

**Government Defence
Integrity Index**



**COUNTRY
BRIEF**

SOUTH SUDAN

2025





SOUTH SUDAN

Since gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan continues to face acute political fragility, recurrent conflict, and weak state institutions. Formally, the country has a multiparty political system, but in practice power remains concentrated in the long-dominant party, while institutions struggle with limited capacity and independence.¹ The power-sharing arrangement established under the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), aimed at guiding the country toward elections and constitutional reform, was extended to 2027 as institutional reforms and elections have been repeatedly suspend.² The country continues to host one of the largest peace operations in the world, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), alongside regional stabilisation efforts under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Despite these attempts, conflict and human right violations persist. South Sudan also remains under a United Nations arms embargo, first imposed in 2018 and renewed through 2025, reflecting continuing concerns over the diversion of weapons and weak command accountability.³ South Sudan's economy relies almost entirely on oil exports, which account for over 90 percent of public revenue, but has greatly declined in recent years, with the

FY2024/25 period marking the fifth consecutive year of negative growth.⁴ The country is currently at high risk of debt distress, while it is also estimated that nearly 60 percent of the population faces crisis-level food insecurity.⁵

These political, security, and economic conditions directly shape governance outcomes in the defence sector, where institutional weakness, prolonged conflict, and limited oversight constrain accountability. Critical corruption risks persist across South Sudan's defence sector. While constitutional and legal provisions formally grant Parliament oversight powers, these are largely limited in practice, with internal and external audit bodies similarly constrained. Procurement and operations represent the most serious areas of risk, characterised by high levels of secrecy, sanctions-evasion practices, and minimal effective scrutiny. Opaque financial management, weak enforcement, and limited political commitment to integrity continue to undermine accountability across the sector.

Member of Open Government Partnership	No
UN Convention Against Corruption	Accession in 2015
Arms Trade Treaty	Not yet joined the ATT

EAST AFRICA

East Africa's security environment is shaped by overlapping conflicts, violent extremism, organised crime, and structural fragilities that cut across borders. Weak state presence in peripheral regions, porous borders, and the circulation of small arms continue to enable armed groups and criminal networks to operate across the region. Climate stress, food insecurity, and demographic pressures intensify competition over land and resources, fuelling intercommunal violence and displacement. While primarily active in Somalia, al-Shabaab remains the most significant transnational threat in the region, attacking neighbouring countries, particularly Kenya and Uganda, targeting civilians, security forces, and critical economic infrastructure.



Security dynamics vary across countries. South Sudan continues to face instability driven by communal violence and the fragile implementation of peace agreements, resulting in persistent humanitarian crises. While the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is not part of East Africa, the conflict in its eastern provinces pose a significant external risk, with spillover effects through cross-border armed activity, displacement, and regional security involvement. Burundi experiences ongoing political repression, and violence from activities of armed groups and criminal networks linked to regional trafficking routes. Madagascar struggles with banditry, cattle rustling, and illicit natural resource exploitation, especially in remote areas with limited state control.

These overlapping threats have strained defence forces across East Africa. Weak coordination, uneven capacity, and governance shortcomings within defence institutions have limited the effectiveness of security responses. Across East Africa, defence sectors remain characterised by limited financial transparency, weak civilian oversight, opaque procurement processes and limited competition. Defence forces are thus often unaccountable to the public increasing corruption risks and abuses of power.

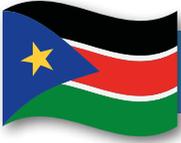
1 BTI Transformation Index, South Sudan Country Report 2024.

2 United Nations, Meetings coverage and press releases, "No Appetite for Another Extension' of South Sudan Peace Agreement, Mission Head Tells Security Council, Urging Leaders Focus on Benchmarks without Delay," February 5, 2025.

3 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2736, Renewal of the Arms Embargo on South Sudan, 2025.

