**EU calls for end to Sudan, South Sudan clashes**

**By Sebastian Moffett, Reuters**

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***The European Union's foreign policy chief urged Sudan and South Sudan on Wednesday to end fighting along their disputed border, saying further clashes could lead to a wider military conflict.***

Sudan and South Sudan blame each other for the fighting. South Sudan said its neighbor Sudan launched air strikes on major oilfields in its Unity state on Tuesday. It was one of the most serious reported confrontations since the South declared independence from Sudan in July.

"Recent cross-border attacks and continued aerial bombing represent a dangerous escalation of an already tense situation," a statement from Catherine Ashton's office said.

"Further cross-border military activity could result in a wider military confrontation."

South Sudan won its independence under a 2005 peace deal that ended decades of civil war with Khartoum, but distrust still runs deep. Both sides are still at loggerheads over the position of their shared border and how much the landlocked south should pay to transport its oil through Sudan.

Sudan has denied launching air strikes but said its ground forces had attacked southern artillery positions which had fired at the disputed oil-producing area of Heglig, which is partly controlled by Khartoum.

Sudan's U.N. ambassador, Daffa-Alla Elhag Ali Osman, said on Tuesday that his country's armed forces were ready "to defend every inch of our territorial integrity."

Also on Tuesday, the United Nations Security Council called on the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to exercise maximum restraint and sustain purposeful dialogue.

Ashton, the EU's High Representative for foreign affairs and security, called for negotiations between the two sides.

"The High Representative calls on both Sudan and South Sudan to exercise maximum restraint, cease military operations in the border area and respect the commitments they made," the statement said, referring to a memorandum signed in February.

Analysts say tensions between the countries could erupt into a full-blown war and disrupt the surrounding region, which includes some of Africa's most promising economies.

The latest violence has already set back efforts to resolve the countries' disputes. Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir has suspended talks with his South Sudan counterpart Salva Kiir aimed at resolving them, state media reported.

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