

HUMANITARIAN AID RELIEF TRUST (HART)



## **HART Report: The Arms Trade and Sudan**

### **Uncovering the Major Arms Exporters and the Human Rights Abuses They Support**

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## **Introduction**

Described as [“Africa’s arms dump”](#), Sudan is one of the most heavily armed countries in the world. The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has fuelled a cycle of conflict and instability. Despite a ten year old U.N. arms embargo on the Sudanese Government over its actions in Darfur, weapons are still being supplied to President Bashir’s regime. These are then being used to carry out attacks on civilians, particularly in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions. Until recently, the specific types of weapons and ammunitions used, and their points of origins, have been only vaguely understood. Increasingly, however, more detailed information is beginning to emerge that enables us to trace the complex web of arms trafficking.

## **Historical background**

In order to better understand the present arms trafficking situation, it is important to have an awareness of the wider historical context, examining the past to see how Sudan became known as “Africa’s arms dump” and how the widespread and impune use of firearms against civilians became normalised.

Firearms are first believed to have arrived in Sudan in the early 1800s with the invading forces of [Muhammad Ali Pasha](#) of the Ottoman Empire. Further arms were then introduced later in the 19th century thanks to the British-led Anglo-Egyptian forces in the [1898 recapturing of Sudan](#). It wasn’t until the 1950s, however, that civilian gun ownership began to increase, following a failed 1955 mutiny and the beginnings of a Southern Sudanese secessionist movement. This proliferation in arms, and the climate of insecurity that came with it, was exacerbated by Cold War Realpolitik. Both the Sudanese Government and rebel groups received weapons and ammunition during this period as foreign powers used the country as a kind of proxy war for Cold War point scoring. For example, West Germany established an ammunitions factory in Khartoum and introduced vast quantities of automatic small arms, which led their Soviet bloc rivals in East Germany to supply one of the main opposition groups, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), with AK47s in response.

This period was also marked by liberation wars and neighbouring conflicts, the spill-over effects of which flooded Sudan with more weapons and ammunition, which seeped through the country’s porous borders. For example, according to one security expert, the Libyan-Chad war of the 1980s - *“contributed to the influx of small arms and light weaponry into Sudan, and in particular Darfur, which... received weaponry that outmatched the arsenal of both the police and armed forces”*. Geopolitics also played a role as Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi sought to

oust the Sudanese President at the time, Gaafar Nimeiry, by allegedly arming the SPLA and other opposition groups. This inundated Darfur with weapons and ammunition, [sowing the seeds for future conflict](#). The Sudanese Government, however, wasn't just a passive victim of external conflict and Realpolitik. It also helped fan the flames of arms proliferation arming militant groups that were engaged in intrastate conflict in neighbouring countries, as it sought to profit both financially and geopolitically from the regional instability. In 1964, for example, the Government in Khartoum involved itself in the Congo crisis that followed the bloody overthrow of President Patrice Lumumba by supplying the anti-government rebels with West German G3 assault rifles. This intervention had negative repercussions for the Sudanese Government. When the rebels were defeated a year later, it was Southern Sudanese secessionist militants who benefited, with many of these same weapons falling into their hands.

The proliferation of arms and ammunition as a legacy of cold war realpolitik and spillover from conflicts in neighbouring countries has served to fuel a cycle of greater violence and political instability, which are being keenly felt to the west in Darfur as well as in the southern regions of Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

### **The U.N Sanctions Regime**

In July 2004, in response to the global outcry over the humanitarian crisis being caused by the violence in Darfur, the United Nations Security Council adopted [Resolution 1556](#). This established a ban on the sale of arms to 'non-governmental entities and individuals, including the Janjaweed', [the Government-backed militia group in Darfur](#). The Resolution also called on the Sudanese Government to fulfil its obligations and disarm the Janjaweed. However, as it didn't mention other pro-Government militia groups specifically, the Government in Khartoum could argue that the resolution didn't cover other state-backed militias.

