



Who is Fuelling the Sudan 2023 Civil War?

Stan BRABANT



Al Baraha Specialised Hospital was once the largest and most renowned private hospital in Khartoum. It was destroyed on 29 April 2023.

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Introduction

On 15 April 2023, fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), triggering a cascade of atrocities committed by both sides and their allied militias.¹ Two years into the war, though, and despite United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) arms embargoes, the UN Secretary-General declared that “weapons and fighters continue to flow into Sudan, allowing the conflict to persist and spread across the country”.² Indeed, a handful of states have kept supplying weapons to either the SAF or the RSF (or to both) since the beginning of the war. While few of these transfers have been officially documented, many have surfaced in multiple credible sources.

Therefore, the main objective of this Focus Paper is to identify those countries that have been supplying weapons or ammunition to the SAF and/or the RSF since April 2023. However, before assessing arms stockpiles and transfers, the paper first examines how and why this war started. It also reviews the consequences of the war on people and communities in Sudan, as well as the violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws committed by the SAF and the RSF. The paper then delves into SAF and RSF weapons stockpiles and scrutinises publicly available information documenting deliveries to the warring parties. It is indeed possible on this basis to identify the main countries that have been fuelling the 2023 civil war. The Focus Paper also looks at what might motivate these countries.

To do this, we examined and cross-checked a broad range of sources that have documented arms stockpiles, transfers and supply routes across the region. Because of the opaque nature of the arms trade, the picture drawn here is most likely not comprehensive, though. The author therefore welcomes comments, additions and clarifications.

¹ “Sudan: After 2 Years of War, Global Action Needed – Focus on Protecting Civilians, Aid Access, Accountability,” *Human Rights Watch*, April 13, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/13/sudan-after-2-years-war-global-action-needed>.

² “External Flow of Weapons into Sudan Must End, Insists UN’s Guterres,” *United Nations*, April 15, 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162246>.

What Led to the 2023 Civil War

One of the specificities of the current civil war is that it developed within the security sector.³ Indeed, the two main warring parties – the SAF and the RSF – originate from the Sudanese state. While the SAF finds its roots as a colonial force “older than the Republic of Sudan”,⁴ the RSF was created by ex-president Omar al-Bashir on the basis of the ‘Janjaweed’⁵ militia and was initially managed by the National Security and Intelligence Service (NISS).⁶ Indeed, al-Bashir viewed the RSF as a protector of his regime against a potential military coup by the SAF.⁷ But the RSF gradually developed international connections and amassed significant wealth resulting from the capture of the Jebel Amer gold mines in Darfur⁸ and the United Arab Emirates’ (UAE) funding of RSF mercenaries who took part in the Yemen and Libya wars.⁹ In response, anxious SAF commanders began developing their own network of companies and contacts across the region, thereby further fragmenting the security sector. When millions of protesters opposed the regime in 2018-2019, both the SAF and the RSF, although initially cracking down on the democracy movement,¹⁰ ended up siding with protesters, at least temporarily.¹¹ The SAF and the RSF then joined a transitional government that, crucially, recognised the RSF as a separate force,

³ Gerrit Kurtz Wolfram Lacher, and Denis M. Tull, “The Myth of the Gamechanger: Drones and Military Power in Africa,” *Megatrends Afrika Policy Brief* (German Institute for International and Security Affairs; German Institute of Sustainability and Development (IDOS); Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW)), no. 33 (March 2025), <https://doi.org/10.18449/2025MTA-PB33>.

⁴ Harry Verhoeven, “Surviving Revolution and Democratisation: The Sudan Armed Forces, State Fragility and Security Competition,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 61, no. 3 (September 2023): 413–37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X23000174>.

⁵ ‘Devil horsemen’ in Arabic.

⁶ In July 2019, the NISS was converted into a downscaled General Intelligence Service (GIS). See “Sudan’s Military Reforms Security Services,” *Sudan Tribune*, July 29, 2019, <https://sudantribune.com/article/66001>.

⁷ “Two Years On, Sudan’s War Is Spreading,” *International Crisis Group* (ICG), April 7, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/two-years-sudans-war-spreading>.

⁸ Nick Donovan, Richard Kent, and Mohamed Aboelgheit, *Exposing the RSF’s Secret Financial Network* (London: Global Witness, 2019), <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-resources/exposing-rsf-secret-financial-network/>.

⁹ Alex de Waal, “Sudan Crisis: The Ruthless Mercenaries Who Run the Country for Gold,” *BBC*, July 20, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48987901>.

¹⁰ *They Were Shouting ‘Kill Them’ - Sudan’s Violent Crackdown on Protesters in Khartoum* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2019), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/11/18/they-were-shouting-kill-them/sudans-violent-crackdown-protesters-khartoum>.

¹¹ Verhoeven, “Surviving Revolution and Democratisation.”

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thereby enabling the RSF to further consolidate power and wealth.¹² When the SAF seized power from the transitional government in a coup in October 2021, it was with RSF support. But tensions rapidly developed between the RSF and former allies of Omar al-Bashir whom the SAF had encouraged to return to Sudan after the coup. While SAF allies gradually took over positions within the new military regime, the RSF cultivated its ties with traditional leaders.¹³ In March 2023, major disagreements developed between the SAF and the RSF about a reform of the security sector that would have integrated the RSF into the SAF.¹⁴ On 15 April 2023, fighting erupted between the SAF and the RSF, which rapidly escalated in areas of Sudan where RSF troops had recently redeployed.¹⁵

The Impact of the War on Individuals and Communities

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of the Sudan war on civilians. Indeed, described as “a crisis of staggering scale and brutality”,¹⁶ the Sudan war primarily affects non-combatants and their livelihoods. In the words of the aid group *Doctors Without Borders*, “The population has faced horrendous levels of violence, succumbing to widespread fighting and surviving repeated attacks, abuse, and exploitation by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).”¹⁷

¹² Reem Abbas, *Money Is Power: Hemedti and the RSF's Paramilitary Industrial Complex in Sudan* (Washington: Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2023), <https://timep.org/2023/07/26/money-is-power-hemedti-and-the-rsfs-paramilitary-industrial-complex-in-sudan/>.

¹³ Clément Deshayes, “Les logiques du chaos - Révolution, guerre, transition politique au Soudan,” *Étude* (Institut de recherche stratégique de l'École militaire), no. 109 (July 2023), <https://www.irsem.fr/actualites/etude-de-l-irsem-n-109-2023.html>.

¹⁴ Hager Ali, “The Sudan Crisis: A Power Struggle by Design,” *Aljazeera*, May 18, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/18/the-sudan-crisis-a-power-struggle-by-design>.

¹⁵ Natasha Booty and Farouk Chothia, “Sudan War: A Simple Guide to What Is Happening,” *BBC*, July 4, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59035053>.

¹⁶ António Guterres, “Secretary-General's Remarks at High-Level Humanitarian Conference for the People of Sudan,” intervention during the Humanitarian Conference for the People of Sudan, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, February 14, 2025, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2025-02-14/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-humanitarian-conference-for-the-people-of-sudan>.

¹⁷ *A War on People: The Human Cost of Conflict and Violence in Sudan* (Amsterdam: Doctors Without Borders, 2024), <https://www.msf.org/war-people-human-cost-conflict-and-violence-sudan>.

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A 2024 study recorded 61,202 deaths in Khartoum State alone since the start of the war, of which 26,024 were due to intentional injuries.¹⁸ Although ACLED recorded 28,700 fatalities for the whole country by the end of November 2024, including over 7,500 civilians killed in direct attacks, the true number of casualties is likely to be as high as 150,000.¹⁹ This difference reflects a growing difficulty of collecting information while the war destroys public health structures.

Beyond casualties, over 30.4 million people (out of a population of 51.7 million) need humanitarian assistance, including 24.6 million people who face acute hunger.²⁰ In addition, nearly four million individuals have fled Sudan and 8.8 million have been internally displaced.²¹ According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there has been a notable rise in the number of Sudanese nationals arriving in Libya and Egypt – two countries that often serve as key departure points for migrants attempting to reach the EU.

More broadly, the war has profoundly affected urban families, displacing 31 percent of households, reducing full-time employment by half, preventing over 70 percent of urban families to send their children to school and reducing access to health care for most households.²²

Both the SAF and the RSF, as well as their allied militias, have committed the gravest violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate and direct attacks against civilians, schools and hospitals,

¹⁸ Maysoon Dahab et al., “War-Time Mortality in Sudan: A Capture-Recapture Analysis,” *Preprint* (SSRN), (November 2024), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5016438>.

