

Beat: Travel

At least 78 dead, 50 injured in South Sudan cattle raids

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USPA News - At least 78 people are believed to have been killed over the weekend in a series of violent cattle raids in a remote region of South Sudan, local officials said on Monday as the United Nations (UN) continued medical evacuations and deployed a team of investigators. The attacks began early Sunday morning when armed groups led by rebel leader David Yau Yau attacked a number of villages in Jonglei state.

Among the sites attacked was Paliu cattle camp in Ajong Payam, Maar cattle camp in Pakeer Payam and other cattle camps in Twic East County. Information and Broadcasting Minister Michael Makuei said at least 44 civilians were killed and more than 50 others were injured, but local member of parliament Deng Dau Malek later told the BBC that the death toll had reached 78 by late Monday. Other reports said an unknown number of people were still unaccounted for. Medical staff were flown to the region by the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and evacuated 31 seriously wounded civilians by Sunday night, and another helicopter flew to the scene on Monday morning to continue the medical evacuations. Another aircraft transported a team of investigators to investigate the attack, ascertain the identity of the attackers and to determine the exact number of casualties. "The Mission will also work closely with the South Sudanese authorities to have the perpetrators held to account, and work with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and South Sudan's National Police Service (SSNPS) to find ways of enhancing arrangements by SPLA, SSNPS and UNMISS to provide effective protection to vulnerable communities," UNMISS said in a statement. Cattle raids are a persistent problem in South Sudan, with a single cow worth hundreds of dollars depending on its coloring. More than 200 and as many as 800 people were killed in March 2012 when around 3,000 members of the Murle tribe attacked cattle camps and villages of the Lou Nuer ethnic group in the Dengjok Payam district of Akobo County, which is located in Jonglei state near the Ethiopian border. Before that, in August 2011, at least 600 people were killed and more than 750 others were injured when tribal clashes erupted in Jonglei. The clashes originated between the Murle and Lou Nuer communities following large-scale cattle raids by members of the two groups, leading to the theft of between 26,000 and 30,000 cattle. South Sudan became the world's newest country when it broke away from Sudan on July 9, 2011, as a culmination of a six-year peace process which began in January 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

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