

Satellite Sentinel Project

Sudan Armed Forces Buildup in Heglig
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Situation Report: Sudan Armed Forces Buildup in Heglig

March 15, 2013

Sudan Armed Forces Buildup in Heglig

Analysis of DigitalGlobe imagery from an oil-producing area on the border between Sudan and South Sudan, dated March 5, 2013, indicates an increase in Sudan Armed Forces, or SAF, including the arrival of additional tanks and two Mi-24 helicopter gunships. The imagery is of a SAF position at Heglig, a region in South Kordofan, Sudan, which South Sudan claims lies within its territory.

Imagery from March 5, 2013 shows 22 SAF tanks in the Heglig area, which equates to two tank companies. Previous imagery from December 2012 shows six tanks in the same SAF garrison. As of March 5, 2013, ten Heavy Equipment Transports, or HETS, each capable of carrying a main battle tank, are parked just outside the gate of the tank support area. These could be used to quickly transport the tanks long distances for defensive or offensive operations.

Twelve tanks are already deployed to defensive positions south of the town. Analysis of additional imagery shows some of these southern positions are augmented by artillery and infantry units. The new satellite imagery in this report also shows the disposition of three main battle tanks around one of the nearby garrisons.

Earlier this year, South Sudan accused Khartoum of sending more forces to the contested border area,¹ which Khartoum neither confirmed nor denied.² Analysis of imagery taken over the six months preceding March 5, 2013 shows a slow buildup of forces in the Heglig area with the most recent increases noted since January

2013. According to the Satellite Sentinel Project's monitoring of this hotspot, as of March 5, SAF's total presence in the Heglig area, including the two tank companies, was equivalent to two reinforced infantry battalions. Continued vigilance will be necessary to monitor whether these recent buildups continue or expand at a time when the two Sudans appear committed to implementing security modalities along the border.

SSP has previously documented clashes between SAF and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army-North, or SPLA-N, near the disputed oil fields of Heglig in April, 2012.³

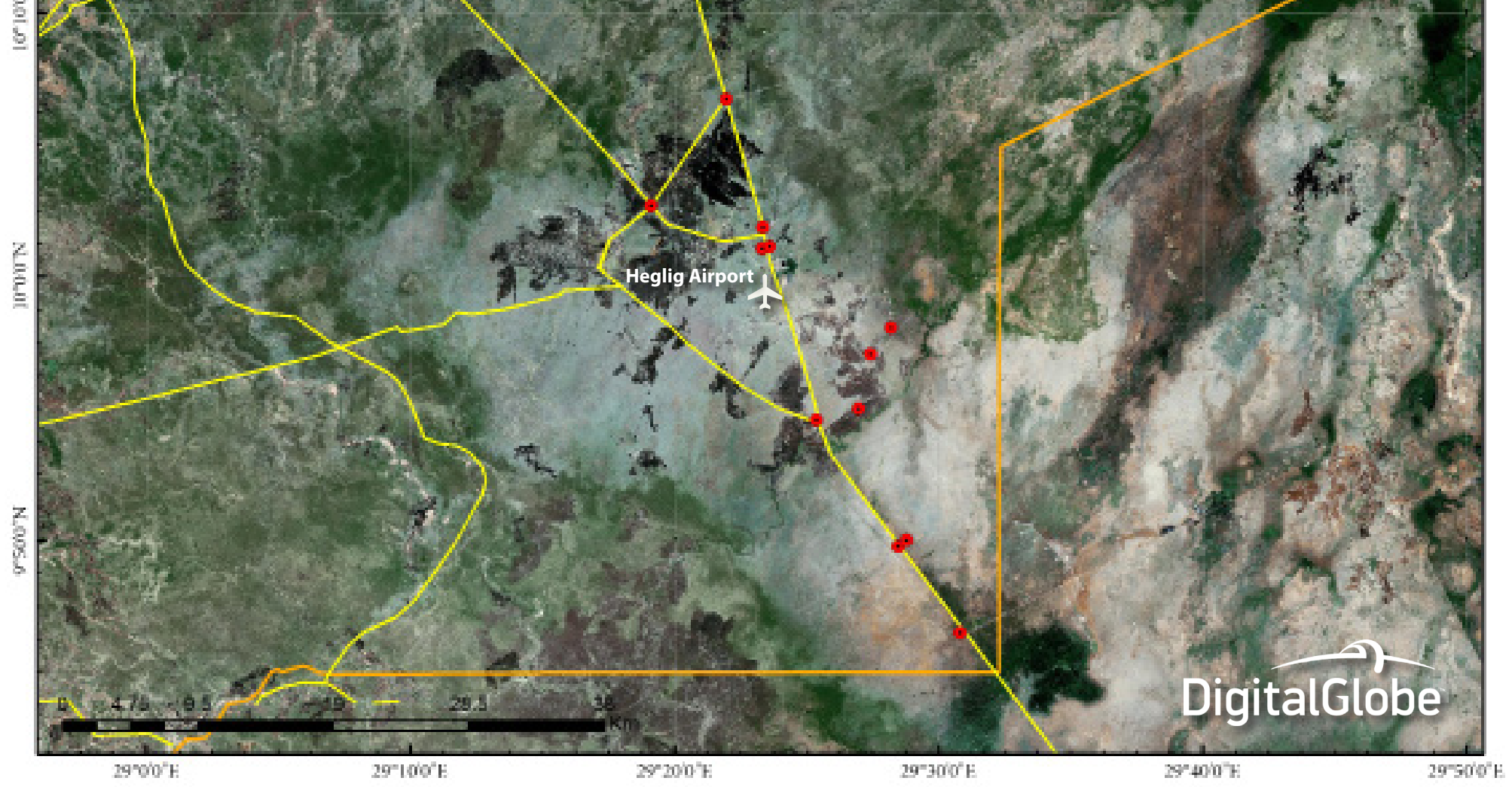
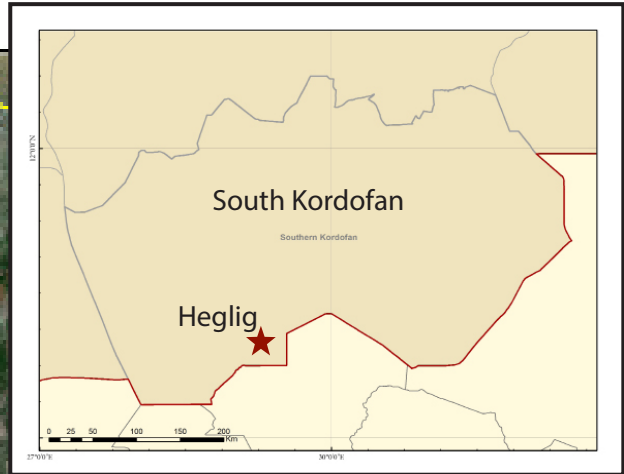
This imagery was taken prior to Sudan and South Sudan's March 12, 2013 conclusion of implementation modalities for a set of cooperation agreements that the two countries signed in September 2012. The conclusion of the implementation modalities appears to have mitigated, in the immediate term, recent tensions along the north-south border and in the vicinity of Heglig. It remains to be seen whether the relative calm will remain, particularly as the two sides begin to implement security-related arrangements along the border in the coming weeks.