¹⁹ Jalale Getachew Birru, *Foreign Meddling and Fragmentation Fuel the War in Sudan* (ACLED: Madison, 2024), <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/sudan/>.

²⁰ Conor Lennon, “Sudan, ‘the Most Devastating Humanitarian and Displacement Crisis in the World’,” *United Nations*, February 14, 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1160161>.

²¹ “Emergency Appeal – Sudan Emergency,” *UNHCR*, May 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/sudan-emergency>.

²² Oliver K. Kirui et al., *The Socioeconomic Impact of Armed Conflict on Sudanese Urban Households* (Washington: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2024), <https://www.undp.org/sudan/publications/socioeconomic-impact-armed-conflict-sudanese-urban-households>.

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the targeting of civilians through rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and torture,²³ as well as the starving of civilians and the use of food as a weapon.²⁴

In addition, the SAF allegedly used chlorine gas against the RSF on two occasions in 2024, the use of which as a weapon is prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention.²⁵ While the head of the SAF, General al-Burhan, had reportedly authorised their use, the SAF also tested chemical weapons on numerous occasions in 2025.²⁶ This alleged use of a chemical agent by the SAF echoes a 2016 report on “at least 30 likely chemical attacks” that took place in the Jebel Marra area (Darfur).²⁷

The RSF and its allies abducted and recruited children and systematically engaged in pillage and looting. They also committed “large-scale attacks based on intersecting ethnicity and gender grounds”.²⁸ The context in which the RSF targeted “non-Arab” communities such as the Masalit people “with the apparent objective of at least having them permanently leave the region” raises the possibility of a genocide.²⁹ Furthermore, the RSF’s siege of El Fasher and its

²³ “Sudan: UN Fact-Finding Mission Outlines Extensive Human Rights Violations, International Crimes, Urges Protection of Civilians,” *United Nations*, September 6, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/sudan-un-fact-finding-mission-outlines-extensive-human-rights-violations>.

²⁴ “Using Starvation as a Weapon of War in Sudan Must Stop: UN Experts,” *United Nations Human Rights*, June 26, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/using-starvation-weapon-war-sudan-must-stop-un-experts>.

²⁵ Tammy Bruce, *Imposing Measures on Sudan for Its Use of Chemical Weapons* (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/05/imposing-measures-on-sudan-for-its-use-of-chemical-weapons/>; Declan Walsh and Julian E. Barnes, “Sudan’s Military Has Used Chemical Weapons Twice, U.S. Officials Say,” *The New York Times*, January 16, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/16/world/africa/sudan-chemical-weapons-sanctions.html>.

²⁶ Declan Walsh and Julian E. Barnes, “Sudan’s Military Has Used Chemical Weapons Twice.”

²⁷ *Scorched Earth, Poisoned Air: Sudanese Government Forces Ravage Jebel Marra, Darfur* (London: Amnesty International, 2016), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr54/4877/2016/en/>.

²⁸ *Findings of the Investigations Conducted by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan into Violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, and Related Crimes, Committed in the Sudan in the Context of the Conflict That Erupted in Mid-April 2023* (Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/A-HRC-57-CRP-6-en.pdf>.

²⁹ “The Massalit Will Not Come Home” *Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity in El Geneina, West Darfur, Sudan* (Human Rights Watch, 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/09/sudan-ethnic-cleansing-west-darfur>.

systematic targeting of members of Zaghawa communities lead a growing number of experts to denounce what can be described as “a genocide in the shadow of world events”³⁰. The RSF’s actions are not a new phenomenon though. In 2004 the then SAF-allied Janjaweed militia, from which the RSF emerged, had already been accused of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity against Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa communities.³¹ Yet, according to observers, such attacks by the Janjaweed/RSF have never really stopped since.³²

Two International Arms Embargoes

It is largely in response to such egregious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that the EU has embargoed arms supplies to Sudan since March 1994.³³ The EU embargo covers the sale and supply of “arms and related materiel of all types, including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment and spare parts”.³⁴

Ten years after the EU, the United Nations Security Council also adopted an arms embargo, in September 2004. While initially limited to non-state entities in Darfur, the embargo was extended in 2005 to all actors, including the SAF. Interestingly, the Security Council also established in 2005 a Sanctions Committee supported by a Panel of Experts to “assess progress towards reducing violations by all parties of the arms embargo”.³⁵ The Panel of Experts produced several crucial reports documenting embargo violations (see below).³⁶

³⁰ Anette Hoffmann (Sudan-expert at the Institute Clingendael) cited in Koen Vidal, “In Darfour zitten honderdduizenden mensen in de val: ‘Rebellen voeren een genocide uit’,” *De Standaard*, September 23, 2025, <https://www.standaard.be/buitenland/in-darfour-zitten-honderdduizenden-mensen-in-de-val-rebellen-voeren-een-genocide-uit/92294668.html>.

³¹ Julie Flint, Jemera Rone, and Leslie Lefkow, *Darfur Destroyed Ethnic Cleansing by Government and Militia Forces in Western Sudan* (Human Rights Watch, 2004), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/05/06/darfur-destroyed/ethnic-cleansing-government-and-militia-forces-western-sudan>.

³² Jérôme Tubiana, “Darfur: A War Within a War,” *The New York Review*, February 2, 2025, <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2025/02/02/darfur-a-war-within-a-war/>.

³³ The EU embargo was amended in 2011 to also cover arms supplies to South Sudan.

³⁴ Council of the European Union, *Council Decision 2011/423/CFSP of 18 July 2011 Concerning Restrictive Measures against Sudan and South Sudan and Repealing Common Position 2005/411/CFSP*, L 188/20 (Brussels: 2011), https://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/f5087171-fc88-4118-8cbc-59af3273fd29.0006.03/DOC_1.

³⁵ *Resolution 1591*, S/RES/1591 (2005) (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2005), [https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1591%20\(2005\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1591%20(2005)).

³⁶ *Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1591 (2005) Concerning the Sudan*, (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2024), https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1591/panel-of-experts/work_mandate.

The UN embargo was already extended several times, most recently on 12 September 2025.³⁷

Weapons that Warring Parties Had in their Stockpiles before the War Started

When the civil war erupted on 15 April 2023, both the SAF and the RSF had access to elaborate, though relatively outdated, stockpiles of weapons and munitions. But little is known about the stockpiles of other armed groups.

Sudanese Armed Forces

SAF pre-war stockpiles reportedly included 465 main battle tanks (MBT), 115 light tanks, 206 reconnaissance vehicles, 145 infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), over 405 armoured personnel carriers (APCs), anti-tank weapons, over 860 artillery weapons, about 1,000 air defence systems, 20 boats, 59 'combat capable' aircrafts, as well as an unknown number of helicopters, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS)³⁸ and air-launched missiles.³⁹ Although the SAF's stockpiles included military equipment delivered until the 1980s by countries such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) or the United States (US), post-2000 imports came predominantly from Belarus, China, Iran, Russia and Ukraine,⁴⁰ as well as – to a lesser extent – the UAE.⁴¹ Weapons acquired before the 2023 war also included commercially available UASs manufactured in China. Indeed, despite the EU and UN arms embargoes, the SAF's access to military imports was relatively unrestricted.⁴²

³⁷ *Resolution 2791 (2025)*, S/RES/2791 (2025) (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2025), <https://www.un.org/en/media/accreditation/pdf/SCRes4.pdf>.

³⁸ According to SIPRI, in 2015 and 2017 Sudan received five CH-3 and five CH-4 heavy UAS produced in China.

³⁹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), eds., *The Military Balance 2023* (London: Routledge, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003400226>.

⁴⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," April 22, 2024, <https://armstransfers.sipri.org/ArmsTransfer/>.

⁴¹ 10 Calidus MCAV-20 and at least four Nimr Ajban 440A armoured personnel carriers.

⁴² *Sudanese Stockpiles and Regional Weapon Diversion* (London: Conflict Armament Research, 2017), 7, <https://www.conflictarm.com/reports/sudanese-stockpiles-and-regional-weapon-diversion/>.

