

SITUATION REPORT

**Identification of New RSF UAV
Launch Site in Nyala**

6 FEBRUARY 2026

Yale SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Humanitarian Research Lab

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I. Key Findings

The Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) has identified at least 85 objects consistent with loitering munitions (LM) visible in satellite imagery across two sites in Rapid Support Forces (RSF)-controlled Nyala in January 2026. As of 4 February 2026, at least 40 objects consistent with LM are visible at a previously identified launch site at RSF-controlled Nyala airport. Loitering munitions are a subtype of UAVs (so-called "drones") sometimes referred to as "suicide drones" or "kamikaze drones" that combine an explosive munition and UAV, rather than a multi-use UAV that can drop or direct munitions.

At least 51 objects consistent with LM were present at a newly identified launch point approximately 2.5 kilometers east of the former UNAMID Sector South Headquarters (Super Camp) visible in satellite imagery as of 5 January 2026. Each of the likely LM were absent from this location in satellite imagery by 22 January 2026.

These LMs are consistent with the Shahed-style UAVs that Yale HRL previously identified in at the Nyala airport site in May 2025 and September 2025. Yale HRL has previously reported that these LMs are consistent with the Shahed 136-style loitering munitions, including the Sunflower-200 (Cobtec) and the ZT-180 (Xi'an Bingo Intelligent Aviation Technology), which have a reported radius of 1500 to 2500 kilometers.¹

There has been a significant shift since the start of the conflict in April 2023 as RSF, SAF, and their respective aligned forces have been increasingly equipped with advanced aerial weapons including advanced UAVs. It is well-documented that Nyala is a transport hub by both air and ground for outside materiel for RSF.²

Throughout January 2026 there have been multiple reports of UAV or "suicide drone" attacks across Sudan attributed to RSF. Yale HRL cannot currently confirm that each of these reports are consistent with the Shahed-style loitering munitions visible at the two sites in Nyala.

40 Loitering Munitions Near RSF-controlled Nyala Airport

Yale HRL identifies at least 34 objects consistent with loitering munitions near Nyala Airport visible in satellite imagery on 10 January 2026 near a cargo container. In later satellite imagery collected on 4 February 2026, at least 40 LMs are present in satellite imagery and the cargo container is open. Thirty-four LMs are in the same position on both 10 January and 4 February 2026 satellite imagery.

While satellite imagery between 10 January and 4 February 2026 was available to Yale HRL, analysts were unable to determine whether some LMs were no longer present or remained. As of 4 February 2026, there are 40 LMs, 34 which were in the same locations as the 34 LMs observed in satellite imagery on 10 January 2026.

The LMs visible in satellite imagery near Nyala Airport on 10 January 2026 and 4 February 2026 are visible at the same site that LMs were previously identified in

satellite imagery from both May and September 2025. The LMs visible in May 2025 were present during the same time that RSF was conducting so-called “suicide drone” attacks across the country including on Port Sudan.³ The loitering munitions visible in at this location on 29 September 2025 were visible soon after a likely loitering munition attack destroyed the Al-Sarfiya mosque in Daraja Oula, El-Fasher, killing more than 70 people on Friday 19 September 2025.⁴

51 Loitering Munitions Near RSF-Controlled Former UNAMID Sector South Headquarters

Yale HRL has identified approximately 51 objects consistent with loitering munitions with accompanying launchers visible in satellite imagery on 5 January 2026 at a newly identified launch site near the UNAMID Sector South Headquarters. These LMs are no longer visible in satellite imagery on 22 January 2026. These LMs and launchers are located approximately 2.5 km east of the former UNAMID Sector South Headquarters (Super Camp). At least 50 cargo containers measuring approximately 8 meters by 3 meters were first visible in satellite imagery at this location by 4 October 2025. The UAV launchers are first visible in satellite imagery collected on 15 October 2025, and LMs are first visible in satellite imagery on 5 January 2026. While all LMs are no longer visible by 22 January 2026, the majority of the launchers remain visible in satellite imagery on 22 January 2026.

