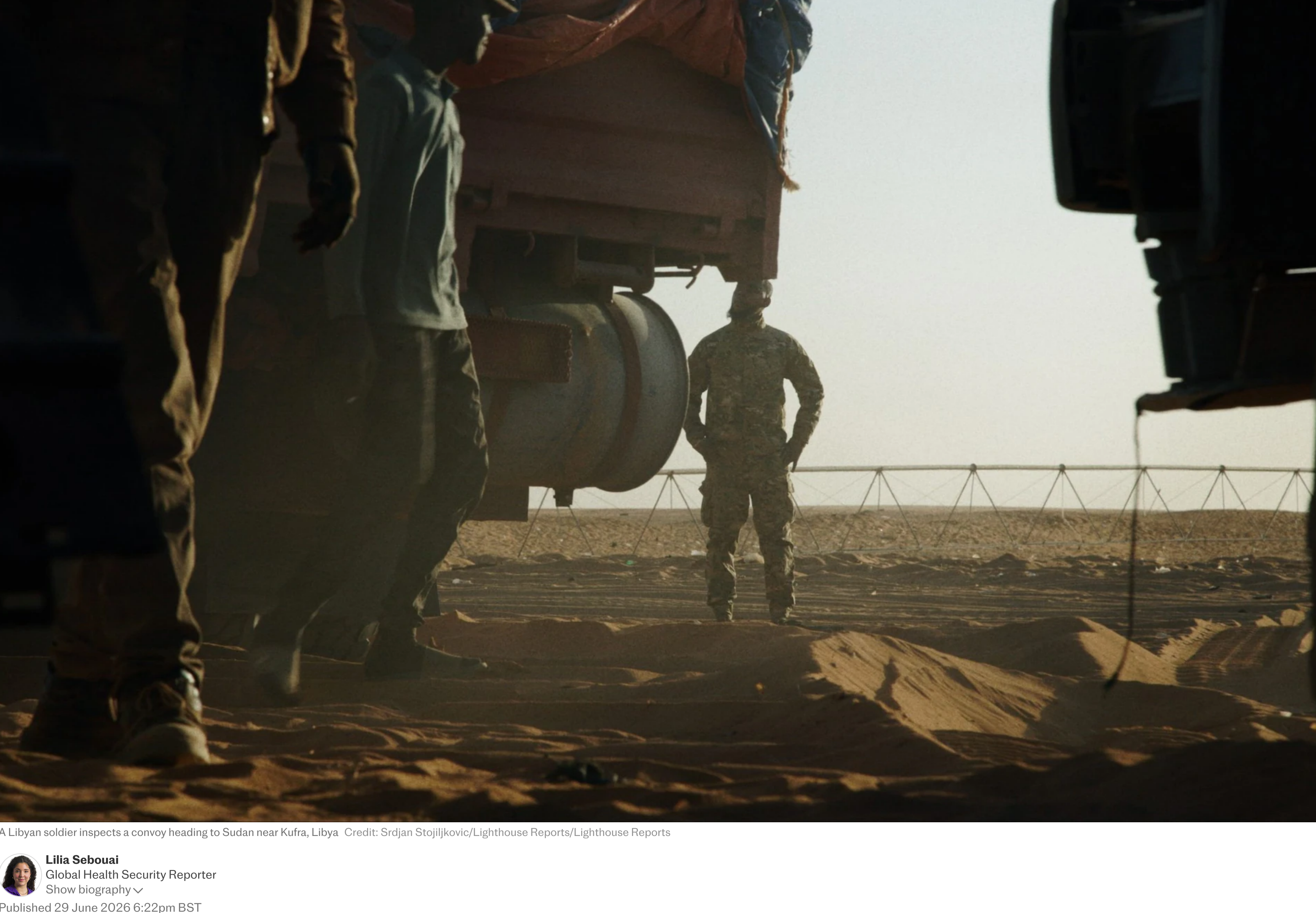


See all News

UAE-backed Sudan rebels ‘training in Libya’

New documentary sheds light on an alleged secret network that is fuelling Sudan's war

  Gift this article free  Add us as preferred source 



A Libyan soldier inspects a convoy heading to Sudan near Kufra, Libya. Credit: Srdjan Stojiljkovic/Lighthouse Reports/Lighthouse Reports

 **Lilia Sebouai**
Global Health Security Reporter
[Show biography](#) 

Published 29 June 2026 6:22pm BST

Sudanese rebel fighters are being trained to use drones, heavy machine guns and rocket launchers in a network of secret camps in Libya, investigators have claimed.

