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Sudan: The Armed Forces in Disarray



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An Intelligence Assessment

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Sudan: The Armed Forces in Disarray



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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by 
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,
and  It
was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations.

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Comment and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESAs,



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[Redacted]

**Sudan: The Armed Forces
in Disarray** [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 14 August 1986
was used in this report.*

The military capabilities of Sudan and the quality of its armed forces' leadership have reached an alltime low. The military can neither defend the country from external attackers nor maintain internal security. Khartoum will remain heavily dependent on external suppliers even to maintain its current diminished capabilities. Military assistance issues are likely to figure increasingly as an irritant in US-Sudanese relations. [Redacted]

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The military has failed to score any gains against the two principal threats to the country's stability and security—the southern insurgency and Libyan subversion. Inconsistent strategy, inappropriate tactics, poor intelligence, low morale, and insurmountable logistic problems contribute to government losses in the south. Even when combined with the civilian security services, the armed forces' ability to contain Libyan hostile activity is hampered by inadequate resources and a lack of counterterrorist expertise. [Redacted]

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Sudan's ability to improve the capabilities of its armed forces is limited by its lack of resources and the reluctance of foreign donors to give more than token amounts of grant aid. Prospects for the regime of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi to rebuild and strengthen the armed forces successfully—and gain their loyalty—are poor. Relations between the civilian government and the military will continue to sour as the military's problems mount and the government's fortunes decline. There is a strong prospect that the Army would return to politics either in a ruling coalition with the civilian government or, more likely, through a military coup. [Redacted]

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Continued deterioration of the armed forces, therefore, is virtually a certainty. Over the next two years this decline will add to Khartoum's problems with the south and could ultimately generate a large-scale mutiny among Army units in the southern commands. Splits in the military will intensify pressure for regional autonomy, especially in the south and west. [Redacted]

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The pressing need for equipment will drive Sudan into more deals with suppliers, such as Libya, that will exact a political price for assistance and add to frictions with the United States. The Sudanese Government, which has already backed away from its support for the Camp David accords, will be less supportive of US policy. Even a successor government run by senior or older middle-grade officers who favor the United States would attempt, at least initially, to show independence from foreign influence. [Redacted]

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
The Decline of the Military	1
Current Deficiencies	1
The Southern Insurgency	2
Libyan Threat	4
Obstacles to Force Improvement	5
Restrictions to Sadiq al-Mahdi's Control of the Military	7
Outlook and Implications for the United States	8
Appendixes	
A. Factors Affecting Capabilities: Manpower and Training	11
B. Sudanese Armed Forces Order of Battle	13

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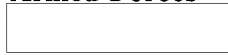
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Sudan: The Armed Forces in Disarray



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The Decline of the Military

Politicization, 20 years of fighting insurgencies in the south, and budgetary stringencies have steadily eroded Sudanese Army capabilities since the country gained independence in 1956. Field Marshal Suwar al-Dahab, the former Military Council chairman, told the US Ambassador in early 1986 that Sudan's military needs to be rebuilt, retrained, and reconditioned from the bottom up.

Sudan's Army has suffered from having been drawn repeatedly into politics. The military—the strongest institution in a country rent by ethnic, tribal, and sectarian divisions—stepped in to take over from weak civilian governments in 1958 and again in 1969. President Nimeiri, who ruled for 16 years after his May 1969 coup, was especially instrumental in politicizing the Army, according to US Embassy reports. Nimeiri appointed officers to a highly corrupt Military Economic Board that administered most of the national industries and controlled much of the country's foreign investment. He demanded that officers actively participate in his political party and in his efforts to implement Islamic law in Sudan after 1983. Nimeiri dominated the professional military, personally assuming key positions and favoring loyalty over competence in the selection of his senior officers.



The current insurgency in the south, which began in 1983, has been even more destructive to military capabilities than previous rounds of fighting in the area. Combat losses, equipment shortages, and lackluster leadership have sapped morale and performance. Most of the military budget supports counter-insurgency operations instead of needed military improvements. Major equipment—US-made F-5E fighters, helicopters, and armored personnel carriers, for example—lost in the war has not been replaced. Sudanese officials claim the war costs about \$500,000 a day.