A year later, and with no clear improvement in the security situation, the Security Council passed [Resolution 1591](#), which reshaped the sanctions regime by extending the arms embargo to all parties covered by the Ceasefire Agreement. This meant that Sudanese national security forces were now under an arms embargo, and unable to receive military support, in the Darfur region. This largely held until 2010, when another [Resolution \(1945\)](#) had to be passed in response to evidence that weapons legally exported to Sudan were then being used in Darfur. Resolution 1945 therefore required all arms transactions to come with end-user documentation. It passed unanimously, with only China abstaining (Small Arms Survey, 2012).

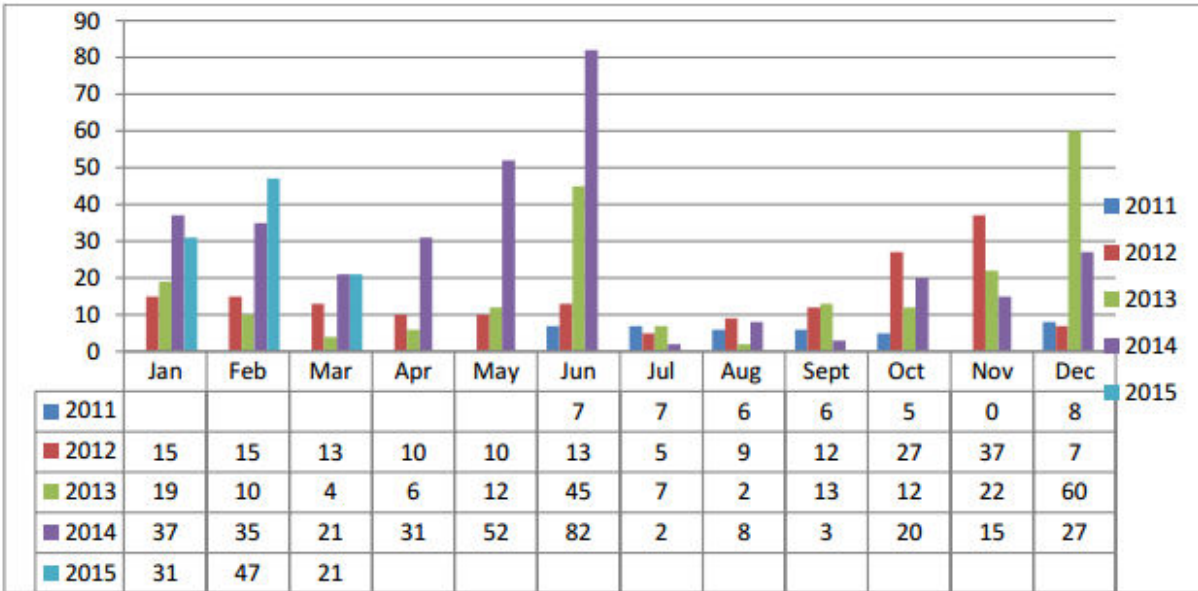
## **The Situation Today**

The influx of arms and ammunition into Sudan and South Sudan over the years has created a legacy of violence which often manifests itself in the bloodshed and instability engulfing Sudan today. Perhaps the most violent of which is occurring in the Nuba Mountains and the South Kordofan region, close to the new, often volatile, and hotly contested border with the breakaway nation of South Sudan. The area has [previously been blighted by conflict](#) between the Government and the SPLA in the mid-80s, and despite a tentative truce being signed under international pressure in 2002, violence has again recently flared back up, with civilians bearing the brunt of the conflict. It has been [estimated by sources close](#) to the SPLA that in the period between June 2011 and January 2012 alone, at least 900 bombs were dropped on the Nuba Mountains, killing at least 86 civilians and injuring 170. This has resulted in the displacement of nearly half a million people, many thousands of which are being forced to subsist on wild foliage to survive (London Review of Books, 2012). Some observers have described this as [genocide by starvation](#).