4 World Bank, "South Sudan Economic Monitor: A Pathway to Overcome the Crisis," March 2025.

5 African Development Bank, Country Focus Report 2024 – South Sudan, July 2024.

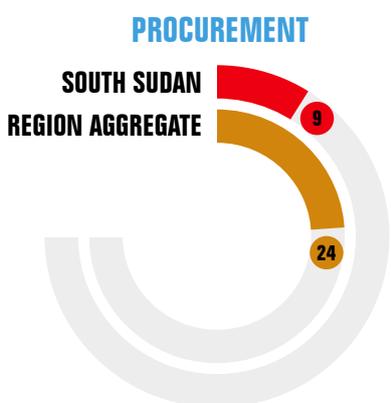
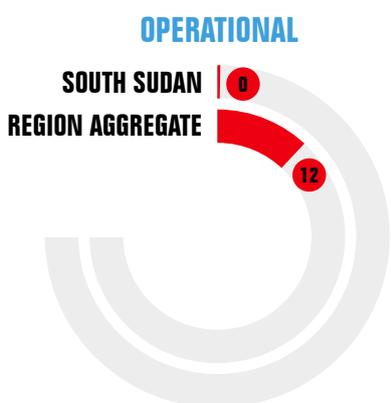
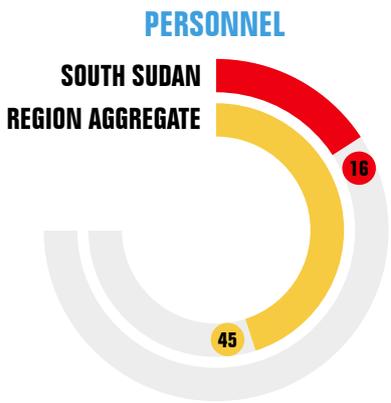
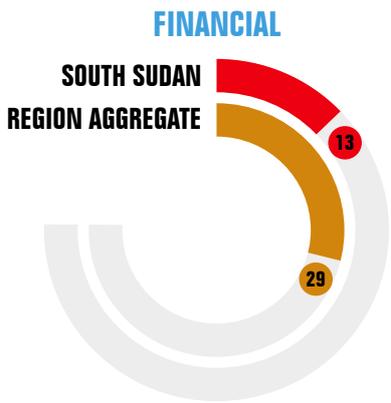
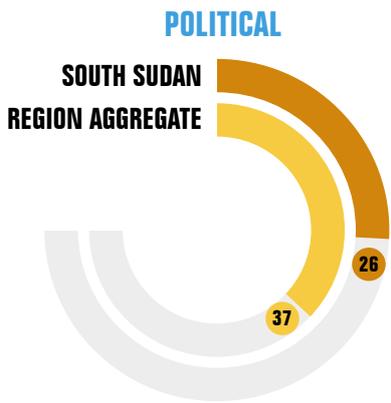
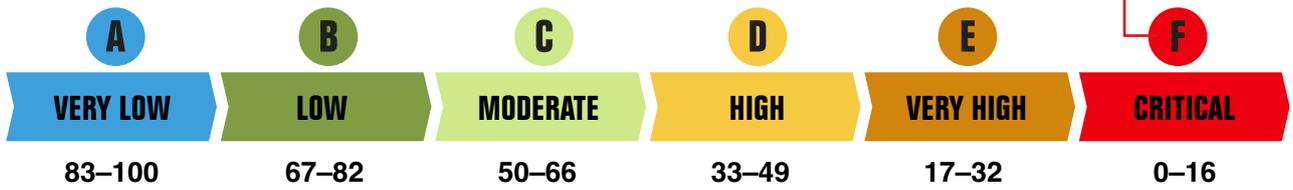
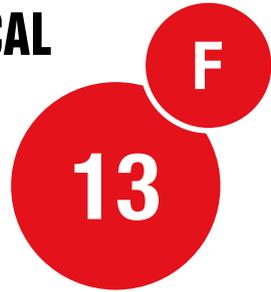


SOUTH SUDAN

RISK COMPARISON

The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) assesses five key risk areas: political, financial, personnel, operational, and procurement. This section compares South Sudan's performance in each area with the regional average (Sub-Saharan Africa).

CRITICAL RISK





PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2023)	28/100
Military expenditure as a share of government spending (SIPRI, 2024)	8.23%
Committee members with defence expertise (%)	Data is not publicly available.
# of meetings/year	Data is not publicly available.
Last review of defence policy/strategy	2008

Parliamentary oversight in South Sudan operates under strong executive dominance. The Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA), appointed in 2021 under the R-ARCSS rather than elected, is dominated by ruling-party appointees, with opposition members reporting intimidation and security presence in Parliament.⁶ These conditions constrain legislative independence and shape how oversight of the defence sector is exercised.