These loitering match the Shahed-style UAVs visible at Nyala airport that Yale HRL has previously reported were visible in May 2025 and again in September 2025.⁵ Yale HRL makes the assessment that these LMs are consistent with the previously identified LMs at Nyala airport based on their shape and dimensions and the shape and presence of the launch platforms.

Antiaircraft Near RSF-Controlled Former UNAMID Sector South Headquarters

Yale HRL identifies the presence of a large vehicle mounted with a rotating object on the back of its chassis measuring approximately 2.5 meters by 10 meters visible in satellite imagery. This rotating apparatus is consistent with a mobile anti-aircraft unit. This anti-aircraft weapons system was first visible in a revetment near the former UNAMID Sector South Headquarters in satellite imagery by 27 August 2025 and the weapons system pivoted to a westward-facing position between 15 October 2025 and 5 January 2026. Open sources have reported that RSF has utilized both Pantsir and FK-2000 anti-aircraft units.⁶

II. Human Security Analysis

Reports of RSF airstrikes

Between 5 – 22 January 2026 there have been reports of multiple drone attacks attributed to RSF or in territory controlled by SAF or Joint Forces, including on SAF military installations. These include the following claims:

- 5 January 2026: SAF claims to have shot down 5 “drones” attempting to target Dilling, South Kordofan.⁷
- 5 January 2026: SAF ground air defenses allegedly shot down RSF “suicide drone” in Merowe, Northern State.⁸
- 6 January 2026: UAV strikes in Al-Jaballiya neighborhood in El Obeid, North Kordofan kill at least 12 people. Yale HRL assesses that the damage at least one site in previous reporting could be consistent with that from a loitering munition.⁹
- 7 January 2026: RSF drone attacks of as many as 10 UAVs are reported at Atbara, killing at least one person; SAF claimed to have shot down at least nine of the UAVs.¹⁰
- 7 January 2026: Reports of RSF UAV strikes in Jabal Al-Labitor, Gezira state target Sudan Shield Forces allegedly killed at least one soldier.¹¹
- 7 January 2026: Reports that RSF conducted a UAV attack on Al-Razma village, Gezira.¹²
- 11 January 2026: A reported SPLM-N/RSF attack on healthcare facilities in Dilling allegedly includes UAVs alongside heavy artillery.¹³
- 11 January 2026: A reported RSF drone attack on Kartala Market, Habila locality, South Kordofan killed at least 5 people and injured at least 12 people.¹⁴
- 12 January 2026: Reports that RSF UAVs attacked SAF at 17th Division Command on Singa, Sennar State killed “dozens of people” including civilians, SAF commanders, and government of Sudan leadership.¹⁵
- 13 January 2026: Reports of RSF UAV attack on 18th Infantry Division, Kosti, White Nile included at least four explosions.¹⁶
- 15 January 2026: SAF-aligned sources claim to have allegedly shot down an RSF drone in the area of El Obeid.¹⁷
- 15 January 2026: Reports state that a RSF and SPLM-N drone targeted Dilling City’s market in Dilling, South Kordofan, killing at least 12 people.¹⁸
- 18 January 2026: Drones were reportedly used in battle between RSF and SAF in Jabrat Al-Sheik locality, North Kordofan.¹⁹

Yale HRL does not currently assess whether all the above attacks are consistent with the same type of loitering munitions identified in Nyala, nor does Yale HRL independently attribute these reported attacks to RSF. SAF has conducted multiple alleged UAV strikes across Sudan during this period as well.²⁰

Both RSF and SAF have acquired advanced UAV capabilities since the start of the conflict. RSF was first documented to have advanced UAVs visible in satellite imagery at Nyala in January 2025 with the presence of CH-95/FH-95-consistent UAVs; there had been previous reports of smaller UAVs used as both loitering munitions and to drop

explosives prior to January 2025.²¹ Since then, RSF has gained a significant UAV arsenal including these Shahed-style loitering munitions.²² SAF, known for its air force capabilities relying on line-of-site targeting before this conflict began, faced a direct threat after RSF allegedly shot down multiple aircraft.²³ SAF reportedly acquired UAVs, including Bayraktar Akıncı and Bayraktar TB2s (Turkish company Baykar), which appear to have increased since the fall of El-Fasher.²⁴

