

Signs of Supply

WEAPONS TRACING IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

Conflict between state and non-state forces continues in Sudan and South Sudan, despite multiple peace agreements. In late 2013, a number of anti-government militias were engaged in vigorous insurgencies in South Sudan; meanwhile, separate branches of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North (SPLM–N) were fighting rebellions on two fronts in the Sudanese states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and the Darfur conflict continued.

To shed light on the types, origin, and supply patterns of arms and ammunition to non-state armed groups, the Small Arms Survey's Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan launched the Arms and Ammunition Tracing Desk in 2011. The project has built on and adapted techniques pioneered by UN embargo panel investigations, applying a multi-step process of weapons identification, mapping, and verification.

While Sudan and South Sudan are home to an abundance of legacy weapons from the civil war era, many of which originated in former Eastern Bloc countries, this chapter focuses on more recently produced weapons, including arms and ammunition manufactured in China and Iran, as well as Sudanese-produced weapons and ammunition. The vast majority of the weapons documented with rebel groups originated in Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) stockpiles.

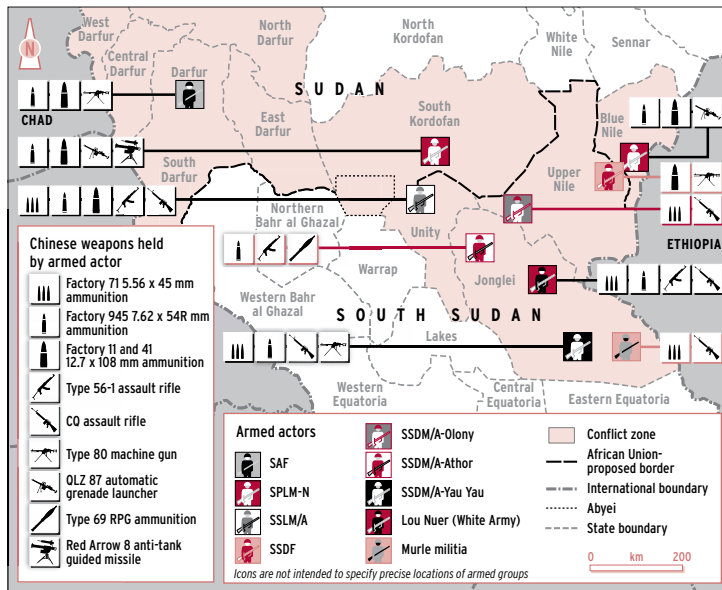
Field inspections in Sudan and South Sudan have noted a large variety of Chinese equipment, including assault rifles, general-purpose and heavy machine guns, RPG-7-pattern rocket launchers, automatic grenade launchers, antitank missiles, various types of rockets, and small-calibre ammunition. Armed opposition groups in Darfur and South Kordofan, as well as rebel and tribal militias in South Sudan—as well as the SAF—all had varieties of Chinese weapons in their possession. According to data reported to the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade), China was the largest supplier state, accounting for 58 per cent of reported transfers to Sudan of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition, and 'conventional weapons'.

Military ties between Iran and Sudan have also grown strong over the years. According to UN Comtrade, Iran was the source of 13 per cent of Khartoum's self-reported arms imports in 2001–12. These have included RPG-7-pattern launchers, No. 4 anti-personnel landmines, mortar rounds and tubes, as well as 7.62 × 39 mm and 12.7 × 108 mm ammunition. Many types were observed in the hands of South Sudanese rebel forces, the SPLM–N in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, as well as with SAF.



SPLA–N fighters watch over ammunition and weapons captured from the Sudan Armed Forces, near Gos village in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan, Sudan, May 2012.
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Map 7.2 Chinese weapons among armed actors, Sudan and South Sudan, 2011–13



Sudan has become a significant producer of arms and ammunition in Africa, and the Survey has observed domestically produced Sudanese arms and ammunition in significant quantities with Sudanese forces, among armed groups in Darfur and South Kordofan, with South Sudanese insurgents, and in several other conflict zones outside of Sudan and South Sudan. While the government-owned Military Industry Corporation (MIC) claims to manufacture a wide range of small arms and ammunition, as well as armoured vehicles and main battle tanks, the Survey has documented a narrower range, including machine guns, mortars, various rockets, and small arms ammunition.

The Survey's Arms and Ammunition Tracing Desk project has revealed that non-state armed groups in Sudan and South Sudan rarely obtain their weapons directly from foreign states; instead, they

tend to receive materiel from local sources. Some of the arming has been deliberate, as in the case of Khartoum's arming of Southern rebel commanders—who have, in turn, passed on weapons to tribal militias.

Non-state armed groups also acquire weapons from state forces through battlefield capture. Some groups are more successful at this than others. With decreasing support from external actors, a coalition of rebels in Sudan—the Sudan Revolutionary Front—has maintained a sizeable arsenal through its military victories against SAF. In South Kordofan, the SPLM–N captured hundreds of thousands of rounds of small- to medium-calibre ammunition as well as more than a dozen vehicles and tanks from SAF in 2012. While the SPLM–N in Blue Nile has been somewhat less successful at capturing military equipment than their South Kordofan counterparts, they too have seized significant quantities of SAF weapons during battle. In most instances, these weapons not only correlate with the materiel that the SPLM–N captured in South Kordofan, but also match the equipment captured from SAF in Darfur and that found in the hands of Southern militias in South Sudan.

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In general, then, Sudanese government stockpiles have proved to be the main source of military hardware for insurgent groups. But Southern insurgent groups have also captured arms and ammunition from the SPLA. In 2012–13, David Yau Yau's militia secured large numbers of weapons and their associated ammunition as a result of its battlefield successes against the SPLA in Jonglei. These weapons included heavy machine guns, mortars, and several vehicles.

Investigators are increasingly documenting newer-model weapons with removed serial numbers and markings.

Much has been learned in Sudan and South Sudan, but much remains unknown. The particulars of the supply chain—the specific actors involved, their motivations, and potential rewards—require further study. Tracing in Sudan and South Sudan also faces new challenges. Perhaps the most difficult is the increase in newer-model weapons documented with removed serial numbers and markings. Such removal may be a response to investigations into the custody chain of newly arrived weapons. While this practice makes tracing much more difficult—although not impossible—it is also a clear indicator of illicit supply. ■