

MAAPSS Update

9 February 2021

The Announcement of Deputy Governors in South Sudan

Introduction

After months of waiting, Salva Kiir appointed six deputy governors on 30 December 2020, followed by a second decree of three deputy governors on 23 January and the last on 29 January 2021. This comes six months after the parties to the revitalized peace agreement determined in August 2020 that the SPLM, SPLM-IO and OPP would nominate deputy governors for three states each, while the SSOA would nominate one. However, in the end the SSOA made no selection and the position in Upper Nile was filled with an SPLM appointee. Following the Small Arms Survey's report on the [announcement of the state governors](#) in July 2020, this new analysis provides background on the newly appointed deputy governors..

SPLM-In Government appointments

The SPLM-IG appointed four deputy governors representing party cadres from relevant state patronage networks or influential local elites. Both Antipas Nyok Kucha (Jonglei) and Dr. Kennedy Ganiko (Western Equatoria) are young and malleable, while Angelo Taban Baijo (Western Bahr el Ghazal) is a crafted and skilled politician. The fourth, James Tor Monybun (Upper Nile), is a former local SPLM party leader. The role of the new deputies will be the state-level reorganization of the SPLM party down to payam and boma levels in preparation for possible elections in 2023. However, in both Western Bahr el Ghazal and Western Equatoria, the appointments have infuriated segments of the general population as they break from the unwritten 'code of honor' of equal ethnic

representation and are seen as a blatant political power-grab by the SPLM-IG.

Western Bahr el Ghazal

The appointment of the [Angelo Taban Baijo](#), a Balanda Fertit, shocked non-Balanda people in Wau as a violation of the common rule of promoting equal ethnic representation by the governing party. In June 2020, SPLM-IO nominated [Sarah Cleto](#), also a Balanda Fertit as governor, meaning that the governor and deputy both hail from Wau county and Balanda families. The other Fertit groups of Raja, the Luwo of Jur River state and the Dinka near the Northern Bahr el Ghazal border, feel marginalized and betrayed by the decision.

Angelo Taban is a former governor of Wau state and a political ally of SPLM-IG strongman [Rizik Zacharia Hassan](#). His political career began as Commissioner of Wau in 2010, serving in the state cabinet of Rizik. In Taban, Salva Kiir has appointed a crafted party cadre to reorganize the political movement in WBeG, confident that the military apparatus in the state is under control; [SSPDF Division 5](#) is firmly under the authority of [Abraham Gum Makuac](#), a Dinka Rek military commander from Gogrial and a loyal Salva Kiir supporter.

Angelo Taban's main role for the SPLM-IG will be twofold. Apart from reorganizing the political movement and overseeing the appointment of SPLM-IG county commissioners to Wau and Jur River, his core task will be to control land politics – the main driver of the economy in Wau.

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Jonglei

The SPLM-IG nominated [Antipas Nyok Kucha](#), a Dinka Bor politician from Makuach payam of Bor county. His appointment was the result of solid support from Dinka Bor elites, led by Senior Presidential Advisor and former Minister of Defense [Kuol Manyang](#) and Minister of Information [Michael Makuei Lueth](#). As such, Antipas Nyok's strong political backing stands in stark contrast to the young and inexperienced Jonglei Governor [Denay Jock Chagor](#). This will be an intriguing dynamic to watch in 2021.

After a long and gruelling nominating process to fill the governor's seat in Jonglei, the SSOA's settled on the politically weak Denay Jock Chagor. Chagor, a Lou Nuer from Dengjok payam in Akobo East, has no political constituency in Jonglei, and is generally thought of as a government sell-out among the Lou Nuer. As [predicted earlier](#), Chagor will have to navigate a powerful Bor Dinka lobby entrenched at the highest levels of the South Sudan Peoples Defense Forces (SSPDF) while having no military forces of his own.

Since 2005, Antipas Nyok has served the SPLM in various capacities, first as the SPLM State Secretary of Jonglei state, followed by six years as SPLM Deputy Secretary for Political Affairs, Mobilisation and Moral Orientation until 2014. His appointment as deputy governor is a clear attempt by the Dinka Bor and party elites to strengthen the SPLM in the state and keep a watchful eye on the young and unpredictable Denay Jock Chagor.