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Besides imported equipment, the SAF also owned locally assembled Chinese and Iranian IFVs and APCs⁴³ and had access to ammunition, small arms and armoured vehicles produced by state-run industries that had expanded significantly in recent years.⁴⁴

The **Military Industry Corporation (MIC)**, also known as the Defense Industries System (DIS) or Masad,⁴⁵ is a SAF-owned⁴⁶ complex of defence production plants. It includes at least seven sites, all of which appear to be based in Khartoum State: Yarmouk Industrial Complex, Al Shaggara Ammunition Plant, Elshaheed Ibrahim Shams el Deen Complex for Heavy Industries, Al Zarghaa Engineering Complex, Saria Industrial Complex⁴⁷ and Safat Aviation Complex.⁴⁸ While ex-President Omar al Bashir opened the MIC in 1993, the Al Shaggara ammunition plant, Sudan's first weapons manufacturing plant, was established in 1959,⁴⁹ three years after Sudan's independence. The Yarmouk plant was the most important in Sudan. It produced rockets, artillery, light weapons and ammunition. The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) ran the site, which was partly owned by Iran.⁵⁰ However, the RSF took control in June 2023 and the factory was destroyed as a result of the fighting.⁵¹ Before the war, the MIC produced armoured vehicles, tanks, trucks, artillery, light aircraft, boats and ships, most of which under licences from China, Russia, Türkiye and

⁴³ Hager Ali, "The War in Sudan: How Weapons and Networks Shattered a Power Struggle," *GIGA Focus Middle East*, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.57671/GFME-24022>.

⁴⁴ *Sudanese Stockpiles*.

⁴⁵ "Sudan: Masad Military-Industrial Machine Aims for Exports Champion Status," *Africa Intelligence*, October 13, 2022, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/eastern-africa-and-the-horn/2022/10/13/masad-military-industrial-machine-aims-for-exports-champion-status,109834553-art>.

⁴⁶ Council of the European Union, *Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/384 of 22 January 2024 Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/2147 Concerning Restrictive Measures in View of Activities Undermining the Stability and Political Transition of Sudan* (Brussels: 2024), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L_202400384.

⁴⁷ The Saria Industrial Complex provides the SAF with military clothing and supplies, simple electronics and appliances.

⁴⁸ "Civilian Firms of Sudanese Army to Be under Government Control: Hamdok," *Sudan Tribune*, March 17, 2021, <https://sudantribune.com/article/67425>; "'Sudan's Military Industry Expanding': Small Arms Survey," *Dabanga*, July 6, 2014, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-s-military-industry-expanding-small-arms-survey>.

⁴⁹ *Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey Sudan, 2014), http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/ordbog/sord/_pdf/Sudan_2014.pdf.

⁵⁰ *Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA)*.

⁵¹ Ali, "The War in Sudan."

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Ukraine.⁵² The MIC occasionally ‘repackaged’ ammunition made in China and marketed it as its own.⁵³ One month before the beginning of the 2023 war, the MIC presented a loitering munition “designed to be launched from an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)”.⁵⁴ Sudan then had the third largest defence industry in Africa, after South Africa and Egypt.⁵⁵

The MIC and a company called Sudan Master Technology Engineering (SMT) also control, “through a network of direct and indirect shareholdings”, some companies of the **Giad conglomerate**, which is involved in the production of weapons and vehicles for the SAF.⁵⁶ Giad is also engaged in joint military initiatives involving North Korea, “including the procurement of arms”.⁵⁷ Target Multiactivities Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of the Giad conglomerate, imports weapons to Sudan from the Indian company Ashoka Manufacturing⁵⁸ (described as “the largest supplier of weapons to the Sudanese market”). Other international companies exporting arms to Sudan include Russian producers Kalashnikov Concern and Molot, as well as a “diversity of Turkish companies”.⁵⁹

⁵² Jonathan Katzenellenbogen, “Sudan’s Military Industry Corporation Pushes Sales to Africa,” *defenceWeb*, February 8, 2023, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/sudans-military-industry-corporation-pushes-sales-to-africa/>.

⁵³ *Sudanese Stockpiles*, 9.

⁵⁴ Kazim Abdul, “Sudan’s MIC Unveils Kamin-25 UAV-Launched Loitering Munition,” *Military Africa*, March 9, 2025, <https://www.military.africa/2023/03/sudans-mic-unveils-kamin-25-uav-launched-loitering-munition/>.

⁵⁵ Jonathan Katzenellenbogen, “Sudan’s Military Industry Corporation.”

⁵⁶ Council of the European Union, “Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/384 of 22 January 2024.”

⁵⁷ “Sudan Master Technology,” July 28, 2025, <https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/NK-QXixz9qMc5qiaF5AQo9XWZ/>.

⁵⁸ Ashoka Industries, “Serving in Defence of Nations,” s.d., https://ashokagroup.net/images/Brochure_Ashoka.pdf.

⁵⁹ *New Weapons Fuelling the Sudan Conflict* (London: Amnesty International, 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2024/07/new-weapons-fuelling-the-sudan-conflict/>.

Rapid Support Forces

In contrast to the SAF, the RSF's pre-2023 recorded stockpiles were relatively limited. They included IFVs (seven Soviet BTR-80A and an unknown number of Chinese WZ-523), APCs (over 20 Soviet BTR-70M) and anti-aircraft guns (an unknown number of Soviet ZPU-2),⁶⁰ as well as thousands of Serbian-made Kalashnikov assault rifles⁶¹ and thousands of 'technicals' (typically, Toyota pickups fitted with portable weapons).⁶² One source indicates that RSF members occasionally used Belgian-made FN FAL battle rifles;⁶³ the presence of FN FAL rifles on arms black markets across Darfur has also been documented.⁶⁴ The RSF had no UAS when the war started.⁶⁵

Because of the nature of the RSF as a force initially developed to suppress insurgency in Darfur,⁶⁶ its weapons were generally lighter and either procured through the government, resulting from previous RSF mercenary deployments in Yemen and Libya, or stolen from other armed groups.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ IISS, *The Military Balance 2023*, 482.

⁶¹ Some of which Saudi Arabia may have diverted to Sudan despite end-user assurances at a time when SAF and RSF soldiers were fighting together at the Saudi-Yemen border. Eric Woods, "Saudi Arabia & Murky European Weapons Transfers To Janjaweed Successor Group," *Bellingcat*, August 28, 2019, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2019/08/28/saudi-arabia-murky-european-weapons-transfers-to-janjaweed-successor-group/>.

⁶² Nick Donovan, Richard Kent, and Mohamed Aboelgheit, *How the RSF Got Their 4x4 Technicals: The Open Source Intelligence Techniques behind Our Sudan Exposé* (London: Global Witness, 2020), <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-resources/how-the-rsf-got-their-4x4-technicals-the-open-source-intelligence-techniques-behind-our-sudan-expose/>.

⁶³ The source indicates that it is "highly probable" that the FN FAL rifles originate from Chad. War Noir, "Arsenal of the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan," *Militant Wire*, May 12, 2023, <https://www.militantwire.com/p/arsenal-of-the-rapid-support-forces>.

⁶⁴ At the time of publication of this paper, FN Herstal had not responded to our request for information. *Letter Dated 14 April 2025 from the President of the Security Council Acting in the Absence of a Chair of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1591 (2005) Concerning the Sudan Addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2025/239* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2025), 33, <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/239>.

⁶⁵ IISS, *The Military Balance 2023*, 482.

⁶⁶ Clément Deshayes, *Les Logiques Du Chaos*.

⁶⁷ "The Rapid Support Forces: A Comprehensive Profile," *Sudan in the News*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.sudaninthenews.com/the-rapid-support-forces-a-comprehensive-profile>.

Recent Deliveries of Weapons to the Warring Parties

*Sudanese Armed Forces and Allied Militias*⁶⁸

The SAF reportedly rely on two main supply routes: Port Sudan, Sudan's main Red Sea hub (either through the seaport or through Port Sudan New International Airport);⁶⁹ and a corridor through Halfa, a Sudanese town close to the Egyptian border.⁷⁰

Because of the historic connections between Egypt and Sudan's armed forces, Egypt is sometimes considered to be the SAF's closest ally. Indeed, Egypt reportedly supported the SAF with "military aid" and airstrikes against the RSF,⁷¹ as well as intelligence, training⁷² and the supply of weapons through the Halfa corridor.⁷³ In the first months of the war, Egypt facilitated the provision to the SAF of military equipment, often produced in other countries.⁷⁴ Egypt's support reportedly included: aircraft, ammunition, "weapons from Serbia"⁷⁵ for

⁶⁸ Challenged by the RSF on the battlefield, the SAF gradually developed a broad coalition of armed groups to whom it provides weapons and training. The SAF-led coalition includes: the Darfur Joint Forces (itself a coalition of several former Darfur-based rebel groups: the Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces (GSLF), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudanese Alliance, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), the Sudan Shield Forces (SSF, a former RSF ally created by an ex-SAF officer from central Sudan), the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) and its related Al-Bara' ibn Malik brigade (both generally considered to be Islamist paramilitary groups), as well as the NISS combat troops. See Ali Mahmoud Ali, Jalale Getachew Birru, and Nohad Eltayeb, *Two Years of War in Sudan: How the SAF Is Gaining the Upper Hand* (ACLED: Madison, 2025), <https://acleddata.com/2025/04/15/two-years-of-war-in-sudan-how-the-saf-is-gaining-the-upper-hand/>.

