

Briefing on the future of AMISOM and the upcoming elections in Somalia

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South Sudan's military said on Monday it will retaliate against the attacks by the militia group, the National Salvation Front (NAS) led by renegade general Thomas Cirilo which previously opted out of the 2018 revitalized peace deal.

Lul Ruai Koang, military spokesperson warned that they are ready to retaliate against NAS in case of continued attacks on their positions and on civilians.

"South Sudan People's Defense Force (SSPDF) reaffirms commitment to the Rome declaration, but reserves the right to respond with deadly force in self-defense and that of civilians and their properties," Koang said in a statement issued in Juba.

NAS refused to sign the revitalized peace deal to end the more than five years of conflict, since the outbreak in December 2013, as it called for renegotiation of the peace pact to include a federal system of governance.

This came following last week's deadly ambush by the rebel group on the convoy of James Wani Igga, second vice president, which left six of his bodyguards killed.

NAS, a rebel group fighting against the government in Central and Western Equatoria State recently claimed responsibility for the attack that took place at Lobonok, which is the home area of the second VP located on the outskirts of the capital.

Koang also blamed NAS for the Aug. 7 attack on a local gold

mine, which left nine civilians killed.

He called on the ceasefire monitors to investigate violations.

The government on Jan. 13 inked a peace deal dubbed the "Rome Declaration" in Rome, with the South Sudan Opposition Movement Alliance (SSOMA), a coalition of opposition groups that did not sign the 2018 peace agreement.

NAS is part of SSOMA but its persistent attacks on government troops have meant violation of the Cessation of Hostilities under the Rome Declaration.

The revitalized peace deal was inked in Ethiopia in September 2018 between the government and the main opposition, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-In-Opposition led by now First Vice President Riek Machar.

Under the ten-point statement dubbed the Rome declaration, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to cease hostilities and continue to dialogue.