The conflict has further escalated earlier this year. [According to the Sudan Consortium](#), the Al-Bashir regime has carried out 'significant attacks' with over 68 bombing incidents in February and March, killing 10 civilians and injuring over 60. A quarter of those injured were children. [Bombings on civilian populations increased 186% over the 2014 to 2015 period](#). December 2014 saw the highest level of recorded bombings in a single month since the conflict began. This has been [blamed on new technologies the Government has obtained](#), allowing the Armed Forces to have better, more precise targeting of civilians, through the bombing of their homes, schools, hospitals and places of worship. For example, newly obtained [Weishi WS-1 rockets, obtained from China, can reach targets up to 45km away](#).

The chart from the Sudan Consortium below shows the scale of Government attacks on civilians in the last four years:

**Number of bombing and shelling attacks on civilians and civilian objects in Southern Kordofan  
June 2011 – March 2015**



However, the bloodshed and humanitarian suffering isn't just confined to South Kordofan. 2015 marks the 12th anniversary of the bloody conflict in Darfur, and the situation seems to be no closer to a resolution. 73% of the population [are estimated](#) to be in need of humanitarian assistance while some 40% are displaced. Over 100,000 people have been displaced there since the start of this year alone. Human Rights Watch has highlighted the [systematic rape of 221 girls in Tabit](#), Northern Darfur as exemplifying the way in which the Sudanese Government is using sexual and gender based violence as a weapon in its counterinsurgency against rebel groups and civilians caught up in the conflict.

**Who is Arming the Sudanese Government?**

As mentioned previously, the historical legacy of Cold War geopolitics and past conflicts in neighbouring parts of East Africa is still being acutely felt even today. The lack of a robust state infrastructure or even an international framework to control the spread of arms means that many weapons stay in circulation, to be used again and again long after a conflict has technically ended, or at least died down. For example, the Soviet Union may have disintegrated in the early 90s but a relic from the era lives on in the [old Soviet Antonov cargo planes that are being used](#) by the Sudanese Government as improvised bombers. These planes are used in a long-established tactic of aerial bombardment against the rebel held areas in the Nuba Mountains, often resulting in civilian casualties. One survivor of such an attack in April 2012, 23 year old Malata describes the bombing of his village in a [report for the LRB](#): *'The Antonov*

*dropped the bomb, and I saw it falling straight on us. It fell less than a metre from our foxhole. Nothing touched us, but then fire and heat came to us. The air was burning.'* Despite the apparent longevity of relics like the Antonovs, the al-Bashir regime in Khartoum has been keen to have its weapons arsenal updated. Alongside “old drums stuffed with scraps of metal”, there are now newer and more professionally made explosives, some of which have been discovered unexploded. These are alleged to be Chinese copies of an old Soviet model, according to one arms expert, Claudio Gramizzi (London Review of Books, 2012).



**The aftermath of an Antonov bombing attack on Mayak Village, Blue Nile, 20 March 2014  
(Sudan Consortium Human Rights Report, March 2014)**