⁶⁹ Simon Marks, "Russian Guns, Iranian Drones Are Fueling Sudan's Brutal Civil War," *Bloomberg*, December 18, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2024-sudan-civil-war/>; Justin Lynch, *Foreign Facilitators of Weapons Fueling Sudan's Civil War* (Washington: The Sudan Conflict Observatory, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.13021/MARS/2541>.

⁷⁰ "Egypt's Intervention in Sudan's War," *Ayin Network*, December 27, 2024, <https://3ayin.com/en/egyptsaf/>.

⁷¹ Mai Hassan and Ahmed Kodouda, "Sudan Is Unraveling: Why War is Likely to Once Again Tear the Country Apart," *Foreign Affairs*, April 30, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/sudan/sudan-unraveling>.

⁷² Kamal Tabikha, "Somalia and Ethiopia Restore Diplomatic Ties after President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud Visits Addis Ababa," *The National*, January 12, 2025, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2025/01/12/somalia-and-ethiopia-restore-diplomatic-ties-after-president-hassan-sheikh-mohamud-visits-addis-ababa/>.

⁷³ "Egypt's Intervention in Sudan's War."

⁷⁴ "Sudan's Army: More Military Upgrades, Alliances – More War Ahead," *Ayin Network*, March 19, 2025, <https://3ayin.com/en/safiets/>.

⁷⁵ "Egypt's Intervention in Sudan's War."

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the SAF-aligned Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A),⁷⁶ as well as Bayraktar TB2 UASs produced by the Turkish company Baykar.⁷⁷ The SAF received eight TB2's as part of a deal worth "at least \$120 million" that also included hundreds of warheads.⁷⁸

In addition, the SAF received small arms from Türkiye's main small arms manufacturer, Sarsilmaz,⁷⁹ 15 fighter jets from Russia and Egypt,⁸⁰ eight Chinese-Pakistani K-8 Karakorum trainer/light attack jets (possibly funded by Qatar),⁸¹ Chinese mortar bombs "produced in 2023",⁸² and Mohajer-6 UASs from Iran.⁸³ However, Iranian deliveries are likely to decrease following Iran's war with Israel in June 2025.⁸⁴ The SAF also received a local version of the Iranian Ababil-3 UAS, known as the Zajil-3, whose first use in the war was reported in January 2024.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Members of the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit ethnic groups in Darfur founded the SLM/A in February 2003 in order to combat the Sudanese government's neglect of Darfur and demand greater political representation.

⁷⁷ "The UAE's Influence: A Lengthening Shadow," *The Economist*, April 19, 2025; Kazim Abdul, "Turkish Bayraktar TB2 Drone Instrumental in Sudan Army's Advances," *Military Africa*, April 10, 2025, <https://www.military.africa/2025/04/turkish-bayraktar-tb2-drone-instrumental-in-sudans-advances/>; Benoit Faucon, Nicholas Bariyo, and Summer Said, "Ignoring U.S. Calls for Peace, Egypt Delivered Drones to Sudan's Military," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 14, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/africa/ignoring-u-s-calls-for-peace-egypt-delivered-drones-to-sudans-military-6f7fdcd4>.

⁷⁸ Katharine Houreld and Elizabeth Dwoskin, "A Turkish Arms Firm Helped Fuel Sudan's Brutal Civil War, Records Show," *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/03/07/sudan-war-turkey-baykar-rsf-saf/>.

⁷⁹ *New Weapons*, 4.

⁸⁰ Jalale Getachew Birru et al., *Foreign Meddling and Fragmentation Fuel the War in Sudan*.

⁸¹ The SAF also consider acquiring Chinese-made Chengdu J-10CE as well as Russian-made Su-30 and Su-35 fighter jets. Acquisition and delivery details remain unclear though (Cf. "Sudan's Army: More Military Upgrades, Alliances – More War Ahead," *Ayin Network*, March 19, 2025, <https://3ayin.com/en/safjets/>); "More Weapons Embolden Sudan's Army to Reject Critical Peace Talks," *Ayin Network*, August 26, 2024, <https://3ayin.com/en/arms-2/>.

⁸² *New Weapons*, 26.

⁸³ Khalid Abdelaziz, Parisa Hafezi, and Aidan Lewis, "Sudan Civil War: Are Iranian Drones Helping the Army Gain Ground?," *Reuters*, April 10, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/are-iranian-drones-turning-tide-sudans-civil-war-2024-04-10/>; Simon Marks, "Iranian Drones Become Latest Proxy Tool in Sudan's Civil War," *Bloomberg*, January 24, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-01-24/iran-supplies-sudan-army-with-drones-as-civil-war-continues?srnd=undefined>.

⁸⁴ "Tehran's Military Setback Leaves Sudan's Army in Limbo," *Ayin Network*, June 25, 2025, <https://3ayin.com/en/iran/>.

⁸⁵ Abdelrahman Abu Taleb, "Evidence of Iran and UAE Drones Used in Sudan War," *BBC*, June 13, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2vvjz652j1o>.

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In addition, since the beginning of the war, the SAF received “large quantities of weapons”, as well as parts for combat aircraft⁸⁶ and UASs from Russia.⁸⁷ Russia even offered its S-400 anti-aircraft missile system in exchange for an agreement on the construction of a naval base on the Red Sea, in Port Sudan.⁸⁸ Although Russia reportedly proposed “unrestricted qualitative military aid” to the SAF in April 2024,⁸⁹ weapon types, volumes and delivery routes remain opaque. However, the destruction by the RSF in Northern Darfur in October 2024 of an



Ilyushin-76, which was illegally supplying weapons to the SAF and carrying Russian arms dealers, sheds some light on SAF supply networks. Interestingly, the same Ilyushin-76 had previously supplied weapons to the RSF.⁹⁰

Recent Russian arms deliveries also include civilian variants of small arms manufactured by the Russian Kalashnikov Concern and often exported as “civil hunting” or “hunting” carbines, although used in armed conflict.⁹¹

Figure 2: SAF soldier holding a Tigr ‘hunting’ rifle produced by the Russian Kalashnikov Concern (source: Twitter/X).⁹²

⁸⁶ Simon Marks, “Sudan Civil War Fueled by Russian Guns, Iranian Drones,” *Bloomberg*, December 18, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2024-sudan-civil-war/>.

⁸⁷ “Sudan Army Builds Tunnels to Shield Drones, Strategic Weapons – Sources,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 24, 2025, <https://sudantribune.com/article/300094>.

⁸⁸ “Судан Отказался Размещать Базу Военного Флота России (Sudan Refused to Host the Base of the Russian Navy),” *The Moscow Times*, December 18, 2024, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2024/12/18/sudan-otkazalsya-razmeschat-bazu-voennogo-flota-rossii-a150862>.

⁸⁹ “Russia Offers ‘Uncapped’ Military Aid to Sudan,” *Sudan Tribune*, April 30, 2024, <https://sudantribune.com/article/285164>.

⁹⁰ “Mercenary Aviation: Russian Cargo Planes Helped Both Sides in Sudan’s War,” *Sudan War Monitor*, October 26, 2024, <https://sudanwarmonitor.com/p/retraction-statement-ilyushin>; Khalid Abdelaziz, Reade Levinson and Filipp Lebedev, “Exclusive: Plane Downed in Darfur with Suspected Russian Crew Was Supplying Army, Rivals Say,” *Reuters*, October 24, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/plane-downed-darfur-with-suspected-russian-crew-was-supplying-army-rivals-say-2024-10-23/>.

⁹¹ *New Weapons*.

⁹² غاضبون بلا حدود غ.ب.ح. (Angry Without Borders), <https://x.com/AWBSUD/status/1759624131568369686>.

