



Satellite Sentinel Project

HUMAN SECURITY ALERT

**SIEGE:
EVIDENCE OF SAF ENCIRCLEMENT
OF THE KAUDA VALLEY**

25 JANUARY 2012





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REPORTED BY



Harvard
Humanitarian
Initiative

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Based on the totality of the evidence presented in this report, the Satellite Sentinel Project (SSP) is issuing a human security alert for the Nuba Mountains region of South Kordofan, including the Kauda Valley. A human security alert is issued by SSP when evidence is collected indicating any of the following: a build-up of forces and/or an enhancement of infrastructure and logistical capabilities indicating either the intent and/or the ability of an armed actor to restrict civilian freedom of movement, detain or displace civilians, and/or attack civilian targets.

The evidence in this report indicates a pattern almost identical to the activity and disposition of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) reported by SSP before their invasion of Abyei in May of last year. That evidence prompted SSP to issue an immediate human security alert in March 2011.¹ Currently, Sudanese road crews are, in one area, within 10 kilometers of completing the roads required to deploy heavy armor into the Kauda Valley. South Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun, indicted in 2008 by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity in Darfur, stated in October 2011, "These [road construction] projects will be the weapon for defeating the enemies."²

Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reported on 23 November 2011 that Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir stated that "the celebration for wiping out the rebellion in South Kordofan State will be through the coming final battle in Kauda area."³ Governor Haroun echoed this statement on 8 December 2011 when he pledged to clear the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) from South Kordofan. Haroun identified three areas still under SPLM-N control to be attacked: Heiban, Umm Dorain and Buram. Haroun further vowed to liberate Kauda from rebel forces.⁴

OVERVIEW

SSP, based on Harvard Humanitarian Initiative's analysis of DigitalGlobe satellite imagery, has concluded that SAF forces are encircling the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N) controlled areas in the Nuba Mountains, including the Kauda Valley, with a network of newly elevated roads. Meanwhile, the Buram region has been isolated from the interior of South Kordofan, potentially closing the main route civilians have used to flee the area, including flight to refugee camps in South Sudan. The road construction appears to be heading towards the Kauda Valley from SAF controlled locations. With only two months left until the expected start of the rainy season, SAF forces in South Kordofan have a limited window of time to launch a full scale assault on the Kauda Valley and its surrounding region. These SPLA-N controlled areas are where the majority of the Nuba civilians still remaining in South Kordofan are currently located.

In addition, SSP has observed SAF efforts to lengthen and level the airstrip at Talodi, which is approximately 50 kilometers/30 miles from the Kauda Valley. The extension and leveling of the airstrip, indicated by the presence of vehicles consistent with construction machinery, increased the length of the strip to 1800 meters from its initial length of 1100 meters. The Talodi airstrip is now capable of accommodating Antonov-type bombers and other attack aircraft which will be able to engage in high-tempo operations on the Kauda Valley from that base.

Recent imagery shows active helicopter gunships at the Kadugli airbase. Also, main battle tanks, apparent mechanized infantry units, and occupied artillery positions are clearly visible at the SAF 14th Division headquarters in Kadugli. With the newly elevated roads, all of these units will soon be capable of rapid deployment to the Kauda Valley.



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SSP analysis has further determined that between 21 May and approximately 1 November 2011 the civilian population of at least one section of Buram likely fled. This locality is identified as an SPLA-N controlled area by the Government of Sudan. The apparent removal of metal roofs on most structures and the absence of almost any possible civilian activity are consistent with reports of civilian exodus from the region. The evidence from Buram is consistent with UN reports indicating that the conflict has displaced 417,000 people from South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.⁵

CURRENT HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN SOUTH KORDOFAN

According to estimates by the United Nations, the US Government and others, at least 200,000 Nuba people within the Kauda Valley and surrounding area are at risk due to a worsening food crisis. Constant harassment bombing has prevented civilians from safely cultivating their land. The situation is also compounded by an influx of Nuba civilians seeking refuge in the Kauda Valley and Nuba Mountains with little to no access to their principal food sources or humanitarian aid. The Kauda Valley and Nuba Mountains are now the last strongholds of what is left of the indigenous Nuba population in Sudan.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice reported that the “conflict has affected more than 500,000 people, and if there is not a substantial new inflow of aid by March of this year, the situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile will reach Stage 4 of an emergency, which is one step short of full scale famine.”⁶

