunition-tracing-desk/HSBA-Tracing-Desk-SSLA-July-2013.pdf>

--. 2013. *Weapons Captured from David Yau Yau's Militia, Jonglei, July 2013*. HSBA Arms and Ammunition Tracing Desk Report. August.
<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/arms-ammunition-tracing-desk/HSBA-Tracing-Desk-Yau-Yau-July-2013.pdf>

-- and Conflict Armament Research. 2011. *A Guide to Sudanese Ammunition 1954-Present*. November.
<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/arms-ammunition-tracing-desk/HSBA-Sudanese-ammunition.pdf>

Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan

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