Western Equatoria

Salva Kiir appointed the relatively unknown [Dr. Kennedy Ganiko](#) to be the deputy

governor to SPLA-IO military strongman [Alfred Futiyo Karaba](#). This selection mirrors the situation in Western Bahr el Ghazal – two people of the same ethnic group appointed the state's top positions. Following the appointment of Futiyo, a Yambio county native, as governor (Futiyo's father is Balanda from Western Bahr el Ghazal, his mother a Zande from Nadiangere), people expected a deputy from the western, non-Zande side of the state. [Africano Mande](#), the former governor of Maridi state, was thought to be the frontrunner, and he travelled to Yambio for background talks with [Jemma Nunu Kumba](#). But he settled for the position of Deputy Commissioner General of the National Revenue Authority in September 2020.

Kennedy Ganiko, a medical doctor, entered politics in 2015 with an unsuccessful run for the chairmanship of the National Youth Union against [Albino Bol Dhieu](#), the current Minister of Youth and Sports. Jemma Nunu Kumba, the current Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Acting Secretary General of SPLM, supported Ganiko at this early stage of his political career and took him to the SPLM National Secretariat following his loss at the polls. He became SPLM Deputy Chair for Political Affairs and Mobilization and later followed Kumba to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in March 2020.

Salva Kiir chose Ganiko following consultations with Avungara Azande elites from Tombura county including Kumba, the leader of the Avungara-clique, and [Patrick Raphael Zamoi](#), a former governor of the state. They argued to Kiir that the sitting governor, Futiyo, is foremost a Balanda (by paternal lineage), and as such, the deputy position should go to a Zande. Their insistence on Ganiko was likely also driven by a perceived threat posed by the popular and former governor of the state [Bangasi Joseph Bakosoro](#); while also a Zande, Bakosoro is not from the elite Avungara clan.

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Bakosoro is currently the SSOA-nominated Minister of Public Services. For the first time since 2015, Bakosoro returned to Yambio in December 2020 – just prior to Ganiko's appointment as deputy governor – and was warmly greeted by enthusiastic supporters. His visit included a consultation with Futiyo, an ally who Bakosoro tapped years earlier to organise the Arrow Boys militia. Kumba and Zamoi appear to envy Bakosoro's popularity and may fear Futiyo is acting to pave the way for Bakosoro's political return to Western Equatoria. Of further note, and in a move to bolster Avungara Azande influence, Kumba and Zamoi encouraged fellow Avungara clan member [James Nando Mark](#) – a former SPLA-IO Division commander and subordinate to Governor Futiyo – to defect to the government in March 2020.

With the help Nando and his newly recruited militia, and the chance for Avungara elites to nominate the commissioners of Tombura and Ezo counties, the Avungara will carve out a fiefdom in Western Equatoria. There is a high chance that conflict in the region could become internationalized as Nando has already carried out mercenary attacks on towns in the Central African Republic.

Upper Nile

The South Sudan Opposition Alliance was initially tapped to nominate Upper Nile's deputy governor, but on 29 January 2021 the SPLM-IG made a unilateral decision to go with its own pick, James Tor Monybuny. The SPLM-IG's decision was met with little objection by the SSOA, highlighting the opposition alliance party's weakness within the R-ARCSS framework.

[James Tor Monybuny](#)'s appointment brings a familiar face back to Upper Nile.

Previously serving as the governor of Central Upper Nile state in 2017–19, Monybuny is a former Presbyterian pastor

from the Ngok Lual Yak subsection of the Padang Dinka. He owes his loyalties to his kinsman from Baliet County, [Chol Thon Balok](#), the controversial former acting-governor of Eastern Nile responsible for the wholesale [displacement of the Shilluk](#) from the east bank of the White Nile, and now the deputy chief of defence forces for the SSPDF. Monybuny became governor of Central Upper Nile after Kiir's 32-states declaration, as a way to take the heat off Chol Thon: he continued, however, with Chol Thon's agenda, using administrative power to consecrate the Padang power grab in Upper Nile

SPLA – In Opposition Appointments

As seen with the selection of ministers and governors, Riek Machar decided to abandon the military organs of the movement, and appointed trusted politicians close to him and his family. While this further alienates his military commanders, it also solidifies his chances of revenue extraction from the positions that SPLA-IO is allowed to control.

Replicating the appointment of Sarah Cleto as governor of Western Bahr el Ghazal, Riek appointed Mary Nadio as deputy governor in Eastern Equatoria. While the international community has praised Riek's appointment of women leaders, there are noteworthy similarities in the two selections. Both Cleto and Nadio are close friends of Angelina Teny, they lack a strong political constituency, and are returning from exile. Elsewhere, in Lakes state, the appointment of Poth Madit is another elevation of a young and malleable politician, without the risk of defection. Tor Tungwar was appointed deputy governor of Unity state.

