

**Government Defence
Integrity Index**



**COUNTRY
BRIEF**

ZIMBABWE

2025





ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe’s political system formally allows multiparty competition, yet real power remains concentrated in the executive and the ruling party. While opposition parties contest elections, they operate in an uneven political environment marked by restrictive laws, limited access to state resources, and recurrent intimidation of candidates and supporters.¹ The 2023 elections were broadly peaceful but criticised by regional and international observers for lacking transparency and failing to meet democratic standards.² Institutions such as the judiciary and legislature face significant constraints in acting as checks on executive power. Civil society organisations and journalists operate under increasing pressure, constrained by legislation such as the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act and the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act, which enable extensive government oversight of associations and public gatherings.³ Recent monetary tightening, the introduction of the new structured currency (“ZiG”), and renewed engagement with international financial institutions mark early signs of macroeconomic stabilisation. Nonetheless, institutional investment, particularly

in public financial management and defence oversight, remains constrained by high debt levels and limited transparency.

This political and institutional context directly shapes defence governance outcomes. Zimbabwe’s defence sector faces critical corruption risks, marked by extreme opacity and limited effective external oversight. Defence budgeting and spending lack transparency, with restricted access to information and extensive classification. Procurement and operations present particularly high risk. While salary payments and basic anti-bribery provisions exist in law, weak enforcement, opaque personnel systems, and limited accountability substantially limit effective management of corruption risks.

Member of Open Government Partnership	Yes
UN Convention Against Corruption	Ratified in 2007
Arms Trade Treaty	Not yet ratified

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa’s security landscape is shaped by a mix of transnational threats, institutional weaknesses, and evolving defence governance challenges. Organised crime, including arms, drug, and human trafficking, remains pervasive across the region due to porous borders, weak governance, and capacity deficits, undermining both public safety and state legitimacy. In Mozambique, longstanding Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado continues to drive insecurity. Zimbabwe’s security landscape remains dominated by a politicised security apparatus, where blurred civil–military boundaries and the use of coercive organs for regime preservation inhibit professionalisation and public trust. South Africa’s defence institutions are under strain: declining investment, ageing equipment, and manpower shortages have limited the South African National Defence Force’s (SANDF) operational capabilities.

Across the region, weaknesses in defence sector governance continue to limit states’ ability to respond effectively to evolving security challenges. While South Africa’s defence sector demonstrates comparatively stronger institutional resilience than its neighbours, parliamentary oversight of defence policy and expenditure remains frequently constrained by executive dominance—particularly in countries governed by entrenched ruling parties such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe—as well as by limited technical expertise. Defence budgeting and procurement processes remain opaque, heightening the risk of corruption and inefficiency, while integrity frameworks for military operations are underdeveloped. Financial transparency is generally limited across the region, with South Africa representing a partial exception. Despite the existence of formal personnel management and ethics frameworks, senior appointments continue to be shaped by political influence, undermining merit-based governance and accountability.



1 BTI Transformation Index, Zimbabwe Country Report 2024.

2 European External Action Service (EEAS). Final Report of the EU Election Observation Mission Zimbabwe 2023. Brussels: European Union, 2023.

3 Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2025 — Zimbabwe. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2025.

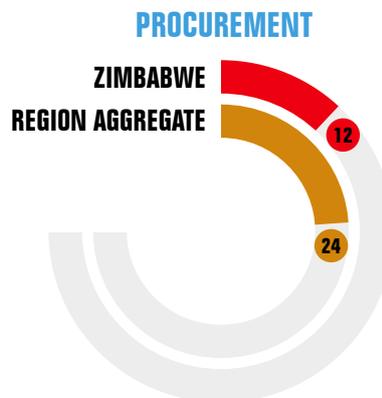
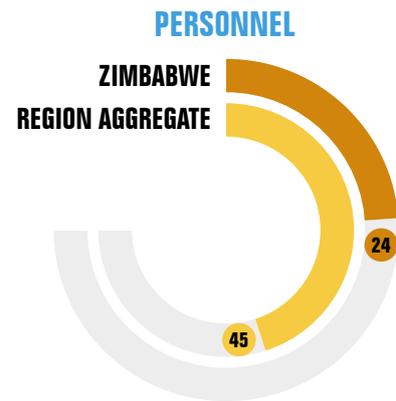
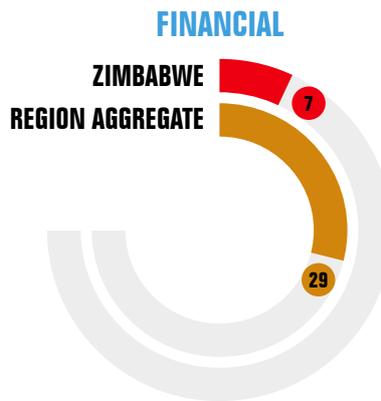
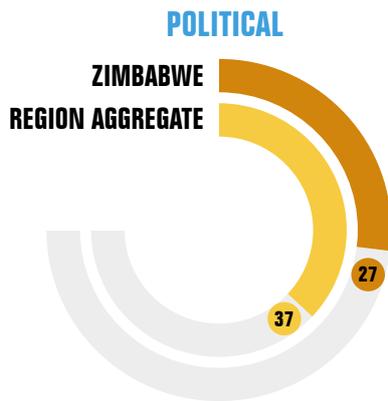
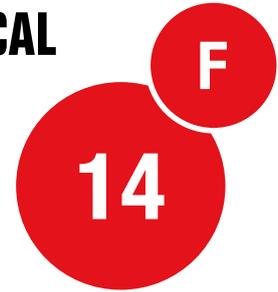