Despite the urgent need for aid, Sudan rejected the option of establishing secure aid corridors to South Kordofan and Blue Nile unless Sudan’s Humanitarian Affairs Commission and national organizations are involved. Ambassador Rice further accused the Government of Sudan of deliberately blocking aid agencies from reaching civilians. US special envoy to Sudan Princeton Lyman echoed these statements, adding that “there is prospect of people dying of hunger which is indefensible.”⁷

In addition, Yida camp in Unity State, South Sudan is the major receiving point for refugees fleeing the fighting and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan. On 22 January 2012, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported there are 24,000 refugees in Yida camp that have fled fighting in South Kordofan.⁸ Along with reported insecurity, confidential sources have reported directly to SSP that SAF is allegedly blocking roads in South Kordofan in an attempt to prevent refugees from reaching Yida camp.

SOURCES

See following page.

CORRECTION: In the original SSP report of 25 January 2012, Fig. 2 dated three images erroneously as 2011 satellite imagery. The images were taken on 13 and 14 January 2012, respectively. The correct labels appear on Fig.2 below.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Satellite Sentinel Project conducts regular, intensive monitoring of Sudan to assess the current human security situation and identify potential threats to civilians.

Analysis prepared by Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.
Imagery and additional analysis provided by DigitalGlobe.
Lower cover photograph provided by Tim Freccia for the Enough Project.



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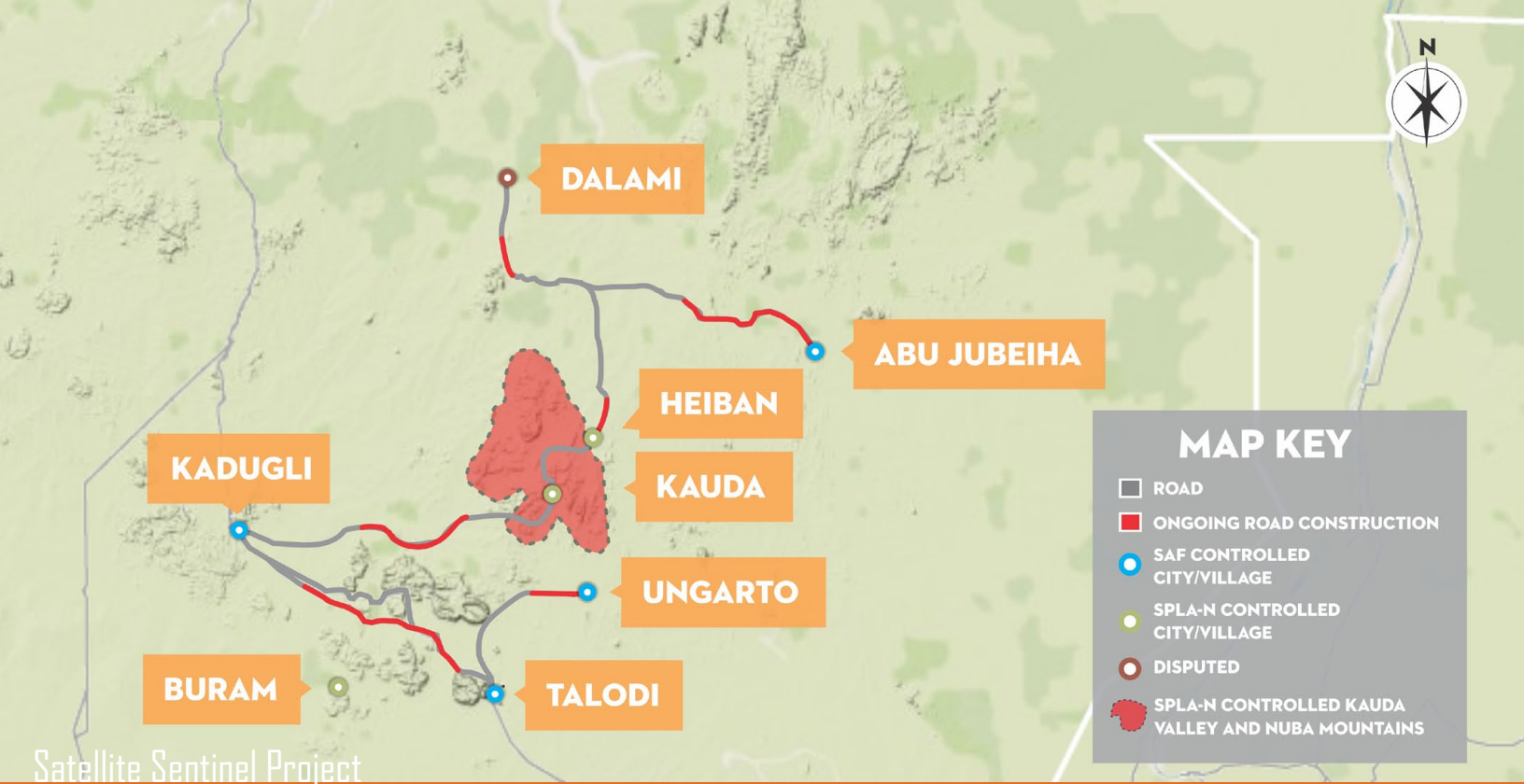
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AS OF 24 JANUARY 2012 | FIG. 1
ONGOING CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS TOWARD KAUDA VALLEY | SOUTH KORDOFAN