It has been well-documented that UAE has supported RSF and Nyala airport has become a transport hub for equipment and materiel to RSF by both land and air.²⁵ As some of the alleged supply routes to RSF have broken down during January 2026, the UAE has reportedly pivoted to continue to support the RSF through different supply lines.²⁶

Simultaneously, SAF has reportedly received significant support, including in recent weeks, from foreign backers including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan²⁷ Turkey,²⁸ Iran,²⁹ and Egypt.³⁰ These include a \$1.5 billion USD deal involving Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to provide UAV and anti-aircraft capabilities to SAF; Egypt has, according to *The New York Times*, engaged in direct support to SAF by conducting air attacks in the triangle which shut down RSF's supply routes from Libya.³¹ The triangle is a geographic area in southeast Libya where arms were reportedly being transported to Sudan.

The increasing number of loitering munitions and additional launch area available to RSF carry significant implications for human security given RSF's track record of deploying these devices against markets, mosques, community kitchens, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure for sustainment of life.³² It is critical that all parties to the conflict with any form of UAV or pilot-guided aerial munitions uphold the core principle of distinction in the laws of armed conflict, not target civilians and civilian infrastructure, and take precautions to limit civilian casualties at all times.

III. Methodology

Yale HRL utilizes data fusion methodologies of open source and remote sensing data analysis. Yale HRL produced this report through the cross-corroboration of open source data, including social media, local news reporting, multimedia, and other reports, and remote sensing data, including satellite imagery and thermal sensor data. Researchers analyzed open source data across social media, news reports, and other publicly available sources to identify, chrono- and geolocate, and verify incidents. Analysts assess the credibility and reliability of open source data based on a source's level of detail, past credibility, and the corroboration of other independent sources. Remote sensing and satellite imagery analysis relies on multi-temporal change detection, which involves the comparison of two or more satellite images of the same area captured at different times to detect differences in coloration, visual properties, and presence, absence, or positional change of objects across the images.

Place names were identified using UN P-codes obtained via the United Nations Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) and International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Sudan. This baseline was then verified and informed through open source analysis by Yale HRL's analysts with relevant cultural and linguistic skills.