Table 1
Operating Defense Expenditures

Fiscal Year ^a	Defense Expenditures (million US \$) ^b	Percentage of Central Government Budget (current expenditures)	Percentage of GDP
1981	379.8	14.1	2.5
1982	419.0	12.1	2.8
1983	539.0	12.5	2.3
1984	534.1	17.7	NA
1985 ^c	823.2	16.5	NA

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^a The Sudanese fiscal year begins on 1 July.

^b Dollar value converted at an exchange rate of 2.45 Sudanese pounds per US \$.

^c Projected.



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The abysmal state of the Sudanese economy and Khartoum's dependence on foreign donors for supply and even maintenance are major contributing factors to the current disarray in the military.

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notes that the diversity of Sudan's equipment and suppliers has resulted in low operational rates and little compatibility among units. Khartoum has run the gamut in its sources of supply, ranging from reliance on the West from independence to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, to a close military relationship with the Soviet Union from 1968 to 1971, to dependence on the nonaligned world—principally China—from 1972 to the late 1970s, and then back to reliance on the West in the late 1970s.

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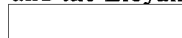


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Current Deficiencies

By any standard, the Sudanese armed forces are incapable of meeting the principal threats to Sudanese stability and security—the insurgency in the south and the Libyan subversive and conventional threat.

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Figure 1. Airborne troops such as these are used in counterinsurgency operations. [redacted]



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The Southern Insurgency

Despite a commitment of 35 to 40 percent of its 51,000-man forces to the south, the Sudanese Army has made no headway against the insurgents in the three-year-old struggle. On the basis of Embassy reporting and insurgent radiobroadcasts, we estimate that the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) now numbers 15,000 to 20,000 men, a significant increase over the estimated 2,000-man force that formed in late 1983 after southern Army units mutinied and fled to Ethiopia. Operating from bases in Ethiopia and, [redacted] armed by such Soviet surrogates as East Germany and Cuba, the rebels control much of the southern countryside. They operate in all three southern regions and occasionally probe into adjacent regions to the north. Operating in their home areas, they are better able to live off the land and to put the terrain to better military advantage than government forces can. [redacted]

Khartoum's strategy to contain the SPLA is inconsistent and poorly managed, in our judgment. [redacted]

[redacted] on the nature of the enemy, the capabilities of their own forces, and the severity of logistic problems. He reports that, at the field level, the Army has used the south as a dumping ground for less capable or untrustworthy officers and that recent efforts to reverse this trend have fallen far short. [redacted]

The government's efforts to take advantage of tribal rivalries by providing arms to those who oppose the rebels have proved to be only marginally successful. The US Embassy reports that the arms provided these tribes generally increase instability throughout the south. The tribes use their government-supplied weapons to settle old scores and confront central authority rather than to attack the rebels. [redacted]

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Figure 2



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meeting the threat from Libya, in our judgment. Of the eight countries bordering Sudan, we believe that Libya presents the greatest subversive and conventional military threat. Although Tripoli ended its support to the southern Sudanese dissidents after the coup in Khartoum in April 1985, it still poses a threat. The US Embassy reports Libya has penetrated Sudan's security services, and it recruits among the military to prepare for potential antiregime activities.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted], much less in more remote areas such as Darfur and Kordofan, where Libyans are working to gain influence. The military's 120-man counter-terrorist unit cannot do its part to contain the terrorist threat, given the generally poor training in the armed forces. [redacted] Even the military and civilian intelligence services combined are inadequate to meet the threat. We believe that infighting within and contests for control of the new civilian security services that were formed following the dissolution of President Nimeiri's security agencies have crippled Khartoum's ability to protect Sudanese and foreign interests. [redacted]

The military's ability to defend against the conventional threat from Libya—most likely consisting of limited military actions such as an airstrike, the occupation of a small area of Sudan, or the introduction of troops to support a coup attempt—is slight. A Libyan military attack is unlikely, at least as long as Qadhafi believes that maintaining good relations with Khartoum favors his goals, but the mercurial Libyan leader has kept his options open for a more coercive policy. [redacted]

Tripoli bombed a radio station near Khartoum in March 1984. Although the attack did not destroy the station, it demonstrated Khartoum's vulnerability to air attacks. In the event relations sour again, Sudan's ability to defend against a Libyan airstrike is no better. [redacted]

[redacted]