Lighthouse Reports, a Dutch non-profit media organisation, alleged that southern Libya has become a key hub for training and supplying the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the paramilitary group that has been repeatedly accused of war crimes and genocide in Sudan's civil war.

Drawing on interviews with RSF defectors and Libyan National Army (LNA) officers, and open source analysis, the investigators detail how Sudanese fighters receive training from UAE-backed Colombian mercenaries and Libyan soldiers.

The video investigation, which was produced in conjunction with Sudan War Monitor, a group of journalists and open-source researchers, and Evident Media, a non-profit visual investigation organisation, is the latest contribution to a growing body of evidence that the conflict in Sudan has evolved into a regional proxy war.

Earlier this year, Reuters reported that thousands of RSF fighters had undergone training in a secret camp in Ethiopia. The UAE has long been widely accused of backing the RSF – allegations it has repeatedly denied.



Truckers wait for inspection at Checkpoint 2-2, a known transit point for fuel and weapons smuggling by the RSF. Credit: Srdjan Stojiljkovic/Lighthouse Reports

The Dutch investigators identified four previously undocumented camps in eastern Libya – territory controlled by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, the UAE-backed commander of the LNA and de-facto ruler of half of the country.

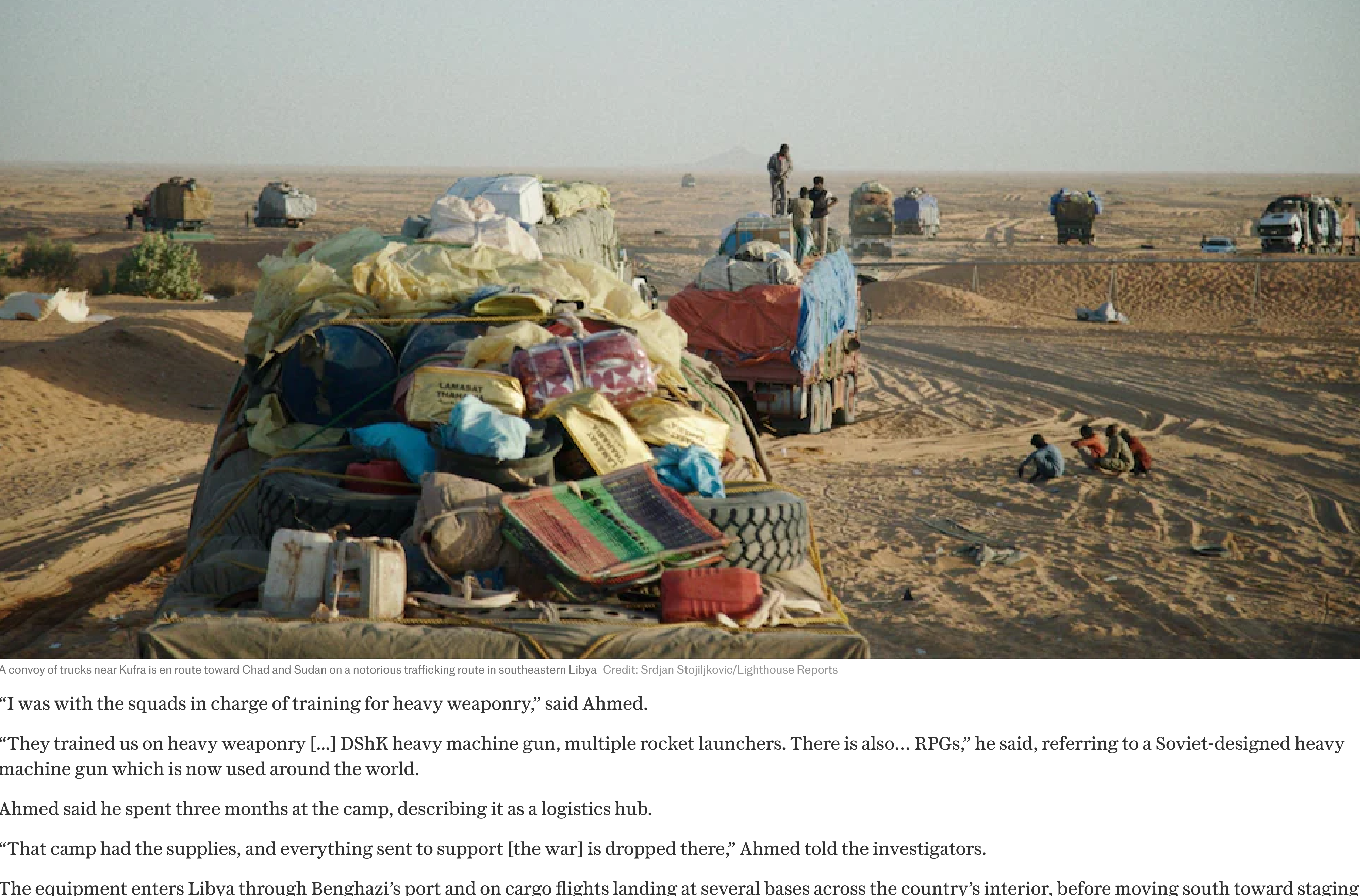
At one of the sites, Camp 17, an LNA facility about 12 miles outside Benghazi, mercenaries trained RSF fighters brought to Libya by land and air in how to use drones and heavy weapons systems, according to an RSF defector and Libyan sources.