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RISK COMPARISON

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

CRITICAL RISK





ZIMBABWE

PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2023)	53/100
Military expenditure as a share of government spending (SIPRI, 2024)	1.32%
Committee members with defence expertise (%)	10%
# of meetings/year	Data is not publicly available.
Last review of defence policy/strategy	Not available.

Following the 2023–2024 electoral cycle, the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), secured a two-thirds majority in Parliament, significantly limiting space for independent legislative scrutiny.⁴ Senior military leadership has openly affirmed allegiance to the ruling party, including public statements by the Army Commander.⁵ This overt politicisation of the armed forces blurs the boundary between the executive, ruling party, and military institutions, undermining Parliament’s ability to exercise independent oversight over defence policy.

Despite strong constitutional provisions, parliamentary oversight of Zimbabwe’s defence sector presents very high corruption risks. Parliament has the legal power to summon the Minister of Defence, approve defence budgets, and scrutinise procurement and deployments. However, these powers are consistently undermined by the political alignment between the military and the ruling party.⁶ This context severely constrains independent scrutiny, resulting in selective parliamentary engagement. Furthermore, Parliamentary defence committees lack technical expertise, enforcement authority, and access to information, particularly on budgets and internal controls. Requests for itemised expenditure or clarification are routinely ignored by the defence sector.⁷ While the Auditor General operates independently and reports to Parliament, defence audits are heavily constrained by classification, limited disclosure, and resistance to implementing recommendations.⁸ These factors reflect a system where formal oversight institutions exist but are systematically neutralised in practice, sustaining very high corruption risks in Zimbabwe’s defence sector.

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)	63/100
World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2025)	106th out of 180.

Financial transparency in Zimbabwe’s defence sector presents critical corruption risks. While the defence budget is submitted to Parliament in a timely manner and formally approved in line with constitutional and public finance requirements, this procedural compliance is, to some extent, superficial. The budget lacks itemisation, with core expenditure categories such as procurement, rations, weapons, intelligence activities, and operational costs either highly aggregated or entirely undisclosed.⁹ Parliament and the public are therefore unable to assess how defence funds are allocated or whether spending aligns with stated priorities, severely undermining effective scrutiny despite constitutional oversight provisions. Moreover, approved defence budgets are not published in detail, the proportion of spending on secret items is unknown, and access to information mechanisms are inapplicable to the defence sector due to broad national security exemptions under the Official Secrets Act and the limited reach of the Freedom of Information framework.¹⁰ Evidence indicates that off-budget military expenditures occur in practice, despite being prohibited in law.¹¹ These practices are combined by extensive military involvement in opaque commercial enterprises, especially in mining, which operate outside any transparent reporting, audit, or independent scrutiny.

4 BBC, "Zimbabwe's governing Zanu-PF party wins two-thirds majority," February 04, 2024.

5 New Zimbabwe, "Army Commander declares allegiance to Zanu PF, says he will forcefully command everyone to support ruling party," New Zimbabwe, July 03, 2024.

