



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit

Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Initial probe indicates UNMISS helicopter was shot down

For the past two weeks, UNMISS has been conducting preliminary investigations into the circumstances surrounding the crash of a United Nations Mi-8 helicopter Bentiu, the capital of South Sudan's Unity State, on 26 August, which killed three Russian crewmen and injured a fourth. In addition to the Mission's own probe, which began in the immediate aftermath of the crash, a technical investigation has also commenced with the participation of United Nations, South Sudanese and Russian experts.

At this stage, the following facts have been established from these preliminary investigations:

- Experts who concluded the first stage of the investigation yesterday have uncovered evidence indicating that the aircraft was shot down;
- UNMISS has confirmed that, during a phone call with a Mission's staff member in Bentiu on 17 August, Peter Gadet, the commander of opposition forces in Unity State, alleged that UNMISS aircraft were being used to transport Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) troops and threatened to shoot down the Mission's aircraft;
- The UNMISS staff member refuted the accusations and, to ensure the safety of its aircraft, UNMISS immediately started sharing information on all its flights into Bentiu with the opposition forces as well as the SPLA.

As the above facts are based on the findings of a preliminary probe, it is premature at this stage to conclusively apportion blame for the shooting down of the helicopter. A more in-depth technical investigation which is being conducted in compliance with international air safety standards, and an independent Board of Inquiry being established by the United Nations to look into the incident, should provide additional information which will make it possible to conclusively determine the source of the ground fire which brought down the helicopter.

UNMISS condemns this unprovoked and deadly attack on its personnel and aircraft in the strongest possible terms. As the Security Council emphasized, those responsible for the attack must be held accountable and all necessary measures to avoid such attacks in the future must be taken.

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