Limitations

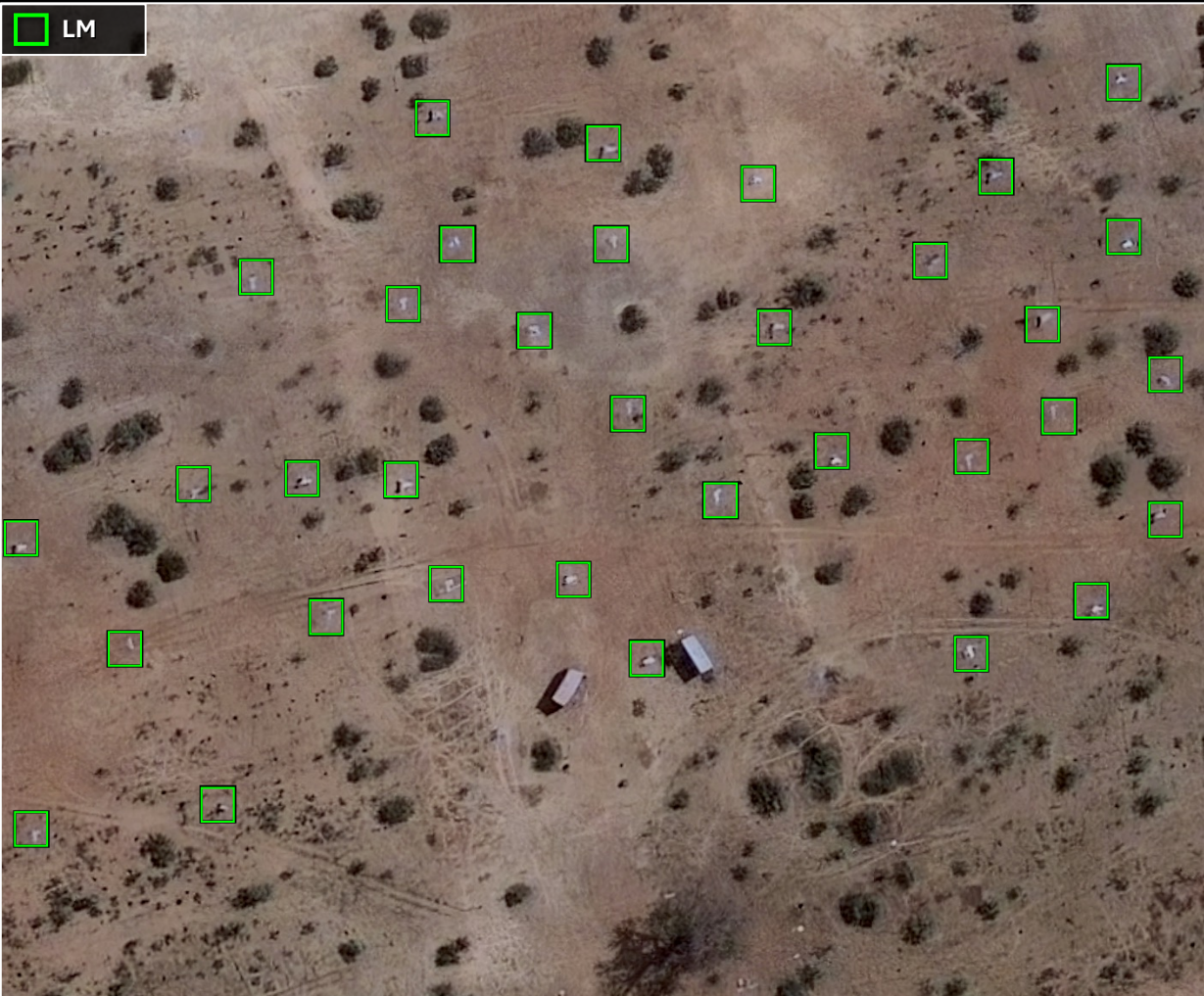
There are significant limitations to the data fusion methodology. The information environment in Sudan does not have the breadth of data available in other locations and there is likely a significant reporting bias for those who provide open source reporting. The tools and techniques present significant challenges to assess activities such as extrajudicial detention, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and conflict-related casualties, particularly in environments with limited data. Satellite imagery analysis is limited by available imagery over time and space. Available nadir angles of satellite imagery can produce challenges to assess structural damage, until multiple angles and ground-level photographic and video materials emerge to help inform the analysis. Image resolution level can also limit the analyst's ability to perceive the full extent of damage present.