## **China**

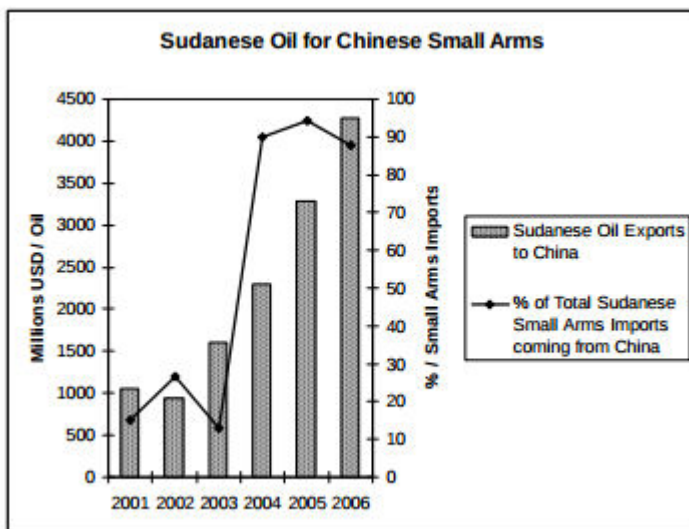
Jumping from a mere 3% of total arms sales (1996-2000) to 25% in the period 2006-2010, China is [one of the biggest arms exporters](#) to Sub-Saharan Africa, recently overtaking Germany to [become the 3rd biggest](#) arms exporter in the world. Many of these arms went onto be used in the Darfur conflict, despite there being a United Nations embargo on the region in place since 2005. In pursuing a close arms trading relationship with the Sudanese Government, China has [sought to undermine](#) U.N efforts to sanction the al-Bashir regime. The undermining of sanctions by Beijing arguably began as the investigative Panels of Experts, created by the Security Council to monitor sanctions violations in African conflicts, “*discovered increasing amounts of Chinese small arms in Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea, despite U.N. arms embargoes*” ([CNN, 2012](#)). China has also been found supplying Sudan with Weishi WS-1 rockets. At four metres long, and with a diameter of 302mm, these rockets are believed to be the largest artillery ever used in a Sudanese conflict. Being able to reach a target over 45km away, the rockets are first choice of purchase for the Government in its mission to strike rebel-held areas deep in the Nuba Mountains.



**Chinese-made T 72A anti-personnel landmines. (Sudan Consortium Human Rights Report, March 2014)**

In selling arms to Sudan, China has gone to great lengths to contravene international efforts to sanction the al-Bashir regime, but why?

In a word: Oil. Beijing has been keen to gain access to external energy sources to meet growing demand at home. Sudan is China's fourth largest oil supplier, behind Saudi Arabia, Iran and Oman. In turn, China supplies Sudan with a wide array of arms and ammunition, as well as enough money to bolster its own domestic arms industry. A relationship that is highlighted in the [chart](#) below:



**Russia**

Nevertheless, China is far from being the only country to support the al-Bashir regime with arms sales. As recently as 2012, Russia partnered with China to resist Western efforts to sanction the Sudans over the escalating conflict between the two countries. Only last December, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, [announced](#) even closer military ties with Khartoum, saying *“we have a project and a plan to develop military cooperation in a way that will not disturb the balance of power in the region”*. This allusion to *“not disturbing the balance of power”*, can be arguably interpreted as code for propping up a beleaguered regime whose economy has been hit hard by economic sanctions and whose leader is internationally isolated and wanted by the ICC for war crimes. A [2012 Amnesty International report](#) condemned Russia for fuelling conflicts in Darfur and South Kordofan, stating that *“the continual replacement of (helicopter gunships) Mi-24s by the Russian Federation makes it possible for attacks in Darfur to continue”*, leading to the displacement of 70,000 people in Eastern Darfur in 2011 alone as the Government waged war on Zaghawa community and other ethnic minority groups. Like China, Russia [has also sought to gain lucrative energy deals with energy-rich Sudan](#), backing its efforts to secure the oil-fields of South Kordofan after much of the country’s energy sources found themselves on the other side of the new border following South Sudan's independence in 2011. There is also a degree of geopolitics at play as Moscow aims to rebuke what it sees as Western dominance in the international arena, finding common cause with other countries also on the receiving end of U.S-led sanctions.



**Unexploded Russian-made FAB 500 (Parachute Bomb) dropped on Ekpol village, Southern Kordofan, 13/02/2014 (Sudan Consortium Report, February 2014)**





**Russian S-8 Air to Surface Rockets causing serious damage in South Kordofan (Sudan Consortium Report, February 2014)**

### **Other Notable Exporters:**

Although China and Russia are arguably the most high profile players in exporting arms to Khartoum, they aren't the only ones. Evidence has also been obtained that traces weapons and ammunition found in Sudan back to Belarus and Iran amongst others, in violation of Security Council resolutions embargoing arms sales. Belarus has [supplied](#) Sudan with S-8 rockets and 15 heavily armoured Su-25 attack aircraft (in 2008-2010 period alone) to carry out strikes against rebel groups in Darfur. According to a U.N. [report](#) *"these strikes last a few hours, but continue for between one and three days, and are later followed by troops of men in khaki uniforms in trucks and on horses or camels, who enter villages and commit violations of international humanitarian law"*.