We believe Libya established a supply depot in western Sudan for contingency use in either Chad or Sudan. US Embassy and [redacted] reported the arrival in March 1986 of Libyan truck convoys totaling at least 150 trucks with some 1,100 "relief workers," including 160 soldiers. [redacted] as many as 900 of them were pulled out of Darfur in August 1986 as a result of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi's requests during his visit to Tripoli earlier that month. [redacted]

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If Qadhafi were to end his current support for the Sadiq government, he could rebuild the Libyan foothold in the west to exert pressure on Khartoum. Driving out the occupation force would require the government to reduce its military presence in other parts of the country. Although a force large enough to meet the task could probably be pulled from the capital area and Port Sudan, without external assistance the logistic burden of airlifting and supporting the units would require drastic reductions in counter-insurgency operations in the south. [redacted]

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Obstacles to Force Improvement

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Khartoum's ability to retrain and rearm the armed forces is severely constrained by lack of resources and by dwindling contributions from foreign donors. Sadiq al-Mahdi has publicly pledged to upgrade the military's capabilities, but, given his less than firm grip on the government, he is even less able to deliver on such promises than his predecessors were. The difficulty of coaxing enough ammunition, replacement weaponry, and transport out of foreign donors is likely to derail plans for force modernization. Many suppliers, especially the Arab countries, have given only token amounts of assistance. [redacted]

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Rearming the Sudanese military will require preparation and the taking of steps to increase its ability to absorb the equipment that are probably beyond Sudan's capabilities. These steps include providing basic and refresher training; developing a permanent cadre of trained technical personnel, instructors, pilots, and others; and instituting a viable maintenance program. [redacted]

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Given Khartoum's extensive needs—and its \$10 billion debt— we expect Sudan to continue to seek military assistance from diverse suppliers. Even together these assistance programs are unlikely to make much headway against the problems besetting the military. [redacted]

Khartoum considers the United States its primary supplier despite cuts in military assistance over the past year, according to Embassy reporting. US assistance in fiscal year 1986 has been geared toward rehabilitation of air defense radars, overhaul of C-130 transport aircraft, establishment of a national logistic system, and sales of V-150 armored personnel carriers and limited amounts of ammunition. [redacted]

France, the United Kingdom, West Germany, and Canada are providing primarily nonlethal aid. According to the US Embassy, this assistance consists mostly of training programs, instructors for Sudanese military schools, and support teams for major military equipment. US officials have noted that the West Germans are attempting to develop military industry in Sudan in the form of a small-arms ammunition plant in Khartoum, but production at the facility is limited by raw materials shortages. [redacted]

Among the Communist countries, China is Sudan's supplier of longest standing. Beijing has provided major equipment items such as tanks and aircraft as well as training and maintenance support. [redacted] signed an agreement this year to provide an aid package worth \$7 million [redacted] the assistance consists mainly of ammunition and aircraft spare parts. [redacted]

The Soviet Union has not provided assistance to Sudan since 1977, but [redacted] indicates East European countries have continued assistance at low levels. We believe Moscow may restore some military aid in an attempt to gain influence with the Sadiq government. US officials noted Romania recently completed delivery of 20 Puma helicopters. Discussion on a new agreement with Yugoslavia for rehabilitation and maintenance of Soviet equipment, on the other hand, was suspended—probably because of Sudan's inability to pay. [redacted]



Figure 3. Colonel Qadhafi offered aid to the transitional government and continues assistance to Sadiq's regime. [redacted]

The Sudanese are looking to Libya for military assistance as aid from Western, Chinese, and East European suppliers dwindles. Although we believe Libya is not capable of providing the extensive assistance needed to upgrade significantly the Sudanese military, Tripoli has provided stopgap assistance—small arms, ammunition, uniforms, trucks, and pilot training. In addition, the US Embassy reported that [redacted]

[redacted]

Egypt, despite a mutual defense treaty with Sudan, provides minimal military aid. Egypt provides instructors for Sudanese military schools and positions in Egyptian military training programs for Sudanese. Cairo, in cooperation with Washington, attempted to upgrade Sudanese air defenses following the bombing of Omdurman, but it abandoned the program in 1985, claiming the Sudanese were not supporting the Egyptian program. US Embassy [redacted]

[redacted] are soured by Sudanese suspicions—often correct in our view—that the Egyptians use Sudan as a dumping ground for obsolete equipment. [redacted]