1. Holland, Hereward. "South Sudan accuses Sudan of troops build-up on border." Reuters, February 12, 2013. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/12/sudan-south-idUSL5N0BCFN120130212> (Accessed March 6, 2013).

2. Voice of America, "Juba Says Sudan Massing Troops on Border." Last modified February 12, 2013. Available at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/juba-says-sudan-massing-troops-on-border/1602181.html> (Accessed March 14, 2013).

3. Satellite Sentinel Project, "Pipeline: Evidence of the Destruction of Key Oil Infrastructure, Heglig," April 21, 2012. Available at: <http://www.satsentinel.org/report/pipeline-evidence-destruction-key-oil-infrastructure-heglig-report> (Accessed March 7, 2013).

Current disposition of Sudan Armed Forces in and around Heglig



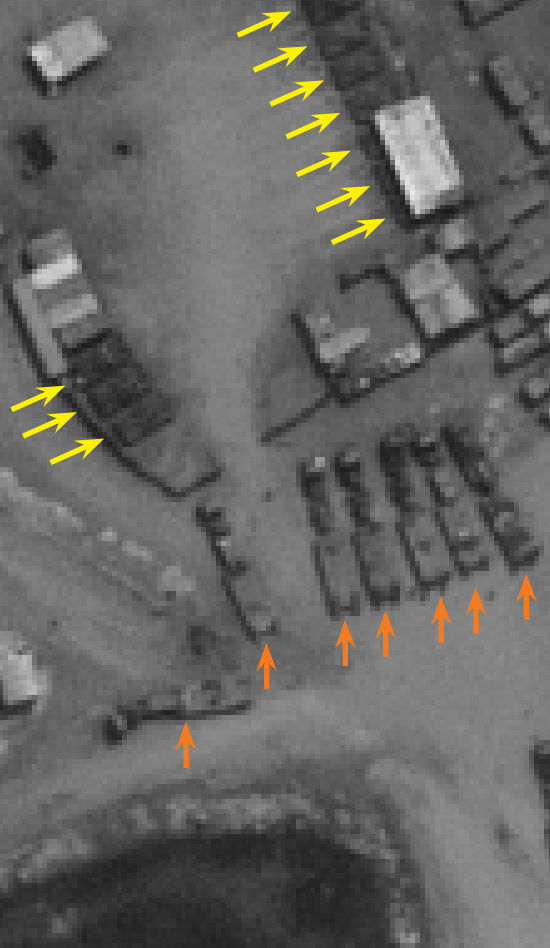
Tanks



Main Battle Tanks (x6)



Tanks & HETS



Main Battle Tanks (x10) 

Heavy Equipment Transporter, HETS (x10) 

Deployed Tanks at
South Garrison



Main Battle Tanks (x3)



**Arrival of
Mi-24 Gunships**



Mi-24 Helicopter Gunships (x2)