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Russia May Pull Choppers From S. Sudan

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UNITED NATIONS — Russia is considering withdrawing its military helicopters servicing the UN peacekeeping force in South Sudan after voicing alarm at attacks on Russian personnel there, a senior official said.

The statement by Susana Malcorra, of the UN Department of Field Support, came during a recent increase in tribal violence in a remote area of South Sudan that caused some 60,000 people to flee.

"My sense is that at this point in time, Russia is seriously considering whether to stay or to leave South Sudan," Malcorra said.

The departure of Russia, which provides key services for the UN mission in South Sudan, could complicate matters in Africa's newest country, an impoverished oil-producing state struggling to establish a functioning security sector.

Until recently, Russia had eight helicopters there, Malcorra said. After its utility helicopters

were attacked by South Sudanese security forces last autumn, Russia decided in December to withdraw four of them and now appears to be contemplating the withdrawal of the other four, she said.

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