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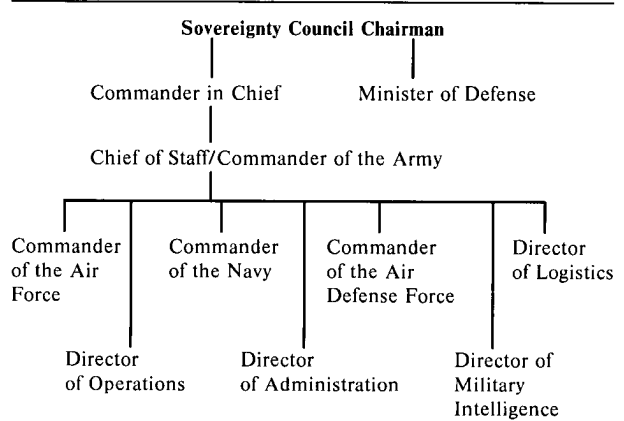
The wealthy moderate Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have confined most of their assistance to nonmilitary aid—oil, money, and humanitarian relief—in the past several years. Small amounts of military assistance—geared toward counterinsurgency operations—have come from other moderate Arab countries such as Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan. [redacted]

Restrictions to Sadiq al-Mahdi's Control of the Military

We believe that Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi must address the military services' grievances—the southern insurgency, force improvement, and, to a lesser extent, the role of Islam—if his government is to retain their loyalty. Since Sadiq assumed office and the defense portfolio—the first civilian to do so since the 1960s—he has concentrated on weaning the Army from politics and winning its support. Specifically he is:

- Seeking to end the insurgency—fighting the insurgents is the most serious grievance of the armed forces—by attempting to undercut foreign support to the insurgents.
- Making pleas for military assistance in state visits to donor or potential donor states. [redacted]
[redacted] We believe Sadiq raised some of these topics during his trip to Moscow in August 1986, but no agreements were reached.
- Pursuing a “hearts and minds” campaign with the military. Soon after the parliamentary election, he began a series of visits to military installations throughout the country to show his personal interest in the troops. [redacted] he was subjected to criticism and hard questioning at many of the meetings. A recurrent question that he refuses to address is why he continues the southern war.
- Moving cautiously on the controversial issue of Islamic law. The role of Islam is a potentially explosive issue. Muslim officers are divided in their

Figure 4 Sudan: Military High Command



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[redacted] 310555 9-86

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views of Islam, and the [redacted]

[redacted]

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- Awaiting the right opportunity to take advantage of retirements and promotions in the senior ranks—part of an armed forces reorganization effort—to insert loyalists into the military hierarchy, [redacted]

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Despite these efforts to woo the military, Sadiq will find it difficult—if not impossible—to consolidate his power over the armed forces. Constitutional restrictions and party and sect loyalties will stand in his way. [redacted]

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The interim Constitution gives the Supreme Council, not the prime minister or defense minister, ultimate authority over the armed forces. The head of the

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Supreme Council, Ahmad al-Mirghani, has constitutional powers as a check to Sadiq's control of the Army, according to the US Embassy. Mirghani is also leader of the Democratic Unionists, the political arm of the Khatmiyyah sect and a rival of Sadiq's Ansar sect. [redacted]

The current officer corps, a product of the Nimeiri period when the Khatmiyyah gained strength at the expense of the Ansar, has little personal loyalty to or trust in the Prime Minister and even less commitment to parliamentary democracy. US Embassy reports suggest most senior officers are sympathetic to the Democratic Unionists and the Muslim Brotherhood, which is Sadiq's key opponent in the Assembly. [redacted]

The US Embassy reports the Army is increasingly dissatisfied with Sadiq's support for legal action against those who supported former President Nimeiri's coup in 1969. Military officers see the Prime Minister's move as a personal and Ansar-related vendetta hostile to military interests. [redacted] the Prime Minister is also reinvestigating a 1971 Sudanese military attack on Jazirat Aba (Abba) Island, the ancestral stronghold of the Ansar. The attack, launched because the Ansar militia refused to surrender to government forces, resulted in numerous casualties and drove Sadiq into exile in Egypt. If carried through, the investigation would embarrass senior Sudanese military leaders, some of whom commanded the units involved in the attack. [redacted]

Outlook and Implications for the United States

Improvement of the Sudanese armed forces is years away, at best, and in the meantime the deterioration of the military as a professional force will continue to pose significant dilemmas for the government in Khartoum. In the next year, we expect at a minimum that:

- The Army will be unable to provide a military solution to the southern insurgency if the civilian government, or even a successor military government, demands it.