Iran is another big arms exporter. According to the Small Arms Survey, a Swiss-based independent research group, *"military ties between Iran and Sudan have grown strong over the years"* to the point where Tehran is [the second biggest arms exporter to the country](#), behind China. Between 2001 and 2012, Iran accounted for [13% of imports](#) of small arms and other conventional weapons; [China accounted for 58%](#). Data from a drone [shot down by rebels near Jaw in March 2012](#) suggest that Iran has also been supplying more high-tech weaponry, enabling the Sudanese Government to rely less on relics from the conflicts of yesteryear. The components of the drone were also believed to have come from the E.U, with the metadata from the video recorders [suggesting they were made in the UK](#) (LRB, 2012). Arguably, this suggests that the West doesn't have a clean conscience when it comes to this conflict, as made evident by the pictures below, showcasing western-made weapons being used by Khartoum. This therefore raises questions about the effectiveness of sanctions, seeing how European companies are allegedly able to sell to Iran and Iran is then able to sell to Sudan, despite

embargoes on both countries. Conversely, it can be counter-argued that these were first sold to “legitimate” regimes, not under international sanctions, who then went on to sell the western-made weapons to Iran or Sudan. However, this at least suggests a problem with the supply chain, in which the global trade of conventional weapons, such as AK47s, [have fewer regulations than bananas](#) and will boost calls for tougher regulations.



**M14 anti-personnel land-mines (US-made)**



**No 4 anti-personnel land-mines (Israeli-made)**

## **Conclusions:**

The flagrant disregard for international sanctions by some states is symptomatic of an inability on the part of the global community to solve the political and humanitarian situation in Sudan, meaning that conflicts in Darfur and South Kordofan are left to fester away without resolution. Faced with escalating levels of violence and a deteriorating humanitarian situation, there are no quick fixes or easy answers. This report recommends that U.N sanctions on arms sales should be applied to the whole of the Sudan, not just the Darfur region. If oil is indeed a strong motivation for transgressing international embargoes, then perhaps [the glut of oil and subsequent drop in demand](#) means that the Government in Khartoum's strength as an oil exporter has been weakened, at least for the time being. Now would therefore be a good time to renew global efforts to shift to more eco-friendly forms of renewable energy and thus end the geopolitical power that comes with being rich in oil but poor in democracy and respect for human rights, as is the case with countries like Saudi Arabia and Sudan. Seeing as the international community at the Security Council level remains so divided over resolving the situation in Sudan, it is then arguable that local and regional level actors might have better luck. The Sudan Consortium, along with other civil society organisations, has [called upon](#) the African Union to take a more proactive role in promoting good governance in Sudan. If a political solution isn't reached soon, and a sustainable peace remains unachieved, then it's the people of Sudan, long forgotten and ignored, who will ultimately continue to pay the price.

## **How To Take Action:**

Sudan is just one example of the devastating impact the international arms trade can have on human rights and development, fuelling conflict and insecurity. The military-industrial complex puts profit over people as governments turn to arms exports in a time of austerity and economic uncertainty, propping up oppressive regimes in the process. It's up to us to put pressure on government and big business to end their political and economic support for the deadly arms trade. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) is one such organisation attempting to do this, working in the UK as it campaigns against the global arms trade by promoting a boycott and divestment strategy. They provide a lot of information detailing the intricacies of the arms trade while also highlighting the ways we can get involved in the disarmament campaign, all of which can be found [here](#) on their website.



**Bombings of Adouna Village, Delami County. Nov 6th 2014. (Sourced from an April 2015 Report by the International Refugee Rights Initiative and National Human Rights Monitoring Organisation)**

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