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Subject: Darfur rebels say they joined border state fight (Reuters)

KHARTOUM (Reuters) - The most powerful rebel group in Sudan's western Darfur region said it successfully attacked a government position alongside anti-Khartoum fighters in a key oil state bordering South Sudan.

The report by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) could not be independently confirmed, but it suggested closer coordination between various rebel groups left in the north after the south seceded on July 9.

A Sudanese army spokesman was not immediately available to comment on the report.

Senior JEM official Al-Tahir al-Feki said the group attacked a government garrison in Southern Kordofan on July 10 -- a day after the south seceded -- in a joint operation with the northern branch of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The operation ended on the night of July 17, he added.

"We managed to take a substantial number of RPGs and AK-47s," Feki said by phone. "We will conduct further operations combining JEM and the SPLA northern sector."

South Sudan formally seceded from Sudan on July 9 under a 2005 peace deal that ended decades of civil war with the north, but many fighters who sided with the SPLA against Khartoum remained on the northern side of the new border.

Fighting between southern-aligned fighters and government troops broke out on June 5 in Southern Kordofan -- which borders South Sudan, Darfur and the disputed Abyei region -- and has gradually escalated to include artillery and aircraft.

Aid workers say a humanitarian crisis may emerge in the region. A draft U.N. report said the Sudanese army's alleged actions there could amount to war crimes. Khartoum rejects the charges, saying it is fighting to ensure stability and help civilians.

A separate insurgency has raged in Darfur since 2003. While down from its peak, a surge in violence since December has forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes.

Analysts have said the south's secession could embolden rebel movements in the north.

Some 2 million people died in the north-south civil war, waged for all but a few years since 1955 over religion, ideology, ethnicity and oil.

An estimated 300,000 people have died in the Darfur conflict in the west, the United Nations says. Khartoum puts the toll at 10,000.

Sudan signed a peace accord with a small Darfur rebel group on Thursday, but JEM and other larger groups have refused to participate or dropped out of the talks.

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