If the Military Steps In

We believe relations between the armed forces and the civilian government will continue to sour as the military's problems mount. Assuming there is no near-term solution to the southern insurgency and the government's fortunes continue to decline, the sense of dissatisfaction with and blame of the new civilian leadership probably will grow within the officer corps. [redacted]

If, as expected, the government comes under increasing criticism in the coming year and cannot cope, there is a strong prospect that the Army will return to politics, possibly in a ruling coalition with civilians but most likely as a result of a coup. Although in 1958 Sudan's Prime Minister handed the reins of government to the military during a crisis, we believe Sadiq would not resort to this precedent. Instead, Sadiq would probably try to ward off a coup by asking senior officers to enter a coalition with the civilian government. Such a civilian-military coalition probably would not improve decisionmaking or stability. We believe that eventually the Army would dominate or the government would be removed through a coup. [redacted]

Younger generals and senior middle-grade officers are the most likely candidates to lead a successful coup against the civilian government. Such officers pressed their seniors in 1985 to remove Nimeiri. In addition, officers from this level have command over combat units large enough to stage a coup and to impose martial law. A seizure of power by junior officers is less likely and probably would come about only after a prolonged period of civil unrest and economic decline in which senior officers failed to take charge. In our view, such a coup would be bloody and would need the external backing of Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, or the Soviet Union for the coup plotters to attract sufficient support to topple the government. [redacted]

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- The equipment needs of the military will drive Khartoum into deals with suppliers like Libya—or possibly the Soviet Union—and into accepting at least some of the conditions these states are likely to attach to the assistance. Sadiq’s recent rhetorical condemnations of the United States, for example, probably are part of the price exacted by the Libyans for the military assistance they have extended over the past year.
- Sudan will remain vulnerable to subversive activity or to conventional military pressure, particularly from Libya or Ethiopia.

[Redacted]

We anticipate that the deterioration of the Sudanese military and tensions stemming from the southern war will contribute to bloody confrontations that will splinter the Army and strengthen pressures for regional autonomy. Carrying on the fighting in the south as capabilities continue to diminish is already generating an increasing number of desertions. In our view, if the fighting continues, it will ultimately spark a large-scale mutiny among Army units in the south.

[Redacted]

In the north, tensions generated by a prolonged southern war may spark clashes between conservative Muslim groups and southern Sudanese in Khartoum and possibly a collapse of public order. The police probably could not stop the violence, because most riot-control police in Khartoum are southerners who would not sympathize with the northern-dominated government. In addition, a split along religious or regional lines in Khartoum would pit rival groups within the military against each other.

Further weakening of central government control would intensify pressures for regional autonomy. The southern regions already are handling many of their own affairs now that the insurgency has cut many of their ties to Khartoum.

Table 2
Ethnic Composition of the Armed Forces

Region of Origin	Percentage
Kurdufan	35
Darfur	15
Ash Shamali	19
Bahr al Ghazal, A’li an Nil, Al Istiwa’i	18
Al Awsat	9
Ash Sharqi	3
Khartoum	1

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Note: The figures above apply to noncommissioned officers and enlisted men. The officer corps is believed to be 95 percent northern Muslim.

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[Redacted]

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Even if Khartoum avoids these worst case scenarios, relations with the United States will be complicated by military assistance issues. Given the cuts in US assistance and Khartoum’s search for alternative suppliers, Sudan will be less supportive of US policy initiatives. It has already turned its back on the Camp David accords. Most Sudanese elites are more comfortable with the present policy of nonalignment than with Nimeiri’s strong pro-Western tilt and the charges it drew of dependence on the West. Even a government run by senior or older middle-grade officers, generally well disposed toward the United States, would attempt at least initially to project the appearance of independence from foreign influence.

