

Presidential Press Briefing
Response to the False Allegations by Peter Biar Ajak

The Office of the President
Juba, South Sudan

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Press Secretary

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all for coming here today.

On behalf of the President of the Republic of South Sudan, I would like to begin by sending my heartfelt sympathies to the parents of the three innocent children murdered in cold blood in Rock City this past weekend. The law enforcement authorities are working tirelessly to ensure justice is served. Let me add that the Office of the President wholly supports this due process.

This press briefing provides an opportunity to offer a little more context and answer your questions on the false allegations that Peter Biar Ajak made recently, which have been the subject of intense discussions on several media platforms and beyond.

Peter made three allegations as motivating his forced return to the United States, saying that:

1. His life was threatened by the “President of South Sudan, who ordered the National Security Service to either kill or abduct him;”
2. He was wanted for exposing corruption and promoting democracy, citing activities he led under the defunct South Sudan Young Leaders Forum (SSYLF); and
3. Finally, his arrest was due to disturbing peace and for speaking to foreign media.

We will go through Peter’s background and political activities shedding light on what truly led to his arrest and pardon.

To jog your memory, Peter was incarcerated in July 2018, sentenced to 2 years in prison in 2019, and pardoned in January 2020. He later joined his family in Nairobi, Kenya.

He recently returned to the United States, and upon arrival, announced on various media outlets the above allegations. He then declared his intention to challenge the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan by calling for immediate national elections in 2021, increase in international protection force, and targeted sanctions against President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Gen. Akol Koor Kuc of the NSS.

As you all know, South Sudan is founded on the principles of equality, prosperity and justice for all. Upon gaining independence in 2011, the country has since striven to uphold the rule of law, and, among others, respect the bills of rights, including freedom of expression and assembly, which are enshrined in the constitution. However, due to various internal conflicts, starting in 2013

through the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018, the Government has had difficulty in performing a delicate act of defending the sovereignty and rights of the citizens. While that has been a challenge, the country has performed its best, preserving its territorial integrity and protecting its people and their inalienable rights during the toughest of times.

To this end, Peter has been accorded space per his constitutional right to organize events and speak freely against the Government policy and decisions. However, when an individual is suspected to have violated the established laws of the land, as is the case globally, the authorities are duty bound to investigate and follow the due procedures to get to the bottom of such suspicion. In 2018, South Sudanese authorities had such suspicion against Peter, consequently apprehending him. Investigations that followed, indeed, implicated Peter.

Like many of our citizens who sought refuge abroad in search of better opportunities, Peter obtained academic credentials from La Salle and Harvard universities, respectively. After obtaining his master's from Harvard in 2010, he immediately moved to South Sudan as a local staff of the World Bank. After leaving the World Bank, he became a consultant for the National Security Service (NSS) under Gen. Oyay Deng Ajak, a decorated SPLA officer and Peter's brother-in-law. In his capacity as a Coordinator in Gen. Oyay's office, Peter contributed in drafting the South Sudan's NSS Policy, which set the basis for the current National Security Law and Regulations. He then enrolled in a graduate program at King's College, United Kingdom. His doctoral thesis, which supposedly investigates the "*SPLM/A and the State formation in South Sudan*" remains an unfinished business today.

Let us also touch on his humanitarian consultancy work. Peter signed a "Contract for Independent Service" in early 2018 with a Berlin based organization agency (name withheld). His undertakings with this agency and media presentations raised further suspicion and in July 2018, a warrant was issued for his immediate arrest. The authorities confiscated Peter's electronic devices for forensic analysis. Materials extracted from his computer and corroborated using online data confirmed the suspicion that Peter was, indeed, engaged in intelligence gathering, spying on military, intelligence agencies, and active Government officials, as well as colluding with violent oppositions.

Peter has not often engaged in peaceful activities allowed under the constitution of South Sudan. His subversive activities, which are injurious to the peace process and the leaders of the country are notable. A dossier the Government has gathered points to Peter's collusion with foreign governments, international agencies, and violent groups to radicalize the youth to destabilize an-already troubled society. In addition, in a situational analysis he presented to the British Ambassador to South Sudan, Peter sought international support to isolate and punish South Sudanese leaders and the population by asking donors to withdraw humanitarian assistance.

Further, Peter participated in a violent protest on October 7, 2018 while in NSS custody, leading to his final conviction and sentencing to a 2-year imprisonment.

Going forward, the formation of the RTGoNU has given the state a breathing space, enabling it to embark on critical reforms, and national healing. In the spirit of peace, prisoners of war, political detainees, and those with other forgivable offenses, including Peter, were recently pardoned. Thus,

the state has no interest in pursuing, monitoring or harming him. His only problem is fear itself and such paranoia is the genesis of his return to the US, the current media blitz, and a call for sanctions and an increase in internationally sponsored protection forces in South Sudan.

Let's now take a look at why Peter really fled to the United States.

A careful scrutiny of the above allegations leads to a conclusion that Peter made up this story. Here is why:

First, upon his arrest and subsequent conviction, Peter spent 18 months in prison and was pardoned by the President and later left as a free man. The state has no further interest in pursuing him.

Second, the President is vocal against corruption. He is not threatened by those who support his own cause. Moreover, Peter's moral convictions are highly questionable. His financial records from the Bank of South Sudan (BSS) are indicative of a manipulative and corrupt young man. Peter, for instance, sourced from the BSS extremely scarce US dollars and GBPs in hundreds of thousand at preferential exchange rates by submitting requests to governors between 2013 and 2017.

Third, Peter was not arrested for speaking to the media. Speaking to foreign media or any media is not a crime in South Sudan, as freedom of speech is observed.

Understandably, Peter seems to have other reasons for fleeing to the United States for the second time. Primarily, Peter was associated with Late Kerbino Wol Agok who declared a rebellion against the Government in June 2020. He probably fears the state authorities would monitor or investigate him for a potential involvement in the just foiled insurgency.

Secondly, Peter lost his residency status following a long absence from the US. And for him to secure a return, he has to make up stories to gain reentry. Our investigation reveals that Peter has had residency problems in the US in the past. For example, in 2010, upon return to the US, Peter's Sudanese passport and US Green Card were confiscated by the US Department of Homeland Security for having overstayed outside the country. He was then ordered to appear before competent authorities in March 2011.

Therefore, it is only intuitive that Peter would sensationalize his security situation in South Sudan in order to regain residency in the United States.

Finally, Peter alleged that the hit squad in a tinted vehicle with a South Sudanese number visited his Nairobi apartment, sending him hiding. This allegation does not stand intelligence tradition. No government with this kind of intention would be this bold and daring to pursue a dissident in a foreign country using means that best implicates it.

In conclusion, South Sudan has embarked on implementing the peace agreement and looks forward to a promising transition and path to democracy. The Government plans national elections in 2023. In the meantime, the Government is joining hands with citizens, and development partners to move the country out of the attendant situation. In summary, the

Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity is committed to peace, good governance, the rule of law, and democracy, notwithstanding many yet conquerable hiccups along the way.

While looking forward to answering your questions, I thank you for listening attentively.

May God bless you and May God bless our Republic