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In August 2025, several media reported the signature of a major contract between the SAF-controlled MIC and Pakistan concerning the delivery of 10 K-8 Karakorum trainer/light attack aircraft, 20 Shahpar-2 UASs, 150 YIHA-III UASs, 50 MR-10K UASs, 50 Ababeel-5 UASs, engines for MiG-21 fighter jets, 150 ASV Mohafiz armoured vehicles, as well as an unknown number of Chinese-made HQ-9 and HQ-6 air defence systems,⁹³ possibly with funding from Saudi Arabia.⁹⁴

Moreover, an unspecified “friendly country” supplied the SAF with advanced air defence systems, monitoring equipment and radars “to counter RSF drones”.⁹⁵

In addition, Eritrea established camps on its territory that provide “advanced training” to SAF-allied forces from eastern Sudan.⁹⁶

Rapid Support Forces and Allied Militias⁹⁷

While the SAF rely on two main supply routes (through Port Sudan and the Halfa corridor), the RSF rely on at least four routes running through the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Southern Darfur and possibly South Sudan.⁹⁸

In the first months of the war, the UAE and the Russian private military company (PMC) Wagner did “cooperate closely” in order to supply the RSF.⁹⁹

The RSF’s main supply route was initially through Chad, where “large-scale and sustained supplies” of small arms and light weapons, unmanned combat aerial vehicles, anti-aircraft missiles, mortars and various types of ammunition were enabled thanks to “a heavy rotation” of cargo planes coming from the UAE.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ “Al-Burhan Inks \$1.5B Arms Deal with Pakistan amid Ongoing Conflict,” *The Sudan Times*, August 15, 2025, <https://thesudantimes.com/sudan/al-burhan-inks-1-5b-arms-deal-with-pakistan-amid-ongoing-conflict/>.

⁹⁴ “Sudan and Pakistan Sign a Historic \$1.5 Billion Defense Agreement,” *Mena Defense*, August 24, 2025, <https://www.menadefense.net/sudan-and-pakistan-sign-a-historic-1-5-billion-defense-agreement/>.

⁹⁵ “Sudan Army Builds Tunnels.”

⁹⁶ “Eritrea Military Training Camps Raise Concerns about Security in Eastern Sudan,” *Dabanga*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/eritrea-training-camps-raise-concerns-about-security-situation-in-eastern-sudan>; “Eritrea’s Role in Sudan’s Conflict: A Ticking Time Bomb,” *Atar*, August 12, 2024, <https://atarnetwork.com/?p=5696>.

⁹⁷ The RSF created a decentralised coalition of ethnic militias originating from groups such as the Beni Halba, Misseriya, Rizeigat and Salamat. However, these groups competed and clashed repeatedly. The SSF, initially an RSF ally, defected to the SAF-led coalition in October 2024. Mahmoud Ali, Getachew Birru, and Eltayeb, *Two Years of War in Sudan*.

⁹⁸ Laura Victoria Bernal Moncada et al., *Letter Dated 15 January 2024 from the Panel of Experts on the Sudan Addressed to the President of the Security Council* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2024), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4039195?ln=en&v=pdf>.

⁹⁹ Ali, “The War in Sudan.”

¹⁰⁰ Bernal Moncada et al., *Letter Dated 15 January 2024*, 14–15.

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The UAE “has facilitated weapons to RSF” through the airports of Amdjarass in eastern Chad¹⁰¹ and the country’s capital N’Djamena,¹⁰² “with stops in regional countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda”.¹⁰³ In June 2023, assault rifles, ammunition “and other small arms” were found in a cargo plane originating from the UAE and supposedly carrying humanitarian goods for Sudanese refugees in Chad.¹⁰⁴ In September 2023, “over 100 Wagner vehicles” transported weapons for the RSF through Chad.¹⁰⁵

Deliveries of, amongst others, man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and associated munitions also took place through the Central African Republic,¹⁰⁶ a country where Wagner was reported to collect arms shipments from Emirati planes and transfer them to the RSF in Sudan.¹⁰⁷

Another route is through Libya: thousands of Bulgarian-made mortar shells were sold to the Emirati company International Golden Group (IGG), before being transferred to the RSF via eastern Libya.¹⁰⁸ Wagner was again involved, supplying surface-to-air missiles to the RSF with the support of the Libyan warlord Haftar and some of his brigades based in southern Libya. Deliveries took place just before and throughout the early days of the war.¹⁰⁹ The Libya route was also used to bring in Colombian mercenaries employed by a UAE-based

¹⁰¹ Lynch, *Foreign Facilitators of Weapons Fueling Sudan’s Civil War*, 3.

¹⁰² “The Winding Arms Supply Routes From Beijing To N’Djamena Via Abu Dhabi,” *Africa Intelligence*, April 16, 2025, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/central-africa/2025/04/15/the-winding-arms-supply-routes-from-beijing-to-n-djamena-via-abu-dhabi,110414158-art>.

¹⁰³ Bernal Moncada et al., *Letter Dated 15 January 2024*.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas Bariyo and Benoît Faucon, “A U.S. Ally Promised to Send Aid to Sudan. It Sent Weapons Instead,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/world/africa/a-u-s-ally-promised-to-send-aid-to-sudan-it-sent-weapons-instead-82d396f?mod=hp_lead_pos10.

¹⁰⁵ Ali, “The War in Sudan.”

¹⁰⁶ Bernal Moncada et al., *Letter Dated 15 January 2024*, 17.

¹⁰⁷ “UAE ‘Used Russian Mercenary Group to Arm Sudan Rebels’,” *Source Material*, September 14, 2024, <https://www.source-material.org/uae-russia-wager-mercenaries-arming-sudan-rebels/>.

¹⁰⁸ Quentin Peschard and Elitsa Gadeva, “Des armes européennes au Soudan : Enquête sur la présence illégale de munitions au cœur de la guerre civile,” *France 24*, May 5, 2025, <https://www.france24.com/fr/armes-europ%C3%A9ennes-au-soudan/>.

¹⁰⁹ “Libye: Plateforme Logistique Du Groupe Wagner - Wagner livre des armes depuis la Libye aux FSR,” *All Eyes On Wagner*, April 20, 2023, <https://alleyesonwagner.org/2023/04/20/libye-plateforme-logistique-du-groupe-wagner/>; Nima Elbagir et al., “Exclusive: Evidence Emerges of Russia’s Wagner Arming Militia Leader Battling Sudan’s Army,” *CNN*, April 21, 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/20/africa/wagner-sudan-russia-libya-intl/index.html>; Bernal Moncada et al., *Letter Dated 15 January 2024*, 16.

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company.¹¹⁰ The RSF's recent capture of the Sudan-Libya-Egypt border triangle and reports of increased air traffic from the UAE into southeastern Libya, suggest that the Libya route may become even more prominent.¹¹¹

In addition, following its capture of Nyala, a town in Southern Darfur, in October 2023, the RSF also received military supplies and mercenaries through the town's airport.¹¹²

Also, one source reported on the potential opening of "a new military logistics centre, hidden alongside a hospital" established by the UAE in South Sudan's Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, close to the border with Sudan.¹¹³ While many patients treated at this hospital are reported to be "wounded soldiers fighting for the RSF",¹¹⁴ the UAE has been accused of "shipping arms from the South".¹¹⁵ According to one report, weapons and ammunition, "including howitzers", arrived in Juba from the UAE on a C-17 military cargo plane before being transferred to the RSF.¹¹⁶ According to South Sudan's foreign minister, though,

¹¹⁰ Santiago Rodríguez Álvarez, "'Me quiero devolver': hay más de 300 exmilitares Colombianos en la guerra de Sudán," *La Silla Vacía*, November 26, 2024, <https://www.lasillavacia.com/silla-nacional/me-quiero-devolver-hay-mas-de-300-exmilitares-colombianos-en-la-guerra-de-sudan/>.

¹¹¹ Shewit Woldemichael, "Capture of Tri-Border Area Marks Another Twist in Sudan's Civil War," *International Crisis Group*, June 20, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/capture-tri-border-area-marks-another-twist-sudans-civil-war>.

¹¹² In August 2025, the SAF claimed to have destroyed an Emirati aircraft carrying "mercenaries and military equipment destined for the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces" while it was landing in Nyala, allegedly killing "at least 40 Colombian mercenaries." *Letter Dated 14 April 2025*; Santiago Rodríguez Álvarez, "Sudan: How Colombian Mercenaries Were Duped into Fighting in a Brutal Civil War," *The Africa Report*, April 8, 2025, <https://www.theafricareport.com/380870/desert-wolves-how-colombian-mercenaries-operate-in-sudan/>; "Sudan Army: '40+ Colombian Mercenaries Killed as RSF-Bound Emirati Aircraft Destroyed in Nyala'," *Dabanga*, August 7, 2025, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-army-40-colombian-mercenaries-killed-as-rsf-bound-emirati-aircraft-destroyed-in-nyala>.

¹¹³ "Emiratis Accused of Shipping Arms from the South," *Africa Confidential*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.africa-confidential.com/article-preview/id/15462/emiratis-accused-of-shipping-arms-from-the-south>.

¹¹⁴ Simon Marks, "The UAE In Africa: Power, Influence And Conflict," *Bloomberg*, July 8, 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2025-07-08/the-uae-in-africa-power-influence-and-conflict>.