Despite strong constitutional provisions, parliamentary oversight of the defence sector in South Sudan remains extremely weak in practice, resulting in very high corruption risks. The TNLA has formal authority to scrutinise defence policy, and this mandate is exercised primarily through the Standing Specialised Committee on Defence and Veteran Affairs, alongside the Committee on National Security and Public Order. While these committees meet periodically, review budgets, and make recommendations, defence spending has increased sharply in recent years, despite the country's severe humanitarian and development needs.⁷ Ongoing conflict, international sanctions, and illicit arms flows further undermine effective oversight of defence procurement and expenditure.⁸

Legislative independence is constrained by executive dominance, political appointment of legislators.⁹ Although the Committee on Defence and Veteran Affairs undertakes short-term reviews and occasional investigations, its oversight is largely reactive.¹⁰ Internal and external audit mechanisms exist in law but are under-resourced,¹¹ inconsistently applied, and often classified, limiting parliamentary scrutiny and public access.¹²

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Defence-related access to information response rates	1) % granted full or partial access: Data is not publicly available.
	2) # subject to backlog: Data is not publicly available.
Defence-related complaints to ombudsman/commissioner #	Data is not publicly available.
Does the commissioner have authority over the MoD?	Data is not publicly available.
Audit reports on defence (2020-2025) #	None
Open Budget Index (IBP, 2023)	13/100
World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2025)	109th out of 180.

Defence financial management in South Sudan is extremely opaque, with weak alignment between approved budgets and actual spending. Security forces rely on informal revenue extraction; by January 2025, around 50 illegal checkpoints along the Nile River were reportedly operated by state and opposition forces, highlighting extensive off-budget financing.¹³

Financial transparency in South Sudan's defence sector is extremely weak, presenting critical corruption risks. While defence allocations are formally included in the national budget and published, most expenditure is highly aggregated and dominated by broadly defined "classified" spending.¹⁴ Budget approval is often delayed, access to budget documents is limited in practice, and citizens face significant barriers to obtaining information, despite the existence of access-to-information laws.¹⁵ ¹⁶ There is no public disclosure of actual defence spending, no reliable data on secret or off-budget expenditures, and no transparency around alternative revenue streams or commercial interests linked to defence institutions.¹⁷ Oversight is further undermined by classified audits, weak external scrutiny, and the absence of follow-up on audit findings, resulting in a defence financial system that remains opaque, and highly vulnerable to critical management of corruption risks.

6 Voice of America, "South Sudan Opposition Lawmakers Complain About Intimidation," March 3, 2022.

7 Interview with an officer of the Transitional National Assembly of South Sudan, August 29, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

8 Ben Arneson & Jack Cinamon, "Green Horizon: Fuelling the Conflict in South Sudan," Corruption Tracker, February 6, 2024.

9 Voice of America, "Opposition mounts against security bill in South Sudan," July 11, 2024.

10 Interview with an officer of the Transitional National Assembly of South Sudan, July 12, 2025. Government Defence Integrity Index.

11 U.S. Department of State, Fiscal Transparency Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2023.

12 Radio Tamazuj, "SSP182 billion set aside for security sector in 2023–2024 budget," August 11, 2023.

13 The Dawns, "SSPDF, SPLA-IO to hold talks on illegal checkpoints along the Nile River," January 14, 2025.

14 The Approved Budget of Fiscal Year 2023 -2024, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Government of South Sudan, Juba.

15 Brian Nzomo, "South Sudan Halts Spending as FY Ends," Budget Delayed, The Weekly Brief, July 2, 2024.

16 Interview with a South Sudanese scholar, August 26, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

17 The Report of the Committee on Defence and Veterans' Affairs on De-Mining, DDR, Defence and Veterans' Affairs Sectors Budget for FY 2023/2024. Rev. Michael Ayuen Johnson (MP), Chairperson, Specialized Committee on Defence and Veterans' Affairs TNLA/Juba (offline).



SOUTH SUDAN

PERSONNEL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

Whistleblowing legislation	No
# defence-sector whistleblower cases	None
# Code of conduct violations	Military: Data is not publicly available.
	Civilian: Data is not publicly available
Financial disclosure system	# submitted: None.
	# of violations: None.

In 2021–2023, President Salva Kiir promoted several senior officials who were serving as ministers, governors, and presidential advisers directly into top military ranks, prompting public debate over the use of presidential discretion in promotions and the limited role of formal merit-based criteria set out in the Sudan People’s Liberation Army Act (2009).¹⁸ This case highlights how political authority shapes personnel decisions within the armed forces.

South Sudan’s personnel ethical framework in the defence sector presents critical corruption risks. Enforcement is weak and sporadic, with major cases often pursued by foreign jurisdictions rather than domestic institutions.¹⁹ There is no whistleblower protection legislation, and individuals who report corruption face intimidation and retaliation without safeguards.²⁰ Defence personnel numbers are not accurately known, with persistent concerns over ghost workers following repeated integrations of armed groups.²¹ Appointment processes for middle and senior ranks are highly politicised, and are often executed through decrees without clear criteria or oversight.²² Codes of conduct for military personnel exist but are classified, inconsistently applied, while no code of conduct applies to civilian defence staff.²³ Anti-corruption training is largely absent, reflecting a lack of willingness to embed corruption risks within core defence legislation or policy frameworks.