14 JAN 2012
UMM DORAIN - KAUDA ROAD



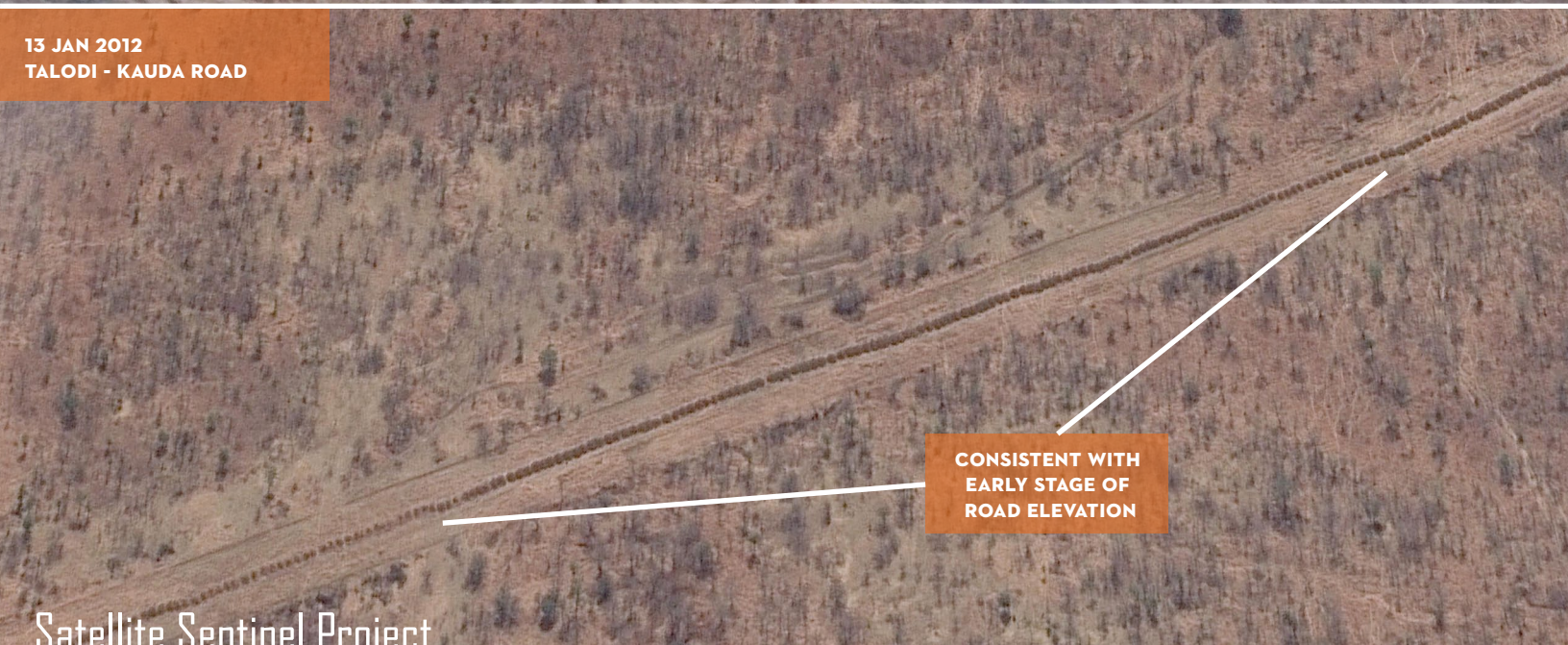
CONSISTENT WITH
EARLY STAGE OF
ROAD ELEVATION