Ahmed, an RSF defector, who spent three months at the camp and whose name has been changed to protect his identity, said the trainers were neither Libyan nor Sudanese, were covered in tattoos, spoke English, and “had a special rank in that camp”.

The recruits believed that the trainers were Colombian, and that the UAE had brought and paid for them.

It has been widely reported that the UAE [has paid for hundreds of Colombian mercenaries](#), some still teenagers, to train and fight with RSF paramilitaries on the frontlines of Sudan's war.

Last year, the Sudanese government told the United Nations Security Council that Emirati private security companies including the Abu Dhabi-based Global Security Services Group (GSSG) were behind the recruitment of the South American guns for hire.



A convoy of trucks near Kufra is en route toward Chad and Sudan on a notorious trafficking route in southeastern Libya. Credit: Srdjan Stojiljkovic/Lighthouse Reports

“I was with the squads in charge of training for heavy weaponry,” said Ahmed.

“They trained us on heavy weaponry [...] DShK heavy machine gun, multiple rocket launchers. There is also... RPGs,” he said, referring to a Soviet-designed heavy machine gun which is now used around the world.

Ahmed said he spent three months at the camp, describing it as a logistics hub.

“That camp had the supplies, and everything sent to support [the war] is dropped there,” Ahmed told the investigators.

The equipment enters Libya through Benghazi's port and on cargo flights landing at several bases across the country's interior, before moving south toward staging areas near the Sudanese border, according to investigators.

Despite efforts by the Libyan authorities to keep these operations under wraps, RSF soldiers stationed in Libya have posted thousands of videos on social media since April 2023, when open fighting erupted between Sudanese army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti”, who heads the RSF.



Sudanese men pack a pickup truck at Checkpoint 2-2, a known transit point for weapons and fuel bound for Sudan. Credit: Srdjan Stojiljkovic/Lighthouse Reports

One video featured in the documentary shows eight RSF soldiers lounging in the desert, waving to the camera. Another shows two young men in uniform surfing down sand dunes on what appears to be a broken piece of a car door.

Two Libyan National Army sources told Lighthouse that RSF fighters continue to be trained by foreign instructors at Camp 17.