¹¹⁵ "Emiratis Accused of Shipping Arms from the South."

¹¹⁶ "South Sudan Involved in Smuggling Emirati Weapons to the RSF," *The Citizen*, May 13, 2025, <https://citizen-sd.com/2025/05/south-sudan-involved-in-smuggling-emirati-weapons-to-the-rsf/>.

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“The field hospital in Northern Bahr el Ghazal was a gift from the president of the United Arab Emirates to recognize our existing bilateral relations... It was not to be used as a base against anybody.”¹¹⁷

Furthermore, the recent discovery of ammunition crates bearing Kenyan labels in an alleged RSF depot – captured by the SAF near Khartoum – suggests that Kenya may have facilitated the transfer to the RSF of ammunition manufactured in third countries.¹¹⁸

Weapons supplied to the RSF include: Chinese-made GB50A guided bombs and 155mm AH-4 howitzers “re-exported” by the UAE;¹¹⁹ Nimr Ajban APCs manufactured in the UAE and “equipped with the French Galix System”;¹²⁰ munitions manufactured in Serbia and “sent to the UAE Armed Forces Joint Logistics Command”;¹²¹ unidentified UASs modified to drop thermobaric munitions “sent by a Serbian arms company to the UAE armed forces, joint logistics command based in Abu Dhabi”;¹²² Chinese-made Wing Loong II unmanned aircraft systems “operated by the UAE”, as well as FH-95 UASs “likely deployed by the UAE based on location”,¹²³ launched from the airports of Amdjarass in Chad and Nyala in Sudan.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ “South Sudan Rejects Claims UAE-Built Hospital Supports RSF,” *Sudan Tribune*, March 11, 2025, <https://sudantribune.com/article/298459>.

¹¹⁸ Carlos Gonzales, Mike Yambo, and Jackline Macharia, “Kenyan Weapons Linked to Sudan’s Civil War,” *Bellingcat*, June 15, 2025, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2025/06/15/kenya-weapons-sudan-civil-war-conflict-khartoum-omdurman-munitions-ammunition/>.

¹¹⁹ “Sudan: Advanced Chinese Weaponry Provided by UAE Identified in Breach of Arms Embargo – New Investigation,” *Amnesty International*, May 8, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/sudan-advanced-chinese-weaponry-provided-by-uae-identified-in-breach-of-arms-embargo-new-investigation/>.

¹²⁰ “Soudan. Des systèmes d’armement de fabrication française repérés dans le conflit – nouvelles investigations,” *Amnesty International*, November 14, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2024/11/sudan-french-manufactured-weapons-system-identified-in-conflict-new-investigation/>.

¹²¹ Katharine Houreld and Hafiz Haroun, “Sudan’s Civil War Fueled by Secret Arms Shipments from UAE and Iran,” *The Washington Post*, October 15, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/15/sudan-war-weapons-uae-iran/>.

¹²² Mark Townsend, “‘Smoking Gun’ Evidence Points to UAE Involvement in Sudan Civil War,” *The Guardian*, July 25, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/jul/25/smoking-gun-evidence-points-to-uae-involvement-in-sudan-civil-war>.

¹²³ Katryn Tyson, *Drones over Sudan: Foreign Powers in Sudan’s Civil War* (Critical Threats Project, 2025), <https://www.aei.org/articles/drones-over-sudan-foreign-powers-in-sudans-civil-war/>.

¹²⁴ “Soudan : selon l’armée, les paramilitaires ont utilisé des drones chinois lors des dernières attaques,” *RFI*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20250429-soudan-selon-l-arm%C3%A9e-les-paramilitaires-des-fsr-ont-utilis%C3%A9-drones-chinois-derni%C3%A8res-attaques>.



Figure 3: box of Serbian-made 120mm thermobaric munitions sent to the UAE and captured by the SAF.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Letter dated 11 October 2024 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2024/733 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2024), <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/733>.

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The New York Times and *The Washington Post* determined that the UAE has been shipping weapons to the RSF,¹²⁶ a claim that a UN report in January 2024 calls “credible”.¹²⁷ Despite repeated UAE denials and assurances given to the US government that the UAE “is not now transferring any weapons to the RSF and will not do so going forward”,¹²⁸ a January 2025 briefing by the Biden administration¹²⁹ and “numerous testimonies collected in the field” by the International Crisis Group confirm that UAE arms deliveries to the RSF are still happening.¹³⁰

Why Some Countries Have Been Supplying Weapons to the SAF and/or to the RSF

China

China’s long-term objectives in Sudan are primarily centred on securing its economic and resource interests, including oil, while maintaining its non-interference policy.¹³¹ Although China supports the SAF, it also supplies weapons to the RSF, probably driven by its arms industry’s economic interests more than by its strategic objectives in Sudan.¹³² Interestingly, though, China – a State Party to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)¹³³ – has proven in the past to be sensitive to

¹²⁶ Declan Walsh et al., “While Talking Peace in Sudan, the U.A.E. Fuels Sudan Fight,” *The New York Times*, September 30, 2023; Houreld and Haroun, “Sudan’s Civil War.”

¹²⁷ Bernal Moncada et al., *Letter dated 15 January 2024*, 15.

¹²⁸ Robbie Gramer (@RobbieGramer), “On UAE Support for RSF Militia in Sudan’s Civil War,” X, December 19, 2024, <https://x.com/RobbieGramer/status/1869845703473963137>.

¹²⁹ Congresswoman Sara Jacobs, “Jacobs, Van Hollen Confirm UAE Providing Weapons to RSF in Sudan, in Contradiction to Its Assurances to US,” Press release, January 24, 2025, <https://sarajacobs.house.gov/news/press-releases/jacobs-van-hollen-confirm-uae-providing-weapons-to-rsf-in-sudan-in-contradiction-to-its-assurances-to-us>.

¹³⁰ “Le Tchad, victime et protagoniste de la guerre au Soudan,” *International Crisis Group*, June 17, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/africa/chad-sudan/le-tchad-victime-et-protagoniste-de-la-guerre-au-soudan>.

¹³¹ Daniel Large, “China & the Contradictions of ‘Non-interference’ in Sudan,” *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 115 (March 2008): 93-106, <https://www.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.1080/03056240802011568#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20upshot%20of%20China%27s%20pursuit%20of,to%20Sudan%27s%20governing%20elites%20in%20historically%20unprecedented.>

¹³² “China’s Hidden Hands: How Chinese Weapons Are Fueling Both Side of Sudan’s War,” *Ayin Network*, June 3, 2025, <https://3ayin.com/en/china/>.

¹³³ The 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) makes arms transfer decisions subject to human rights and humanitarian concerns by forbidding transfers when there is a defined level of risk that war crimes or serious violations of international human rights law will be committed.

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international pressure resulting from its arms exports to Sudan.¹³⁴ Additionally, despite the war, Sudan remains an important country for China's Belt and Road Initiative.¹³⁵

Egypt

Egypt may be the SAF's strongest ally in its war against the RSF. Its support is indeed profound and multifaceted. It relates to long-lasting historic connections between the military apparatus of the two countries. In addition, the SAF – not unlike Egypt's armed forces – got rid of a civilian transition that was threatening their political and economic interests. Securing the SAF's control over Khartoum and Eastern Sudan therefore reduces the risk of 'democratic contagion' in the region. Crucially, Egypt also needs to secure access to the water of the Nile, challenged by Ethiopia – an ally of the RSF – and its Blue Nile dam.¹³⁶ Last but not least, Egypt is confronted with hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing the war in Sudan, which may explain its recent attempts to contain the fighting and bring the warring parties to negotiate.¹³⁷

Iran

Iran re-established military and diplomatic ties with Sudan's military leadership shortly after the war began.¹³⁸ Its supply of weapons to the SAF is primarily motivated by its desire to acquire a foothold on the Red Sea.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Gioia Serena Wang, "What Motivates Chinese Foreign Policy in Sudan? A Discourse Analysis of Chinese Official Statements on the Darfur Conflict from 2004 to 2023," *The Grimshaw Review of International Affairs* 1, n° 2 (September 2024), <https://grimshawreview.lse.ac.uk/articles/10/files/66f447fa0b889.pdf>.

¹³⁵ "Sudan Expects to Play Bigger Role in Belt and Road Initiative," *Xinhua*, August 27, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/28/c_137424486.htm; Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Will Sudan War Cast a Shadow on China's BRI Projects in Africa and Arab World?," *The Economic Times*, April 25, 2023, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/will-sudan-war-cast-a-shadow-on-chinas-bri-projects-in-africa-and-arab-world/articleshow/99767961.cms>.

¹³⁶ "Egypt's Intervention in Sudan's War."