OPERATIONS

Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2020)	53,000
Troops deployed on operations #	N/A

South Sudan’s defence operations take place within a security environment where corruption has long been intertwined with military activity and elite power structures. International investigations have raised concerns about the accumulation of unexplained wealth linked to senior military command and control over operations, alongside the exploitation of operational deployments and armed units.^{24 25} These dynamics have been identified as undermining discipline, accountability, and civilian protection, shaping a high-risk operational context.

There is no publicly available doctrine that recognises corruption as an operational or strategic risk, and while the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces Act (2012) criminalises certain corrupt acts, these provisions focus on low-level individual offences rather than corruption in the defence establishments. There is no evidence of corruption-specific training for commanders, nor of corruption risk being integrated into forward operational planning, deployment decisions, or command practice. At the same time, there are no corruption-monitoring personnel, no mission-level M&E frameworks, and no operational guidance to identify or mitigate corruption risks during deployments.²⁶ This is further reinforced by a legal framework that offers limited guidance on the regulation and accountability of private or quasi-military forces.

18 "Military Defends Promotion of 5 Officials to Top Ranks," Radio Tamazuj, March 24, 2023.

19 "Glencore to pay £280 million for 'highly corrosive' and 'endemic' corruption," Serious Fraud Office, United Kingdom, November 2022.

20 "Whistleblower exposes MTN South Sudan bribe cartel," Radio Tamazuj, July 23, 2024.

21 "South Sudan needs to clean payroll of ghosts," The Dawn, November 6, 2023.

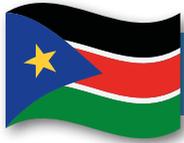
22 Nyamilepedia. "President Kiir Promotes His Own Executive Director to Top Military Rank," October 20, 2021.

23 Interview with an expert in peacebuilding and conflict management, September 2024, Juba. Government Defence Integrity Index.

24 South Sudanese political elites illicitly diverting millions of US dollars, undermining core human rights and stability – UN experts note," Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, September 23, 2021.

25 "Making a Killing: South Sudanese Military Leaders' Wealth, Explained," The Sentry, May 20, 2020.

26 Interview with a senior SPLM officer, August 26, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.



SOUTH SUDAN

DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

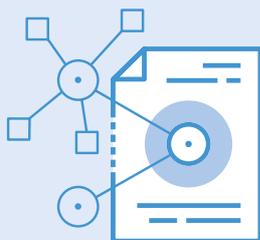
Military expenditure (US\$ mil) (SIPRI, 2024)	\$2027.9
Open competition in defence procurement (%)	Data is not publicly available.
Main defence exports – to (SIPRI, 2020-24)	N/A
Main defence imports – from (SIPRI, 2020-24)	UAE (93%)

In 2020, evidence emerged of illicit arms transfers and deliberate concealment of weapons despite the UN arms embargo, raising concerns about how military equipment enters and circulates within the country. These findings point to procurement pathways operating outside conventional regulatory and reporting frameworks.²⁷

South Sudan’s defence procurement is formally regulated but opaque in practice, showing critical corruption risks. While the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act (2018) establishes acquisition planning requirements and nominal oversight mechanisms, defence procurement is routinely shielded by secrecy provisions, sanctions-related justifications, and classified spending. Acquisition planning processes are not publicly available, links between procurement decisions and defence needs are unclear, and

arms purchases continue to occur despite a UN embargo, indicating off-budget and secret procurement practices beyond legislative or public scrutiny.^{28 29}

Regarding oversight and accountability mechanisms, the Public Procurement Authority remains underdeveloped, parliamentary scrutiny is limited to high-level budget discussions, and audit access to classified procurement is restricted to a narrow political circle.³⁰ There is no public disclosure of procurement cycles, supplier selection, contract implementation, or asset disposal, and competitive tendering is frequently bypassed through single-sourcing and emergency justifications. Foreign suppliers continue to influence defence acquisitions through opaque deals, reinforcing entrenched corruption risks characterised by secrecy, political control, and weak institutional enforcement.³¹



GDI data collection for **South Sudan** was conducted from July 2024 to August 2025.

27 Amnesty International, “South Sudan: Evidence of violations and illicit concealment of arms must spur UN to renew arms embargo,” April 30, 2020.
 28 Interview with a senior SPLM Officer, August 26, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.
 29 Edith M. Lederer, “UN extends arms embargo on South Sudan despite appeals from African Union, Russia and China,” AP News, May 31, 2024.
 30 Interview with a South Sudanese Scholar, August 26, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index
 31 The East African, “Juba under arms embargo tops military spend in East Africa,” March 18, 2024.