13 JAN 2012
LIRI - TALODI ROAD



CONSISTENT
WITH
ROAD LEVELING

13 JAN 2012
TALODI - KAUDA ROAD



CONSISTENT WITH
EARLY STAGE OF
ROAD ELEVATION

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DIGITALGLOBE

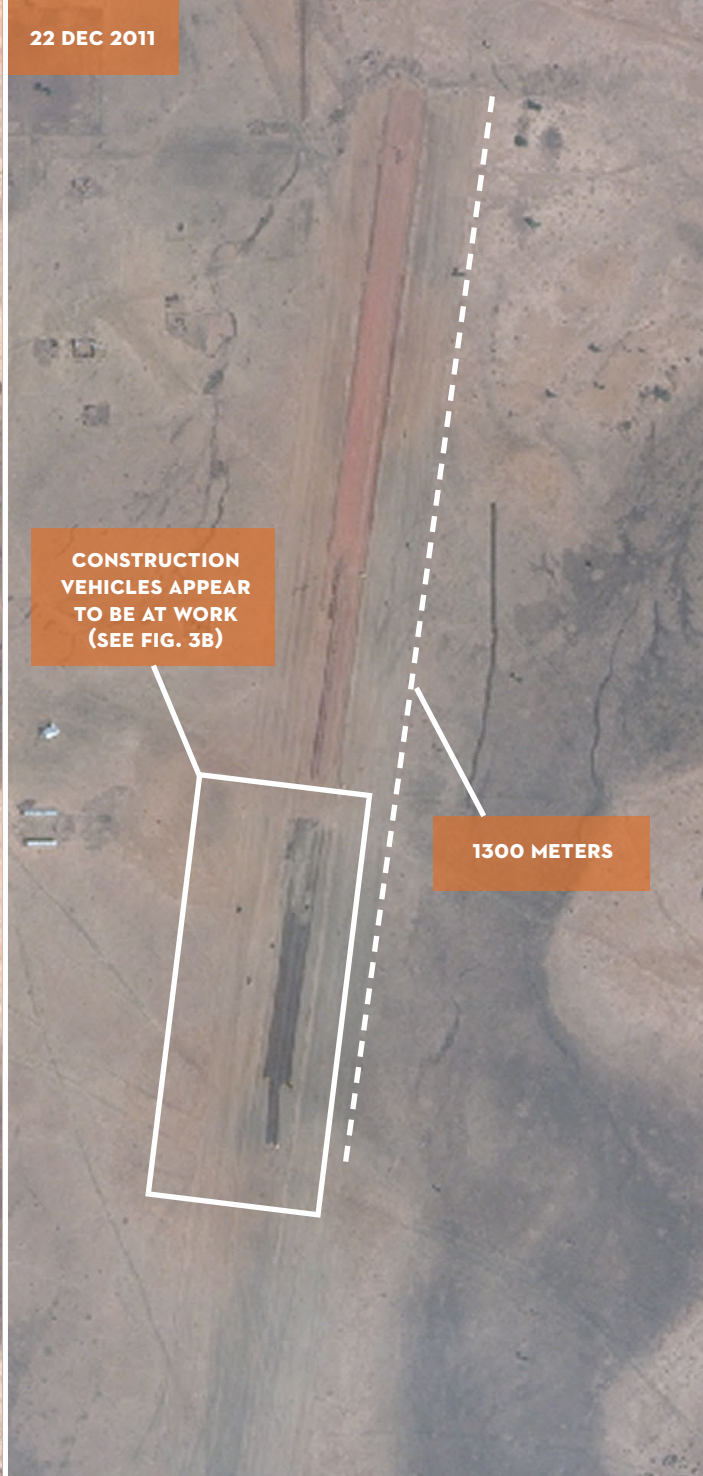
13-14 JANUARY 2012 | FIG. 2
ROAD ELEVATION AND REINFORCEMENT TOWARD KAUDA | SOUTH KORDOFAN