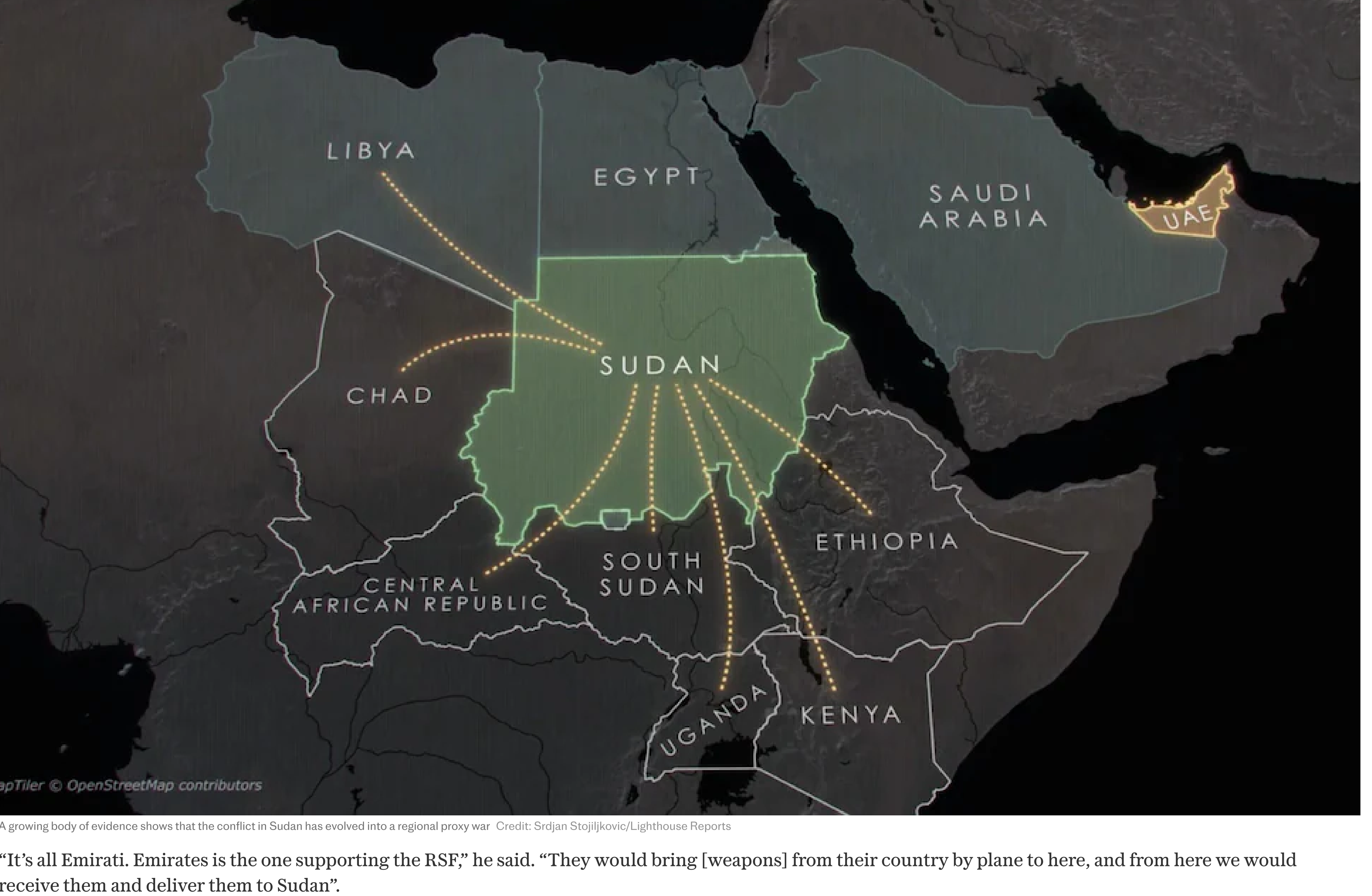
Ahmed said the foreign instructors at Camp 17 initially trained Libyan soldiers, who then passed on those skills to Sudanese recruits.