Eastern Equatoria

Riek Machar – or, some say, [Angelina Teny](#) – nominated [Mary Nadio Alphonse](#), a Didinga politician from Budi county. As we

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had seen with the selection of the governors, SPLA-IO appointed a female as well, to keep the 35% quota enshrined in the constitution.

Mary Nadio served as a policewoman before she joined the SPLM in the early 90s. She rose in prominence and by the time of the Chukudum Convention in 1994 she established herself in the party leadership. However, after fighting resumed she left to the UK and lived in exile until late 2020. She befriended Angelina Teny, wife of Riek Machar, and she was among the first Eastern Equatorians to join the IO. She also financially supported the movement.

Reportedly, Riek Machar consulted with several high-ranking IO politicians from Eastern Equatoria in effort to convince one of them to accept the deputy position, but understandably they had no appetite to serve under the influential and hardnosed governor [Louis Lobong Lojore](#). One of them, [Oyet Nathaniel](#), was the top choice for Machar. Oyet is an Acholi from Torit and served as the opposition governor of Imatong state. Since the signing of the R-ARCSS he is co-chair of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) in Juba and reportedly has eyes for a high position in the reconstituted national assembly, and to become a leading IO lawmaker.

Mary Nadio finds herself in an uneasy situation. She will lack necessary resources and have to deal with a aggressive and very experienced governor. The SPLA-IO forces of Eastern Equatoria, once a bastion of the rebellion, are in disarray and show signs of cracks amid internal tensions. Division commanders are competing with each other for scarce resources in training sites and accuse one another of betrayal. Probably both the SPLM and [Thomas Cirillo](#) will attempt to lure them to their cause one by one. Meanwhile, both the national army and national security services are in the hands

of Eastern Equatorians in the government – the SSPDF Chief of Staff is ['JJ' Okot](#) and the Minister for National Security is [Obuto Mamur Mete](#) — and they control their home state strictly. Mary Nadio will have a ceremonial role among these powerful figures.

Lakes

[Ustaz Poth Madit Dut](#) is in the weakest position for any incoming deputy governor. SPLA-IO lacks any organized force or political constituency in Lakes, especially after the passing of [Telar Ring](#) in December 2020. Poth Madit was born in Amongping, Rumbek Centre county to a Dinka Agaar family in 1985. He graduated from the Catholic University of Juba and later worked as a teacher, with NGOs, and later as the deputy coordinator at the Lakes State Coordination Office in Juba until 2014, when he opportunistically joined SPLA-IO.

Lakes state is in the firm hands of governor [Makur Kulang](#), an ally of [Rin Tueny Mabor](#), the influential Director of Military Intelligence, with a direct line to the president. Makur Kulang is also leaning on the influence of [Paul Mayom Akec](#), Minister for Interior. Ustaz Poth has no place in this center of power, so his role in Lakes will be utterly ceremonial.

Unity

The SPLA-IO selection in Unity is of more consequence than its other selections; the appointment of [Tor Tungwar](#) as deputy governor cements [Nguen Monytil](#)'s control of Unity state. Though Tungwar is an SPLA-IO appointment, the Tungwar family, like the Monytils, straddle the government-opposition divide. Elite politics in Unity state has long been focused on a few central families; their particular political affiliation at a given moment of time is rather less of an issue.

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For example, the Tungwars are Leek Nuer from the Cieng Chol section, Rubkona county. Tor Tungwar's father, Tungwar Kueingong Ret, was an important traditional chief, and remained the Leek Nuer Paramount Chief until August 2020. His sons and daughters occupy all the elite ranks of Unity state: some of his brothers work for NGOs in Bentiu, while one of his brothers, [Lam Tungwar](#), is a close ally of Nguen Monyтуil and has taken many positions in the state administration. His sister is even closer to Nguen Monyтуil—she is married to him. Thus, though Tor Tungwar has been the SPLA-IO Military Governor of Unity state since 2015, his appointment is a consolidation of the centrality of the Tungwar and Monyтуil families at the heart of Unity state politics.

The ground-level SPLA-IO will be less enthusiastic about Tungwar's appointment: he was widely blamed for the defeat of the SPLA-IO in Unity in 2015–18 and is distrusted by the Gojam militias in the south of the state. As such, Tungwar's appointment will be seen as more evidence that Riek Machar has abandoned the concerns of SPLA-IO in favour of an accommodation with Salva Kiir. Tungwar is a Machar loyalist—who joined SPLM-Nasir during the second civil war—and his appointment must also be understood as the tightening of the circle around the beleaguered vice-president to a group of family members and friends who are eager to work with Kiir's regime.

