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2.7.1. Actors involved and territorial control

During the reference period, the SAF controlled the eastern edges of North Kordofan bordering White Nile and Khartoum states as well as the area stretching along the southern road connecting Kosti in White Nile state to the North Kordofan's capital El Obeid.^{[821](#)} Towns along this stretch of road towards Kosti like Umm Ruwaba, Rahad Abu Dakna and Wad Ashana were under SAF control.^{[822](#)} El Obeid served as a stronghold for the SAF, with their 5th Infantry Division ('Camel Corps') stationed there.^{[823](#)} In its areas of control in North Kordofan, the SAF were supported in its offensives by the allied Joint Forces,^{[824](#)} having formed a joint battalion named Al-Sayyad (Hunter^{[825](#)}) Forces.^{[826](#)} Further support was reportedly provided by the Sudan Shield Forces (SSF) under their commander Abu Aqla Keikel,^{[827](#)} who had previously fought with the RSF in Al Jazirah before switching sides to join the SAF.^{[828](#)} As of July 2026, the SAF-allied groups Sudanese Popular Resistance Forces (Mustanfareen) and the Islamist Al-Baraa Bin Malik Brigade also reportedly had a presence in the state.^{[829](#)}

Meanwhile, the RSF controlled vast areas of the state,^{[830](#)} namely north and west of El Obeid.^{[831](#)} In June 2026, the RSF closed in on El Obeid, a major commercial hub serving as a gateway to Darfur, Kordofan, and central Sudan, which has remained under SAF control since the start of the war in April 2023.^{[832](#)} On account of the reported RSF military reinforcements around El Obeid, the UN Security Council in June 2026 warned of a potential ground offensive on the city.^{[833](#)}

- [821](#)

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Sudan War Monitor, Fears of Looming Attack on El Obeid as RSF Build-Up Continues, 21 June 2026, [url](#)

- [824](#)

Sudan Tribune, Sudanese army retakes strategic town in North Kordofan, 5 March 2026, [url](#)

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Sudan Tribune, Sudan joint force says it retook West Kordofan town from RSF after fierce battle, 14 May 2025, [url](#)

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Sudan Tribune, Sudanese paramilitary forces mass near El Obeid ahead of expected assault, 15 June 2026, [url](#)

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