“At first [the Colombians] train Libyans, when [the Libyans] get it, then Libyans would train the Sudanese... when they were training Libyans, we would be sitting there,” he said.

But Colombians were not the only foreign presence identified at the Libyan bases. Another RSF defector who spent time in Jufra, in central Libya, said Russian personnel were in operational command of the base, while Libyan staff handled administrative roles.

Ahmed also witnessed weapons, military vehicles and boxes of ammunition regularly arriving in Libya by plane.

Though most were unmarked, he said that at least one type of armoured vehicle bore explicit “Made in UAE” markings.



A growing body of evidence shows that the conflict in Sudan has evolved into a regional proxy war. Credit: Srdjan Stojiljkovic/Lighthouse Reports

“It's all Emirati. Emirates is the one supporting the RSF,” he said. “They would bring [weapons] from their country by plane to here, and from here we would receive them and deliver them to Sudan”.

Lighthouse corroborated Ahmed's account by analysing satellite images of Camp 17 and its surrounding terrain, as well as drone footage of training areas and vehicle compounds, and open-source videos posted from southern Libya.

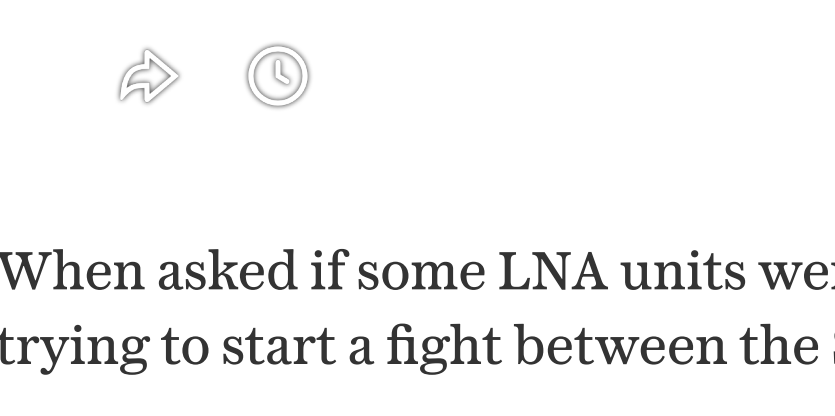
They identified Toyota Land Cruiser 79-series pickup trucks – the same vehicles that had previously been linked to alleged UAE arms transfers to the RSF by UN investigators.

Investigators said the vehicles appeared repeatedly in RSF-linked social media content and at staging areas in Libya, which they claimed was evidence of an organised supply network.

All together, the investigators analysed thousands of videos across TikTok, Facebook and Telegram confirmed “close collaboration” between the LNA and RSF.

Hemedti, leader of the RSF, featured heavily in the posts, alongside Haftar.

Libyan officials denied that the RSF operates from Libyan territory.



When asked if some LNA units were working with the RSF, Lt. Fattah Ehniesh, from the Subul al-Salam Brigade, said: “No, these are all rumours spread by people trying to start a fight between the Sudanese army and the Libyan army”.

The RSF also rejected allegations that the force receives external military support or operates training camps outside Sudan.

Dr Alaa El-Din Nugud, spokesperson for the RSF-aligned Tasis administration, said: “There are many allegations that are not true, and we have issued statements rejecting them”.

Asked directly about alleged training camps in Libya, he replied: “It's all our own. Our training camps are within our borders.”