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[Redacted]

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Appendix A

Factors Affecting Capabilities: Manpower and Training

Manpower

The Sudanese armed forces are currently an all-volunteer force. [redacted]

[redacted] Volunteers serve a minimum of three years with six reenlistments allowed. Specialists and technicians must serve nine years. Retention is a problem, especially among the specialists and technicians, as they tend to leave the military after their enlistment and follow more lucrative careers in the private sector in Sudan or in foreign countries. [redacted]

The government passed a conscription law in 1971 and has attempted to implement it several times since then. The latest attempt was on 1 April 1984. The economics and politics of registering the target population (males between the ages of 18 and 27) and enforcing conscription, however, prevented its implementation. Although a 50-percent inflation rate and limited employment opportunities ensure a continued supply of volunteers, supporting an expanded military force would be impossible. [redacted]

The 1971 conscription law provided for a reserve program by requiring that men fulfill an additional eight-year commitment in the reserves following active service. This also was never implemented, leaving Sudan without reserves. In addition, there is no evidence of a national mobilization plan to fill manpower shortfalls in a national emergency. [redacted]

Training

The education level of volunteers for the armed forces ranges from six years of primary education to university training. Those with secondary to university-level education are considered for the officer corps. [redacted]

[redacted] people from the west and south are at a disadvantage because many are not fluent in Arabic, the primary language of Sudan and most of its military schools. [redacted]

Once in the military, volunteers for the Navy, Air Defense Force, and Army go through six months of the Army's basic infantry training and then are sent to their own service schools. Air Force volunteers receive basic pilot and maintenance training by the countries of equipment origin—primarily China, the United States, and the United Kingdom. [redacted]

Prospective officers go to the Military College through a program emphasizing political and military science and physical training and then are commissioned as second lieutenants. Those who require more technical or specialized training, such as Air Force or Navy officers, go abroad to study. Officers receive more schooling as they move up through the ranks. Majors are required to attend a one-year course at the Armed Forces Staff College before promotion to lieutenant colonel. Colonels and brigadiers who are to assume high-ranking positions are sent through the Military High Academy to prepare them for their jobs and update their military theory. [redacted]

[redacted] shows virtually all training in the services is limited by budgetary constraints. There are shortages of training aids, ammunition, equipment, and fuel. Aircraft fuel shortages in particular have been devastating to Air Force pilot proficiency. The Air Defense Force has not conducted training against airborne towed targets for at least eight years, and so much of the Navy's equipment is nonoperational that there is little to spare for training. Shortages of funds also have forced Sudan to cut back its foreign training programs. [redacted]

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Figure 5



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Appendix B

Sudanese Armed Forces
Order of Battle**Table 3**
Army Inventory, Major Equipment Only

Equipment	Donor Country	Number in Inventory	Equipment	Donor Country	Number in Inventory
Tanks			Artillery		
Medium			76-mm field gun (ZIS-3)	USSR	18
T-54/55	USSR, Egypt	155	85-mm AT gun (D-44)	USSR	12
M-47	Saudi Arabia	17	25 pdr (87.6-mm) gun howitzer	United Kingdom	12
M-60A3	United States	20	100-mm field gun (M1944)	USSR	12
T-59	China	10	105-mm pack howitzer	Italy	6
Light			105-mm howitzer	Germany	18
T-62	China	60	122-mm howitzer (M-30)	USSR	24
M-41	United States, Saudi Arabia	53	122-mm field gun (Type 60 or 54)	China	36
Armored vehicles			130-mm field gun (Type 59)	China	18
Armored personnel carriers			152-mm gun howitzer (D-20)	USSR	4
BTR-50	USSR	20	155-mm howitzer (M114A1)	United States	12
OT-62A	Czechoslovakia	20	Antitank weapons and rocket launchers		
OT-64B	Czechoslovakia	10	57-mm USM18A1	Saudi Arabia	100
BTR-152	USSR	20	75-mm, Type-56	China	15
M-3	France	8	106-mm, M40	United States, Iran	72
M-113A2	United States	36	Swingfire	United Kingdom	4
Al-Walid	Egypt	100	BM-21	Egypt	4
V-150	United States	34	Mortars		
Armored reconnaissance vehicles			81-mm and above	USSR, France, United States, China, Yugoslavia	175
BRDM-2	USSR	30			
V-100	United States	40			
Saladin	United Kingdom	15			
Ferret	United Kingdom	50			
AML-245	France	6			

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Figure 6



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Table 4
Naval Equipment

Type	Total Number	Operational
Patrol craft	1	0
Coastal patrol boats	7	7
River/roadstead patrol boats	4	0
Utility landing craft	2	0
Auxiliary and service craft	4	0

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