¹³⁷ Elfadil Ibrahim, "Egypt's Evolving Diplomatic Approach to Sudan's War," *The New Arab*, June 25, 2024, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/egypts-evolving-diplomatic-approach-sudans-war>.

¹³⁸ "Iran and Sudan Agree to Resume Diplomatic Relations," *Reuters*, October 9, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/sudan-says-it-will-resume-diplomatic-relations-with-iran-2023-10-09>.

¹³⁹ Tareq Alotaiba, "Sudan Is Iran's Opening for a Foothold in the Red Sea," *Arab Gulf States Institute*, March 3, 2025, <https://agsi.org/analysis/sudan-is-irans-opening-for-a-foothold-in-the-red-sea/>.

Pakistan

While Pakistan's recently announced weapons contract with the SAF appears to be primarily motivated by economic benefits and the promotion of its defence industry, potential funding from Saudi Arabia and the possible presence of Chinese weapons as part of the deal suggest that a broader international alliance may be emerging to support the SAF against the RSF.¹⁴⁰

Russia

Bilateral relations between Sudan and Russia (and, before that, the Soviet Union) go back to the early days of Sudan's independence and, in Russia's words, "have passed the test of time."¹⁴¹ Keen to preserve its interests as the war erupted in April 2023, Russia therefore kept supplying weapons to both sides: while the Russian government was providing "large quantities of weapons" to the SAF, the Russian PMC Wagner supplied arms to the RSF in return for gold.¹⁴² After the death of Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin in August 2023, though, Russia reconsidered its support to the RSF. Several elements may explain this shift in the Russian position: Russia's longstanding ambition to develop a naval base on the Red Sea (in Port Sudan),¹⁴³ its efforts to end military cooperation between the SAF and Ukraine,¹⁴⁴ and – possibly – a decision to further align with Iran.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ "Sudan and Pakistan Sign a Historic \$1.5 Billion Defense Agreement."

¹⁴¹ "Российско-Суданские отношения (Russian-Sudanese relations)," Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Sudan, n.d., https://sudan.mid.ru/ru/dvustoronnie_otnosheniya/.

¹⁴² Sergey Konyashin, "Золото, Военная База и Торговля Оружием: Появилась Надежда На Мир в Судане (Gold, Military Base and Arms Trade: Hope for Peace in Sudan)," *The Moscow Times*, April 6, 2025, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2025/04/06/sudanskii-gambit-a160222>.

¹⁴³ After years of back and forth, the SAF and Russia reportedly agreed on the installation of a Russian military and logistics center in Port Sudan. This deal would involve a twenty-five-year lease in return for the supply of weapons and military equipment to the SAF. Mathieu Olivier, "Tchad, RCA, Russie, Iran... Au Soudan, un casse-tête régional et une guerre qui s'internationalise," *Jeune Afrique*, December 6, 2024, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1637651/politique/tchad-rca-russie-iran-au-soudan-un-casse-tete-regional-et-une-guerre-qui-sinternationalise/>.

¹⁴⁴ Ukraine's special forces provided military support and training to the SAF between August 2023 and mid-2024. Ian Lovett, "Ukraine Is Now Fighting Russia in Sudan," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/ukraine-is-now-fighting-russia-in-sudan-87caf1d8>.

¹⁴⁵ Andrew McGregor, "Russia Switches Sides in Sudan War," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 21, no. 102 (July 2024), <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-switches-sides-in-sudan-war/>.

Türkiye

In the early days of the war, Türkiye had positioned itself as a mediator between the SAF and the RSF.¹⁴⁶ It gradually sided with the SAF though – initially delivering UASs to the SAF via Egypt. Türkiye increasingly uses “drone diplomacy” across the region in order to build soft power, forge new alliances and engage with new geopolitical areas.¹⁴⁷ Türkiye’s motivation in arming the SAF relates to its ambition to promote itself as a major power and expand its influence across the region (including on the Red Sea),¹⁴⁸ while also counterbalancing other regional powers such as the UAE.

UAE

In 1971, Sudan was one of the first countries with which the UAE established diplomatic relations.¹⁴⁹ For many years since, the UAE invested heavily in Sudan. Nowadays, the UAE support the RSF for a range of strategic reasons, including safeguarding their investments, exerting influence over Sudan’s abundant natural resources – particularly gold and agricultural land – and securing access to Red Sea ports. Additionally, the UAE aim to counter rival regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia, and curb the rise of political Islam.¹⁵⁰ The UAE’s financial resources and influence on the RSF also make it a key actor in any peace effort, as well as in the potential post-war reconstruction.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ “President Erdoğan, Sudanese Sovereignty Council officials talk over phone,” *AK Parti*, April 20, 2023, <https://www.akparti.org.tr/en/news/president-erdogan-sudanese-sovereignty-council-officials-talk-over-phone-20-04-2023-18-38-41/>.

¹⁴⁷ Bruno Oliveira Martins, Pinar Tank and Beste İşleyen, “Turkish Drones as a Foreign Policy Tool: A Technology-Mediated Search for Autonomy,” *MidEast Policy Brief* (Peace Research Institute Oslo), 1 (2023), <https://www.prio.org/publications/13435>.

¹⁴⁸ Sinan Ciddi and Sophia Epley, “Is Turkey Playing Both Sides of Sudan’s Civil War?,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, March 15, 2025, https://www.fdd.org/analysis/op_ed/2025/03/15/is-turkey-playing-both-sides-of-sudans-civil-war/; Mustafa Enes Esen, “Turkey’s Chosen Side in Sudan: Why It Matters?,” *Institute for Diplomacy and Economy*, January 17, 2025, <https://www.institute.org/opinion/turkeys-chosen-side-in-sudan-why-it-matters>.

¹⁴⁹ “العلاقات الثنائية (Bilateral relations),” Embassy of the UAE in Sudan, n.d., <https://www.mofa.gov.ae/Missions/Al-Khartum/UAE-Relationships/Bilateral-Relationship>.

¹⁵⁰ The SAF has long been perceived as closely aligned with Islamists.

¹⁵¹ Jonas Horner, “The Falcons and the Secretary Bird: Arab Gulf States in Sudan’s War,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, July 30, 2025, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-falcons-and-the-secretary-bird-arab-gulf-states-in-sudans-war/>.

Conclusion

Atrocities committed by the SAF, the RSF and their allied militias include indiscriminate and direct attacks against civilians, schools, hospitals and humanitarian convoys, the use of starvation as a weapon of war; the targeting of civilians through rape and other forms of sexual violence and arbitrary arrests and torture. In addition, while the SAF is once more accused of having used chemical weapons, the RSF has abducted and recruited children and carried out ethnic cleansing against ‘non-Arab’ communities such as the Masalit and the Zaghawa, which could amount to a genocide.

This inventory of the gravest violations of human rights and international humanitarian law points to the responsibility of states that supply warring parties with weapons and other crucial supplies. As stressed by seven independent human rights experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, “foreign governments providing financial and military support to both parties in this conflict are complicit in starvation, crimes against humanity and war crimes.”¹⁵²

China, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Türkiye stand out as the main suppliers of weapons to the SAF.

Despite its repeated denials, the available evidence enables us to determine that the **UAE** are the main supplier of weapons to the RSF. Also, the **Russian PMC Wagner** – now known as and still active in many parts of Africa as the ‘**Africa Corps**’ – worked with the UAE to supply the RSF in the early days of the war.

Some of these states have proven to be sensitive to international pressure resulting from their previous arms exports to Sudan, which sometimes led to significant policy changes.¹⁵³ Nowadays, though, such pressure is surprisingly limited, in particular compared to other areas of conflict in the wider region, like Gaza.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² “Using Starvation as a Weapon of War in Sudan Must Stop: UN Experts.”

¹⁵³ Wang, “What Motivates Chinese Foreign Policy in Sudan?”

¹⁵⁴ Both the SAF and the RSF have developed relatively sophisticated strategic communication efforts aimed at managing their image and spreading disinformation. The RSF even hired international public relations firms for that purpose. Mat Nashed, “The Soft-Power Campaign of Sudan’s RSF Leader ‘Hemedti,’” *Al Jazeera*, April 20, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/20/the-soft-power-campaign-of-sudans-rsf-leader-hemedti>.

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In addition, weapons produced recently in Bulgaria, China, France, Russia, Serbia and Türkiye also found their way to RSF combatants, often after having been diverted by the UAE. It is worth noting that four of these countries (Bulgaria, China, France and Serbia) are States Parties to the ATT.

