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2.8.2. Conflict dynamics and tactics

After the SAF had driven the RSF out of Khartoum in May 2025^{[893](#)} and the RSF had taken control of El Fasher in Darfur in October of that same year, the focus of the fighting shifted to Kordofan,^{[894](#)} being the region a strategic crossroads for both conflict parties^{[895](#)} linking Darfur and central Sudan.^{[896](#)} As of February 2026, the NRC described South Kordofan as the 'epicentre of the war in Sudan' featuring the country's 'most dangerous and neglected frontline'.^{[897](#)}

In May 2025, clashes were reported in the Al-Qouz locality on the northwestern edge of the state,^{[898](#)} with the RSF advancing into the 'Taiba Triangle',^{[899](#)} a strategic crossroads linking all three Kordofan states.^{[900](#)} In December 2025, RSF together with SPLM-N-Al-Hilu troops cut the road between Dilling and the state capital Kadugli, imposing sieges on both SAF-controlled towns^{[901](#)} and intensifying artillery and drones strikes on both.^{[902](#)} In late January 2026, the SAF, in a counter-offensive from the east, managed to break the siege of Dilling and advance further south towards Kadugli.^{[903](#)} The SAF and allied forces reached Kadugli at the beginning of February 2026, breaking a siege that had lasted for over two years,^{[904](#)} similarly to Dilling.^{[905](#)} However, fighting in the area continued,^{[906](#)} as the RSF cut off the main supply lines for relief operations into Dilling at the beginning of March 2026.^{[907](#)}

Conflict dynamics involved clashes between the SAF and the RSF.^{[908](#)} In the wake of the formation of an alliance between the RSF and SPLM-N-Al-Hilu,^{[909](#)} the SAF further engaged in fighting against SPLM-N-Al-Hilu troops along the road between Dilling and Kadugli^{[910](#)} and in areas under SPLM-N-Al-Hilu control.^{[911](#)} They further launched airstrikes on the SPLM-N-controlled Nuba mountains.^{[912](#)} According to ACLED, between December 2025 and January 2026 air and drone strikes in South Kordofan quadrupled.^{[913](#)} The SAF resumed airstrikes in April 2026 after halting air operations for several months due to the loss of several fighter planes.^{[914](#)} Drone strikes were reported throughout the reference period, targeting contested areas and hitting civilian targets and infrastructure.^{[915](#)}

Furthermore, there were reports of tribal clashes within the area controlled by the SPLM-N-Al-Hilu in May and June 2026,^{[916](#)} even leading to a rival group from the Otoro tribe seizing parts of SPLM-N-Al-Hilu stronghold Kaoda at the end of June 2026.^{[917](#)} Renewed clashes in Kaoda between SPLM-N-Al-Hilu and members of the Otoro tribe were reported in August 2026.^{[918](#)}

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