6 VOA Africa, "Zimbabwe Ruling Party Gains Overwhelming Majority in Parliament," February 04, 2024.

7 Interview with a former member of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services, Harare, July 11, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

8 Interview with a former member of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services, Harare, July 11, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

9 Interview with a member of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services, Harare, June 19, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

10 Interview with an Army Intelligence Officer, Harare, July 26, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

11 Kairiza Tinashé, "Military in US\$90m murky weapons deals," Zimbabwe Independent, November 02, 2022.



ZIMBABWE

PERSONNEL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

Whistleblowing legislation	None
# 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.

Zimbabwe’s defence sector presents very high corruption risks in this area. Although formal disciplinary mechanisms exist through the military justice system, enforcement is deeply inconsistent and selectively applied. Investigations and prosecutions tend to affect lower-ranking personnel,¹² while senior officers implicated in serious corruption have, in documented cases, avoided accountability or even received promotions.¹³ Appointment and promotion processes, particularly for top command positions, are highly centralised under presidential authority, reinforcing political loyalty over merit-based advancement.¹⁴ There is no operational whistleblower protection framework for the defence sector, and military personnel face significant deterrents to reporting wrongdoing.¹⁵ The absence of a military code of conduct addressing bribery, or conflicts of interest, further weakens ethical standards, while the number of military and civilian personnel is not publicly disclosed. Bribery is only indirectly sanctionable through the general criminal law framework, with no defence-specific rules, resulting in ambiguous enforcement. Limited positives exist: civilian personnel are subject to public service ethics provisions, and salary payments are relatively well structured.¹⁶ ¹⁷ However, the lack of anti-corruption training within the military,¹⁸ and weak enforcement against senior figures, result in very high corruption risks across the defence establishments.

OPERATIONS

Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2020)	51,000
Troops deployed on operations #	31 (as of 31 October 2025): 8 in South Sudan (UNIMISS); 5 in Abyei (UNISFA).

Operations pose critical corruption risks in Zimbabwe’s defence sector due to the absence of doctrine, training, or oversight mechanisms addressing corruption in deployed settings. Corruption is not treated as a strategic or operational risk, and commanders receive no formal training on integrity or corruption vulnerabilities before or during deployments, relying instead on ad-hoc verbal guidance through parades and standing orders.¹⁹ There is no deployment of trained personnel to monitor corruption risks in the field, no monitoring and evaluation framework, and no mission-level guidance on contracting or asset control, even in operations involving large volumes of rations, fuel, and supplies.²⁰ This gap has been associated with repeated diversion and resale of resources during internal operations, reinforcing critical corruption risks in deployed environments.

12 News24, “Three Zimbabwean soldiers get 15 years each for spate of armed robberies,” March 09, 2024.

13 Interview with a Military Investigation Officer, Special Investigation Branch, Harare, August 06, 2024.

14 Columbus Mabika, “President promotes six ZDF Generals on retirement,” Chronicle, April 13, 2024.

15 Chikumbu Tafadzwa, “Zimbabwe: Whistleblower Protection Workshop,” Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa, August 18, 2023.

16 Zimbabwe Public Service Academy, Press Statement, 2021.

17 Interview with a Zimbabwe Army Pay Records Officer, Harare, August 03, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

18 Interview with an Officer, Army HQ, Harare, July 29, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

19 Interview with a Quartermaster deployed for both Operation Maguta and Command Agriculture, Midlands Province, August 04, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

20 Interview with a Recruit Training Depot, Bulawayo, August 06, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.



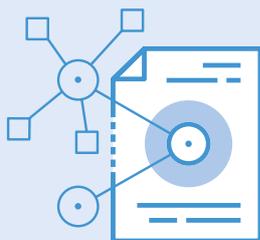
ZIMBABWE

DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

Military expenditure (US\$ mil) (SIPRI, 2024)	\$98.4
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)	N/A

Evidence indicates that defence acquisitions are routinely conducted through government-to-government arrangements, bypassing competitive tendering.²¹ Reports and media outlets have repeatedly identified patronage networks and elite influence as central features of tendering decisions,²² creating space for inflated pricing and preferential treatment of politically connected suppliers.²³ Defence procurement in Zimbabwe presents critical corruption risks, characterised by secrecy, weak oversight, and limited transparency across the acquisition cycle. Although procurement is formally governed by the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (2017) and the Defence Procurement Act (1996), defence-specific purchases are routinely exempted under national security and Official Secrets provisions.²⁴ There is no publicly available defence strategy or acquisition plan, making

it challenging to assess whether procurement decisions are derived from clearly identified operational needs. Open competition is largely absent, with single-sourcing and politically influenced acquisitions, particularly from China and Russia, prevalent.²⁵ Regarding oversight mechanisms, the Defence Procurement Board lacks independence, parliamentary committees are denied information or cooperation, and audit reporting excludes meaningful detail on defence procurement. The only notable safeguards are the existence of supplier sanction provisions and formal complaint mechanisms within the national procurement framework. However, these are undermined by secrecy exemptions and non-compliance by defence authorities.²⁶



GDI data collection for **Zimbabwe** was conducted from May 2024 to August 2025.