29 NOV 2011



1100 METERS

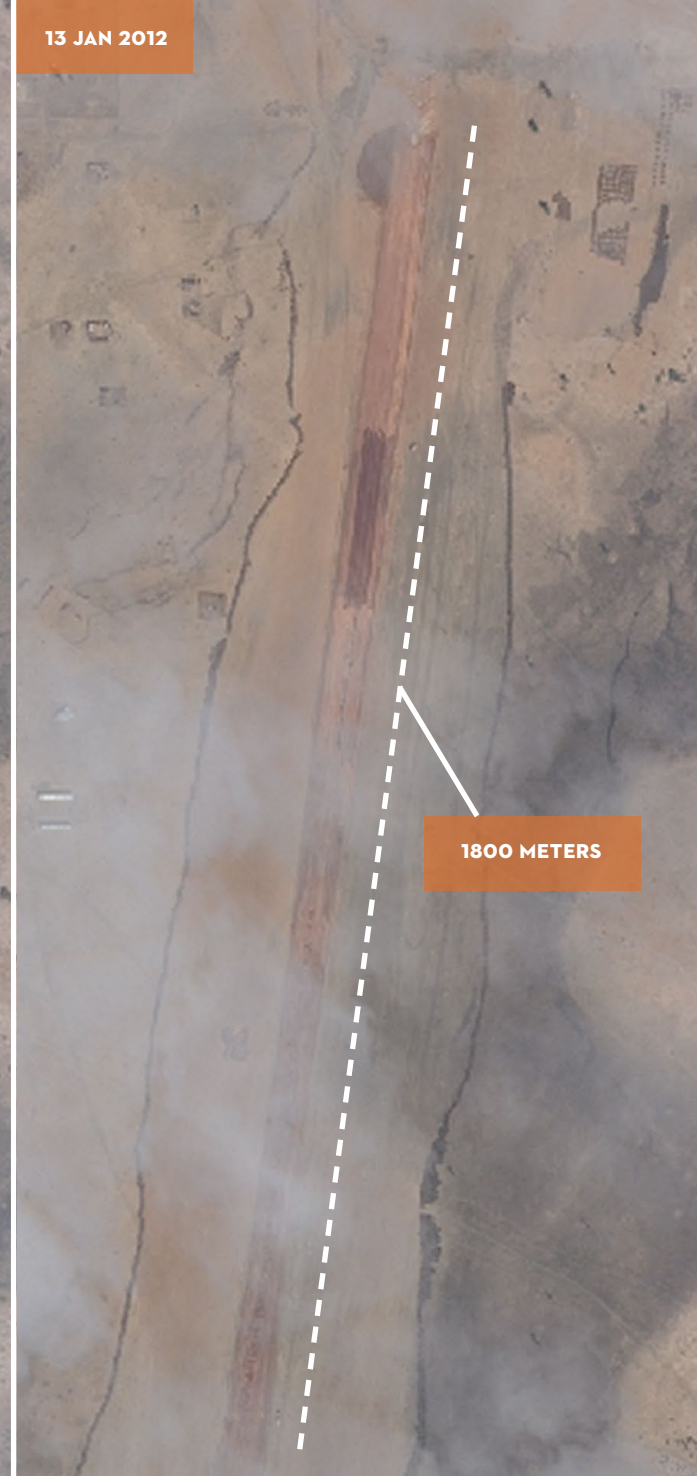
22 DEC 2011



CONSTRUCTION
VEHICLES APPEAR
TO BE AT WORK
(SEE FIG. 3B)

1300 METERS

13 JAN 2012



1800 METERS

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THREE VEHICLES
CONSISTENT WITH
EXCAVATORS

17 JUNE 2011



SAF 14TH
DIVISION HQ

17 JAN 2012



HEAVY ARMOR
(SEE FIG. 4B)

HEAVY ARMOR
AND ARTILLERY
(SEE FIG. 4C)

2.6 KILOMETERS
(1.6 MILES)

DEFENSIVE
FORTIFICATION
(SEE FIG. 4D)

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DIGITALGLOBE

COMPARISON: 17 JUNE 2011 - 17 JANUARY 2012 | FIG. 4A
SAF 14TH DIVISION HEADQUARTERS | KADUGLI, SOUTH KORDOFAN





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SAF 14TH DIVISION

KADUGLI TOWN

CHECKPOINT

DEFENSIVE
FORTIFICATION

2.6 KILOMETERS

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HELICOPTER
CONSISTENT WITH
Mi-8 HIP

THREE HELICOPTERS
CONSISTENT WITH
Mi-24 HIND GUNSHIPS

21 MAY 2011

14 JAN 2012



CIVILIAN DISPLACEMENT
SSP analysis has determined that between 21 May and 1 November 2011, the civilian population in Buram likely fled this location. The apparent removal of metal roofs on most structures and the absence of almost any possible civilian activity is consistent with reports of civilian flight from the region.

Since June 2011, over 417,000 civilians have been displaced from their homes in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

The Government of Sudan identifies Buram as a SPLM-N controlled area.

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