Other Political Parties appointments

According to the agreement, the [Other Political Parties](#) (OPP) were granted the opportunity to nominate deputy governors for Central Equatoria, Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal. However, various factions of the fragile OPP alliance – consisting of several briefcase political parties with minimal support from constituencies in the country – could not initially agree on the nominating process. One faction, South

Sudan's National Alliance of Political Parties, led by [Kornelio Kon Ngu](#), agreed on a list of nominees with several other members of the OPP alliance. But OPP Minister for Humanitarian Affairs [Peter Mayen Wën Majongdit](#) submitted his own separate list to the President. The two factions of OPP finally came to a compromise agreement towards the end of January. The appointee in Warrap, Ayen Mayor is from Peter Mayen's party, while the other two candidates represent other parties from the alliance.

Northern Bahr el Ghazal

The appointment of [Tong Lual Ayat](#) to deputy governor did not come as a surprise as virtually he is the only viable politician of OPP in the state. Holder of a PhD in business, he was a local government official during [Paul Malong's](#) tenure. He fell out with Malong, and founded the United Democratic Party in 2009, and later joined the OPP.

Tong Lual Ayat's appointment fits into the recent pattern of Northern Bahr el Ghazal politics: the elevation of (former) opposition politicians who are all linked by their enmity to Paul Malong. Second Vice President [Hussein Abdel Bagi Akol Agany](#), the leader of the SSOA-member South Sudan Patriotic Front got his appointment due to his enmity to Paul Malong and his cordial relationship with Sudanese military elites. Governor [Tong Aken Ngor's](#) loyalties lie with the most important SSPDF military commander from the state, [Dau Aturjong](#), currently the commander of SSPDF Division 1 in Renk. Their enmity to Malong connects the two strongmen of Northern Bahr el Ghazal. Tong Aken followed Aturjong to the SPLA-IO [RM] rebellion in 2014, until the removal of Malong, when they all returned to SPLM-IG. Tong Aken lobbied for the appointment of Tong Lual Ayat as they represent different sections of the Malual Dinka (the governor is from Aweil Central, his deputy is from Aweil

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West). The new deputy governor has a decent chance to establish a popular political constituency in Aweil West in the years to come.

Warrap

[Ayen Mayor Makuei](#) is the only governor or deputy governor who was not born in the state they are representing. She is a Dinka Atout politician from Lakes state, but married to Joseph Lual Acuil, the Dinka Rek former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs (2011-2013). He remained an influential politician in Juba, as he led the Media Authority in the early years of the civil war. Most observers assume that Ayen Mayor will not be overtly critical of the government in the home state of the president. She is a close associate of OPP minister Peter Mayen, as both of them belong to the People's Liberal Party.

[Bona Panek](#), the governor of Warrap, is an experienced and well-connected politician with a background and alliances in military intelligence. As an inexperienced politician who only has connections to Warrap through her husband, Ayan Mayor starts from an incredibly weak position.

Central Equatoria

[Sarah Neni Ridento](#) is the deputy chairman of the National United Democratic Front (NUDF), and a member of the OPP coalition. The NUDF was a signatory of the ARCSS agreement and delegated four members, including Sarah Ridento, to the Transitional National Legislative Assembly in 2016. As a Member of Parliament, she built up political connections with both opposition and government actors. As a sign of her influence, she was appointed to be the finance secretary of the powerful [National Pre-Transitional Council](#) by [Tut Kew Gatluak](#). The OPP delegate in the council was Peter Mayen.

Acronyms and Abbreviations:

ARCSS Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan

NCAC National Constitutional Amendment Committee

NUDF National United Democratic Front

OPP Other Opposition Parties Alliance

SPLA Sudanese People's Liberation Army

SPLA-IO Sudanese People's Liberation Army - in Opposition

SPLM Sudanese People's Liberation Movement

SPLM-IG Sudanese People's Liberation Army – in Government

SPLM/A-IO [RM] Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army – in Opposition [Riek Machar]

SSPDF South Sudan People's Defense Force

SSOA South Sudan Opposition Alliance

WBeG Western Bahr el Ghazal

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Information provided in this MAAPSS Update is sourced from field research conducted by Small Arms Survey and HSBA experts, including interviews with officials from the SPLM, SSPDF, SPLA-IO, local and state leaders, and other prominent officials both in and outside of South Sudan. Where appropriate, in-text links are provided to access secondary source material and actors' profiles on the MAAPSS website.