

# Undercover Activities

Inside the National Security Service's Profitable Playbook

December 2022



THE SENTRY

## SUMMARY

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In a country plagued by horrific violence and rampant corruption, South Sudan's National Security Service (NSS) stands out as particularly ruthless, secretive, and well-funded. Fear of the NSS is pervasive in South Sudan, and for good reason. Its personnel have been involved in widespread human rights abuses, including kidnapping, torture, and illegal detention, and the organization operates without regard for basic human rights or the personal rights of civilians laid out in the South Sudanese constitution.

The Sentry found that, to cement its control and power in South Sudan, the NSS has employed a two-pronged strategy of state capture and repression. Corporate records reviewed by The Sentry reveal a vast network of companies with NSS shareholders, ranging from media and publishing to natural resources and logistics. The oil, finance, and media sectors particularly suffer from NSS involvement both in terms of economic capture and repression. NSS personnel have occupied key posts in state institutions, and the NSS itself has had a role in approving private company operations in the lucrative mining and security sectors. In this way, the NSS has been able to access off-budget finances and diverted revenues, all while sidestepping oversight and operational scrutiny.

**Challenging the NSS, or those that it seeks to protect, is both difficult and dangerous.**

In turn, the NSS has funded a campaign of surveillance, intimidation, and horrific violence against civilians, activists, and journalists. The NSS has interfered with civil society and the press, suppressed freedom of speech, and illegally detained and permanently silenced those who spoke out against the regime.

Operating under the supervision of President Salva Kiir, the NSS and its activities have gone far beyond their original remit, largely unchecked. In order to end the NSS campaign of egregious human rights abuses and economic capture, decisive action must be taken to curb its powers of detention and arrest, cut off the sources of its off-budget revenue, and ensure civilian oversight mechanisms are established, empowered, and effectively implemented.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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- **The United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Canada, and Australia** should urgently investigate and, if appropriate, impose coordinated and targeted network sanctions on the individuals and entities described in this report.
- **Financial institutions** should take measures to identify accounts held or beneficially owned by members of the NSS, other senior South Sudanese politically exposed persons (PEPs), and the 125 companies revealed by The Sentry to have NSS shareholders.
- **The government of South Sudan** should immediately close all NSS detention centers and ensure that the NSS releases all detainees who have not been charged with a crime or given a fair trial.

Read the report: <https://thesentry.org/reports/undercover-activities>



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