21 The Zimbabwe Mail, "Zimbabwe takes delivery of military hardware from China," December 13, 2023.

22 Chilunjika, Alouis, Kudakwashe Intauno, Dominique E. Uwizeyimana, and Sharon RT Chilunjika. "Dynamics of Patronage Politics and the Tendering Process at Zimbabwe's State Procurement Board." *African Journal of Governance and Development* 11, no. 1.1 (2022): 79-103.

23 ZimLive, "Zimbabwe buys 32 Russian choppers for inflated US\$320 million," May 19, 2023.

24 Official Secrets Act, Republic Act, No.16, 1970.

25 Interview with a Procurement Officer, Harare, August 05, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

26 Interview with a Legal officer, Military Legal Service, Harare, August 05, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

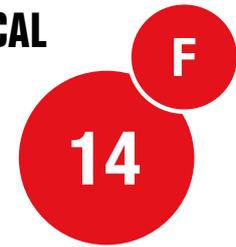


ZIMBABWE 2025 GDI SCORECARD

	Grade	Score
POLITICAL RISK	E	27
Q1 Legislative Scrutiny	C	50
Q2 Defence Committee	E	25
Q3 Defence Policy Debate	F	6
Q4 CSO Engagement	F	8
Q5 Conventions: UNCAC / OECD	B	75
Q6 Public Debate	F	13
Q7 Anticorruption Policy	C	50
Q8 Compliance and Ethics Units	E	17
Q9 Public Trust in Institutions	NS	
Q10 Risk Assessments	F	0
Q11 Acquisition Planning	D	33
Q12 Budget Transparency & Detail	B	75
Q13 Budget Scrutiny	C	50
Q14 Budget Availability	F	8
Q15 Defence Income	F	8
Q16 Internal Audit	E	25
Q17 External Audit	D	38
Q18 Natural Resources	F	0
Q19 Organised Crime Links	D	38
Q20 Organised Crime Policing	D	33
Q21 Intelligence Services Oversight	F	0
Q22 Intelligence Services Recruitment	F	8
Q23 Export Controls (ATT)	C	50
Q76 Lobbying	F	0
FINANCIAL RISK	F	7
Q24 Asset Disposal Controls	D	33
Q25 Asset Disposal Scrutiny	F	0
Q26 Secret Spending	F	0
Q27 Legislative Access to Information	F	0
Q28 Secret Program Auditing	F	0
Q29 Off-budget Spending	D	33
Q30 Access to Information	F	0
Q31 Beneficial Ownership	F	0
Q32 Military-Owned Business Scrutiny	F	0
Q33 Unauthorised Private Enterprise	F	13
Q77 Defence Spending	F	0
PERSONNEL RISK	E	24
Q34 Public Commitment to Integrity	E	25
Q35 Disciplinary Measures for Personnel	F	13
Q36 Whistleblowing	F	8
Q37 High-risk Positions	F	0
Q38 Numbers of Personnel	F	0
Q39 Pay Rates and Allowances	F	13
Q40 Payment System	A	92
Q41 Objective Appointments	F	8
Q42 Objective Promotions	D	44
Q43 Bribery to Avoid Conscription	NA	
Q44 Bribery for Preferred Postings	C	58
Q45 Chains of Command and Payment	F	0
Q46 Military Code of Conduct	F	0
Q47 Civilian Code of Conduct	B	81
Q48 Anticorruption Training	F	0
Q49 Corruption Prosecutions	F	8
Q50 Facilitation Payments	D	33

**OVERALL
COUNTRY
SCORE**

**CRITICAL
RISK**



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	

	Grade	Score
PROCUREMENT RISK	F	12
Q57 Procurement Legislation	F	0
Q58 Procurement Cycle	E	25
Q59 Procurement Oversight Mechanisms	E	17
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	F	13
Q66 Anti-Collusion Controls	E	31
Q67 Contract Award / Delivery	F	13
Q68 Complaint Mechanisms	B	67
Q69 Supplier Sanctions	D	42
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

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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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