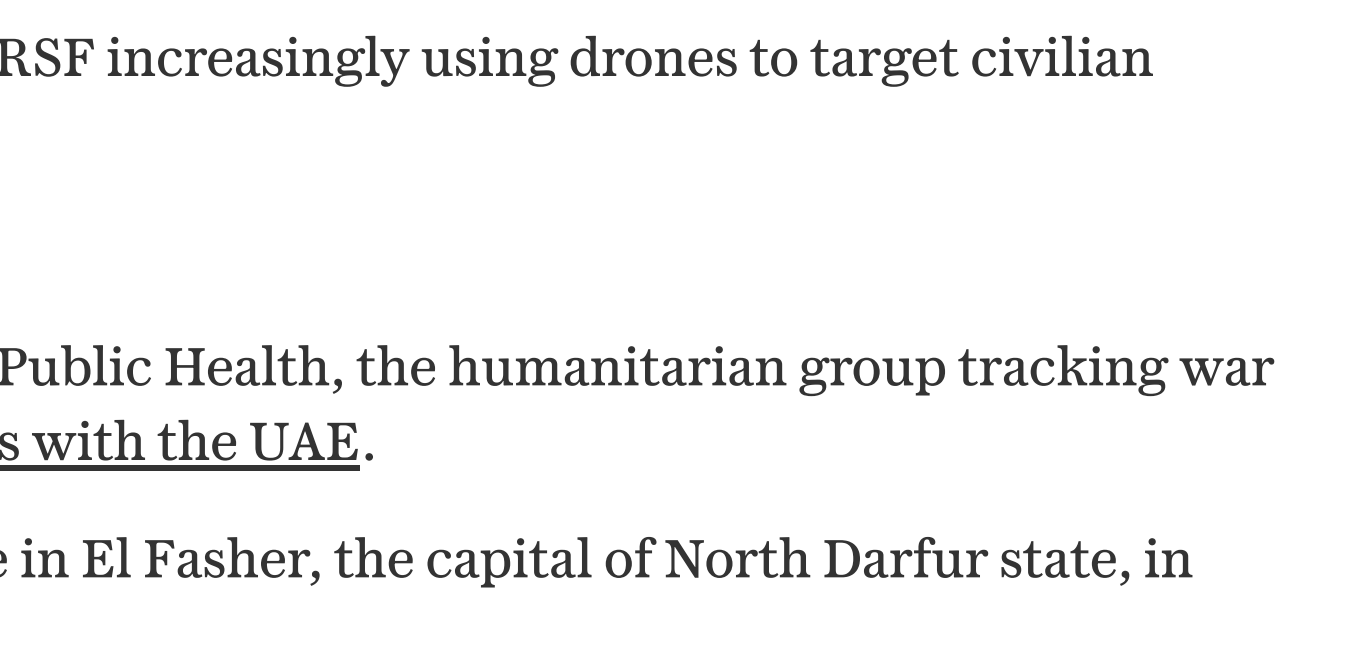
The UAE foreign ministry denied providing military or financial support to any side in the conflict.

“The UAE has not provided and is not providing military or financial support to any warring party in Sudan,” it said in a statement.

The charts that show Sudan's war is the world's deadliest

For three years, a civil war in Sudan has unleashed suffering on a scale that is hard to comprehend.

The *Investigation* has analysed data which show that not only is it by far the deadliest and most destructive conflict in the world, but it is getting worse.



The investigation comes amid reports of [a looming RSF assault on the central Sudanese city of El Obeid](#), the strategic capital of North Kordofan state, which has become the new frontline in the war.

Yvette Cooper, the foreign secretary, last week warned the city was on the “precipice of atrocity”, with the RSF increasingly using drones to target civilian infrastructure and sever access to basic services.

The UK was recently criticised again for its handling of the conflict.

Last week, Nathaniel Raymond, the executive director of the Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, the humanitarian group tracking war crimes from space, told Parliament that Britain [had previously failed to act for fear of damaging its relations with the UAE](#).

Mr Raymond said Britain had been uniquely placed to prevent the slaughter of an estimated 60,000 people in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, in October last year, but did not intervene forcefully enough.

As the UN security council “penholder” on Sudan – meaning it leads on drafting resolutions and co-ordinating the council's response to the conflict – Britain was, Mr Raymond said, still the world's “best hope” of preventing atrocities.

Protect yourself and your family by learning more about [Global Health Security](#)

 **Lilia Sebouai**
Global Health Security Reporter
[Show biography](#) 

Published 29 June 2026 6:22pm BST