Nyala Airport

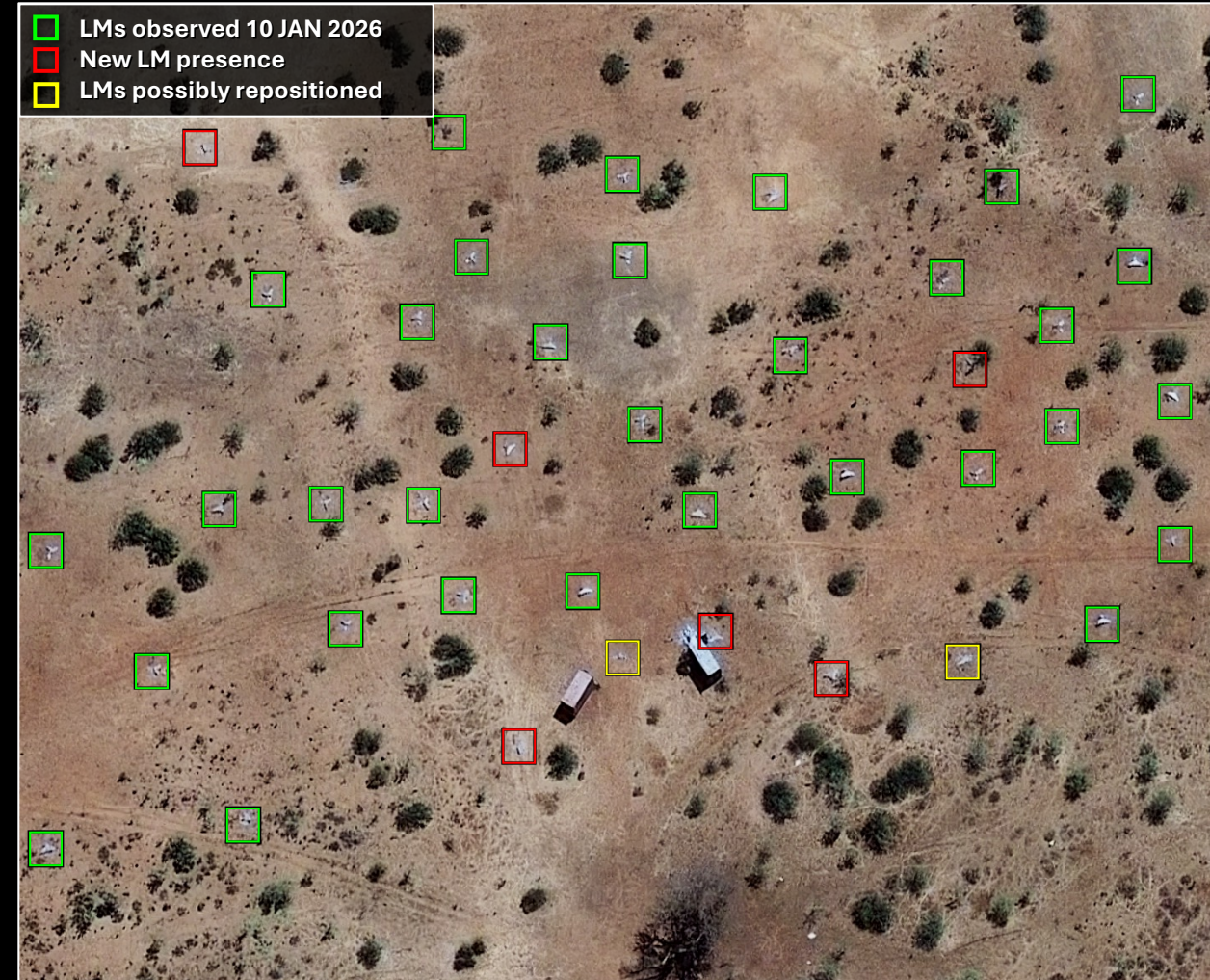
Loitering-munition UAV presence observed between 10 January-04 February 2026

Analysis of satellite imagery collected between over Nyala shows the presence of at least 34 loitering-munition UAVs present at a location near the Nyala airport on 10 January 2026.

Imagery collected on 04 February shows the majority of positions occupied by the LMs identified previously on 10 January have LMs present, with the exception of two that may have been repositioned. Additionally, at least four six more UAVs are also identified on this date.



