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AFRICA/SOUTH SUDAN - The truce has been violated: fighting in Malakal has resumed

Juba (Agenzia Fides) - The South Sudanese rebels loyal to former Vice President Riek Machar announced today, February 18, of having conquered Malakal, capital of Upper Nile State, after government troops ousted President Salva Kiir. The authorities in Juba have denied the conquest of the city but have confirmed the resumption of fighting in the area, in what appears to be the most serious violation of the ceasefire agreed on January 23 between the two rival factions of the SPLM (Liberation Movement of Sudanese People). Malakal is a strategic center because it is located near major oil facilities. The situation remains uncertain.
The conflict which broke out on December 15 threatens to plunge the young State (South Sudan has been independent since July 2011) in the spiral of tribal clashes, because each political actor tends to appeal to the men of their tribe. According to the SudannCatholic Radio Network, some lawmakers have said that about 70 percent of the military of SPLA (the armed wing of the SPLM, which has become the national army) are now in the ranks of Machar. To compensate for this heavy defection President Kiir, as he himself admitted in a recent public intervention, recoursed to his personal army, recruited among the Dinka.
In addition Ugandan troops have intervened alongside those of Kiir, having also recoursed to fighter planes to hit rebel positions. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 18/02/2014)

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