Besides states, companies involved in the transfer of weapons to Sudan also have a responsibility to respect human rights. Indeed, their failure to conduct adequate due diligence and to identify “potential adverse impacts of their exports” may entail criminal responsibility.¹⁵⁵ It is worth stressing that the possession of an export licence does not exempt defence companies from civil or criminal liability.¹⁵⁶

By fuelling a conflict with catastrophic consequences for the Sudanese people, countries and companies that supply weapons to the SAF and/or the RSF may be complicit in grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, efforts to suppress criticism of warring parties’ atrocities may also lead to legal action.¹⁵⁸

Hence the recommendations that follow.

¹⁵⁵ Machiko Kanetake and Cedric Ryngaert, *Due Diligence and Corporate Liability of the Defence Industry: Arms Exports, End Use and Corporate Responsibility* (Brussels: Flemish Peace Institute, 2023), 39, <https://vlaamsvredesinstituut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/VVI-Rapport-Due-Diligence-WEB-new.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ Lana Baydas, “Human Rights Due Diligence Within the Arms Industry: Challenges, Practices and Opportunities,” *Business and Human Rights Journal* (February 2025): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/bhj.2025.1>.

¹⁵⁷ *Findings of the Investigations Conducted by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan*, 79.

¹⁵⁸ Mark Townsend, “UK ‘Tried to Suppress Criticism’ of Alleged UAE Role in Arming Sudan’s RSF Militia,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/jun/24/uk-allegedly-suppressing-criticism-uae-arming-sudan-rsf-militia-genocide-darfur>.

Recommendations

At first sight, the war in Sudan presents open societies with an impossible equation. Indeed, between a military junta (SAF) that committed a cascade of war crimes against its own people and a paramilitary force (RSF) accused of crimes against humanity¹⁵⁹ and genocide,¹⁶⁰ there does not appear to be a good option.

At second sight, though, recent months of fighting have exposed significant vulnerabilities of both the SAF and the RSF. While the SAF have proven unable to take back control of large parts of southern and western Sudan, the RSF failed to maintain their loose alliance of militias across the country¹⁶¹ and are dependent on one main foreign sponsor and principal weapons supplier: the UAE. Furthermore, because they have overthrown the civilian government in October 2021 and persecuted the emerging Sudanese civil society before failing to agree on how to lead Sudan together, both the SAF and the RSF generally lack legitimacy and support from Sudanese civilians.

Therefore, policy makers should maximise their pressure on the UAE so that it stops supporting the RSF, while simultaneously signalling to the SAF-controlled regime that any legitimate government must reflect Sudan's diversity and be civilian-driven.

To do so, a good start would be to resist aggressive lobbying and public relations efforts from the RSF and the UAE, aimed at softening their image and suppressing criticism of their role in atrocities. A second step would involve systematic international denunciation of those atrocities and a full-fledged support of relevant bodies investigating violations. Indeed, recent examples – including the reform of its anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism financing (CFT) framework, following international designations – show that the UAE is sensitive to pressure and may respond with policy changes, such as the introduction of robust due diligence procedures.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ “*The Massalit Will Not Come Home*”.

¹⁶⁰ U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, “Genocide Determination in Sudan and Imposing Accountability Measures,” Press release, January 7, 2025, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/genocide-determination-in-sudan-and-imposing-accountability-measures/>.

¹⁶¹ Mahmoud Ali, Getachew Birru, and Eltayeb, *Two Years of War in Sudan*.

¹⁶² Morgan Heavener, Steve Molloy, and Nader Kayali, “United Arab Emirates: A Shifting Landscape of Risk and Reform,” *Global Investigations Review*, April 24, 2025, <https://globalinvestigationsreview.com/review/the-european-middle-eastern-and-african-investigations-review/2025/article/united-arab-emirates-shifting-landscape-of-risk-and-reform>.

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Simultaneously, while the current conflict leaves little room for a democratic transition within the SAF-led coalition, policy makers should consider increasing their support for local mediators and Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs).¹⁶³ Such support would indeed send a powerful signal to the SAF about prioritising the needs of Sudanese civilians and communities. It would also increase the social and political cost of excluding democratic forces.

While obstacles to peace abound, reducing warring parties' access to weapons and ammunition constitutes another achievable objective that is also in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.

It is therefore essential that the UN and EU arms embargoes be extended and, where possible, expanded. Monitoring and verification mechanisms must be reinforced, and embargo violations systematically denounced. Support to independent journalists and researchers documenting potential embargo violations should also be enhanced.

In a similar vein, recently manufactured weapons from four states parties to the ATT (Bulgaria, China, France and Serbia) have been identified in the possession of the RSF. These states must urgently act to stop such transfers from taking place.

Similarly, European countries, including Belgium's Walloon Region, should reconsider transferring weapons and/or production equipment to countries that have been supplying Sudan's warring parties, notably Egypt and the UAE.

¹⁶³ The ERRs are grassroots and community-led networks that provide humanitarian relief. They were founded following the 2019 revolution and sought to fill the humanitarian void left by international aid organisations. They often use WhatsApp groups to coordinate aid. Michelle D'Arcy, "Mutual Aid & Rethinking International Humanitarian Engagement in Sudan," *CHR Michelsen Institute*, 2023, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/8866-mutual-aid-rethinking-international-humanitarian-engagement-in-sudan>; Gerrit Kurtz, "Protecting Civilians in Sudan: Even without a Ceasefire, There Are Ways to Curb the Brutal Violence against the Civilian Population," *SWP Comment* (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), n° 31 (July 2025), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2025C31-CiviliansInSudan.pdf>.

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More specifically, the UAE's history of cooperation with the Russian PMC Wagner,¹⁶⁴ its documented violations of the United Nations Security Council arms embargo on Libya,¹⁶⁵ combined with the recent discovery of French-manufactured reactive defence systems incorporated into RSF armoured personnel carriers made by the UAE,¹⁶⁶ should leave no doubt on the obvious risk that European weapons that are transferred to the UAE ultimately end up in the hands of groups committing atrocities.

Therefore, while war rages on the European continent, rather than exporting weapons to countries that fuel catastrophic armed conflicts and contribute to the destruction of the international rules-based order, European countries and companies would do better to focus their precious production and know-how on the needs of their own armies.

¹⁶⁴ *East Africa Counterterrorism Operation North And West Africa Counterterrorism Operation: Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress* (Washington, 2020), <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/04/2002546287/-1/-/1/1/LEAD%20IG%20EAST%20AFRICA%20AND%20NORTH%20AND%20WEST%20AFRICA%20COUNTERTERRORISM%20OPERATIONS.PDF>.

¹⁶⁵ *Letter Dated 14 September 2023 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2023/673 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2023), <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/234/61/pdf/n2323461.pdf>.

¹⁶⁶ "Soudan. Des systèmes d'armement de fabrication française."

List of Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
APC	armoured personnel carrier
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
DIS	Defense Industries System
EU	European Union
FN	Fabrique nationale (belge)
GIS	General Intelligence Service
GSLF	Gathering of Sudan Liberation Forces
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
IGG	International Golden Group
IFV	infantry fighting vehicle
IDOS	German Institute of Sustainability and Development
IFW	Kiel Institute for the World Economy
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
MANPADS	man-portable air defence systems
MBT	main battle tank
MIC	Military Industry Corporation
NISS	National Security and Intelligence Service
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
PMC	private military company
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SLM/A	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
SMT	Sudan Master Technology Engineering
SSF	Sudan Shield Forces

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SWP	German Institute for International and Security Affairs
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAS	unmanned aircraft system
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States

Who is Fuelling the Sudan 2023 Civil War?

After the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seized power in a coup in October 2021, the two entities failed to agree on how to share power within the new military regime. As a result, fighting erupted on 15 April 2023, leading to a major refugee and displacement crisis, as well as to some of the gravest violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws. A growing number of experts even talk about a genocide happening in the shadow of other world events. It is therefore of the utmost importance to identify the countries that enable the SAF and the RSF. Indeed, despite United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) arms embargoes, both the SAF and the RSF could rely throughout the war on a relatively unrestricted flow of weapons and ammunition originating from different countries. To determine who these countries are, the author examined and crosschecked a broad range of sources that document arms transfers and supply routes across the region, which enabled the identification of seven countries that have been supplying weapons and ammunition to Sudan's main warring parties. This Focus Paper also examines pre-war stockpiles, recent deliveries, supply routes and the types of weapons transferred to the warring parties. Finally, it provides recommendations to policy makers.

Stan BRABANT is the Sahel-Saharan Strip research fellow at the Centre for Security and Defence Studies (CSDS) of the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID). Before joining the CSDS in March 2025, he worked for Handicap International (aka Humanity & Inclusion), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Amnesty International and the Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP).

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