10 January 2026 © 2026 Vantor



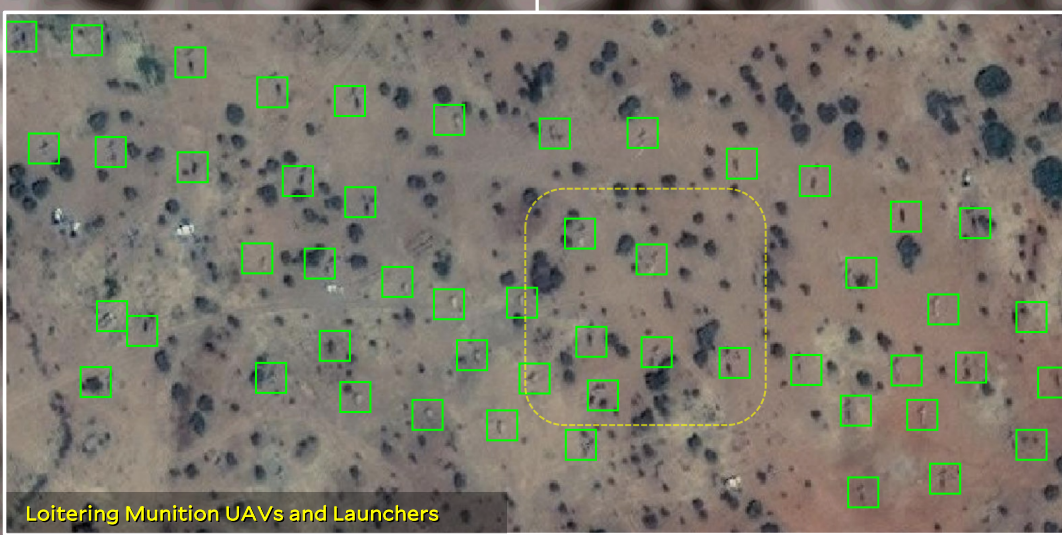
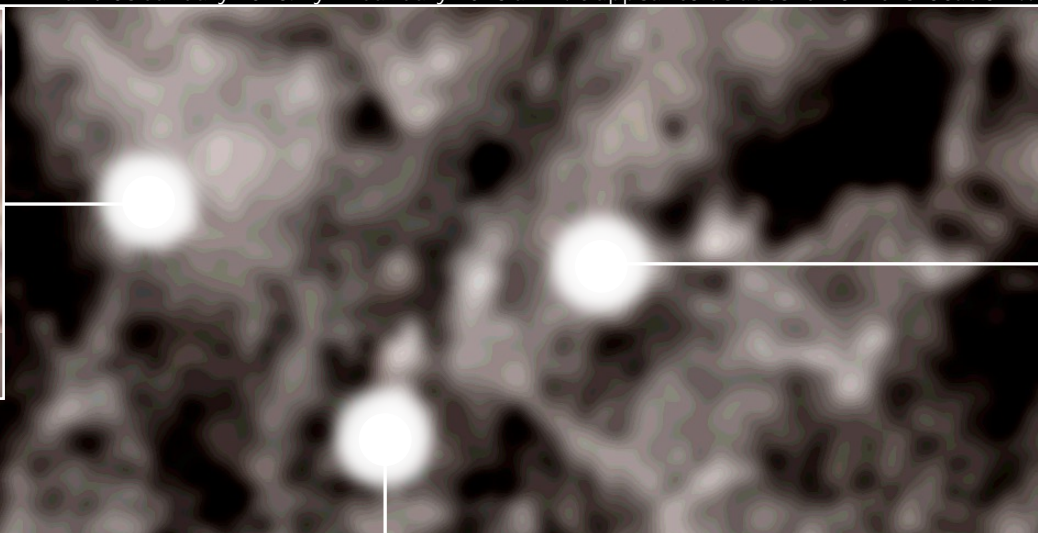
04 February 2026 © 2026 Vantor

Nyala

Possible anti-aircraft, loitering munition UAVs and cargo containers observed on 05 January 2026

Imagery collected on 05 January 2026 approximately 3 km from the former UNAMID Sector South Headquarters (Super Camp) in Nyala shows the presence of a vehicle consistent with a mobile anti-aircraft unit measuring approximately 10x2.5 m in dimension, with an apparent rotating apparatus on the back of the chassis. Analysis of archival imagery reveals this vehicle and revetment were first visible between 25 June and 27 August 2025. Comparison of imagery collected between 15 October 2025 - 05 January 2026 shows movement of position of the likely weapon system in the vehicle chassis.

Additionally, located approximately 8 km distance from a previously-identified loitering-munition (LM) launching site at the Nyala airport, is the presence of at least 50 objects consistent with LM with accompanying launchers. Approximately 50 cargo containers measuring 8x3 m in dimension are also observed at this location. The cargo containers first start to appear in archival imagery analyzed between 29 September and 04 October 2025. The UAV launchers are first visible between 29 September and 15 October 2025, with the first appearance of the LMs occurring between 17 November 2025 and 05 January 2026. By 22 January 2026 all LMs appear to be absent from the location with the majority of launchers remaining.



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