SOUTH SUDAN 2025 GDI SCORECARD

	Grade	Score
POLITICAL RISK	E	26
Q1 Legislative Scrutiny	C	50
Q2 Defence Committee	D	38
Q3 Defence Policy Debate	E	31
Q4 CSO Engagement	D	42
Q5 Conventions: UNCAC / OECD	C	50
Q6 Public Debate	D	38
Q7 Anticorruption Policy	C	50
Q8 Compliance and Ethics Units	E	25
Q9 Public Trust in Institutions	NS	
Q10 Risk Assessments	F	0
Q11 Acquisition Planning	F	8
Q12 Budget Transparency & Detail	C	50
Q13 Budget Scrutiny	B	75
Q14 Budget Availability	D	33
Q15 Defence Income	F	0
Q16 Internal Audit	F	13
Q17 External Audit	E	31
Q18 Natural Resources	F	0
Q19 Organised Crime Links	E	25
Q20 Organised Crime Policing	F	0
Q21 Intelligence Services Oversight	E	25
Q22 Intelligence Services Recruitment	E	17
Q23 Export Controls (ATT)	F	0
Q76 Lobbying	F	0
FINANCIAL RISK	F	13
Q24 Asset Disposal Controls	E	17
Q25 Asset Disposal Scrutiny	F	0
Q26 Secret Spending	F	0
Q27 Legislative Access to Information	E	25
Q28 Secret Program Auditing	F	0
Q29 Off-budget Spending	F	0
Q30 Access to Information	E	25
Q31 Beneficial Ownership	E	25
Q32 Military-Owned Business Scrutiny	E	25
Q33 Unauthorised Private Enterprise	E	25
Q77 Defence Spending	F	0
PERSONNEL RISK	F	16
Q34 Public Commitment to Integrity	E	25
Q35 Disciplinary Measures for Personnel	E	25
Q36 Whistleblowing	F	0
Q37 High-risk Positions	F	0
Q38 Numbers of Personnel	F	0
Q39 Pay Rates and Allowances	C	50
Q40 Payment System	E	17
Q41 Objective Appointments	E	17
Q42 Objective Promotions	D	38
Q43 Bribery to Avoid Conscription	NA	
Q44 Bribery for Preferred Postings	C	50
Q45 Chains of Command and Payment	F	0
Q46 Military Code of Conduct	F	6
Q47 Civilian Code of Conduct	F	0
Q48 Anticorruption Training	F	0
Q49 Corruption Prosecutions	F	0
Q50 Facilitation Payments	D	33

**OVERALL
COUNTRY
SCORE**

**CRITICAL
RISK**

13

F

RISK GRADE

A	83–100	VERY LOW RISK
B	67–82	LOW RISK
C	50–66	MODERATE RISK
D	33–49	HIGH RISK
E	17–32	VERY HIGH RISK
F	0–16	CRITICAL RISK

	Grade	Score
OPERATIONAL RISK	F	0
Q51 Military Doctrine	F	0
Q52 Operational Training	F	0
Q53 Forward Planning	F	0
Q54 Corruption Monitoring in Operations	F	0
Q55 Controls in Contracting	F	0
Q56 Private Military Contractors	NS	
PROCUREMENT RISK	F	9
Q57 Procurement Legislation	F	0
Q58 Procurement Cycle	F	8
Q59 Procurement Oversight Mechanisms	F	8
Q60 Potential Purchases Disclosed	F	0
Q61 Actual Purchases Disclosed	F	0
Q62 Business Compliance Standards	F	13
Q63 Procurement Requirements	F	0
Q64 Competition in Procurement	F	0
Q65 Tender Board Controls	E	31
Q66 Anti-Collusion Controls	D	44
Q67 Contract Award / Delivery	F	0
Q68 Complaint Mechanisms	E	25
Q69 Supplier Sanctions	D	33
Q70 Offset Contracts	F	0
Q71 Offset Contract Monitoring	F	0
Q72 Offset Competition	F	0
Q73 Agents and Intermediaries	F	0
Q74 Financing Packages	F	0
Q75 Political Pressure in Acquisitions	NS	

KEY

- NEI** Not enough information to score indicator
- NS** Indicator is not scored for any country
- NA** Not applicable

GDI

Government Defence Integrity Index



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Registered charity number 1112842
Company number 2903386

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their generous financial support of the production of the Government Defence Integrity Index. Thanks are also extended to the many country assessors and peer reviewers who contributed the underlying data for this index.

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