



TRIP REPORT  
**South Sudan**  
Yida Refugee Camp

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**Rep. Frank Wolf**  
February 2012  
*(Also available at wolf.house.gov)*



## **SOUTH SUDAN Yida Refugee Camp**

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Virginia)

This report provides details of my trip to the world's newest nation, South Sudan, from February 19-21, 2012. My observations serve as the foundation for my policy recommendations I make at the conclusion of this report. I would like to thank Speaker John Boehner and House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers for approving this trip, which could not have come at a more critical time.

My interest and involvement in Sudan has spanned over two decades. I have traveled to Sudan six times since 1989, including in July 2004 when I was the first member of the House of Representatives to visit Darfur, the violence-ravaged western region of Sudan. The unfolding human rights crisis I witnessed there with my own eyes would come to be recognized by the world as genocide.

Sudan has been ravaged by war intermittently for nearly four decades. More than 2 million people have perished from war and famine-related deaths from civil war pitting the Khartoum government against black Christians and others in the southern half of the country. In January 2005, after two-and-a-half years of negotiations, and the tireless efforts of former U.S. Senator John Danforth, appointed by President George W. Bush as special envoy to Sudan, the North and the South signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signaling an end to the 21-year civil war. I was present at the signing of this historic accord in Nairobi, Kenya. Hopes were high for the future, especially among the people of South Sudan who longed for autonomy, peace and basic human rights.

Since the birth of South Sudan on July 9, 2011, I have been planning to travel to this new nation. But the urgency of the trip heightened as I observed events in the months following independence. Not only does South Sudan face its own internal challenges, which I explore in greater depth later in this report, it has become painfully apparent that the government in Khartoum is again engaged in a brutal campaign against its own people in the north, specifically in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, which border South Sudan. The ensuing crisis has resulted in thousands of people fleeing the violence and crossing the border into South Sudan.

Since coming to power, Khartoum's National Congress Party (NCP) has employed scorched earth tactics against various marginalized groups within its borders. These horrific acts of violence are well known and recognized by the international community. On March 4, 2009, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, charging him with seven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. It was a historic decision – the court's first such action against a sitting head of state. In July 2010, the ICC issued a second arrest warrant, this time with the charge of genocide.

In addition to horrific human rights abuses and crimes committed by Bashir and the NCP, Sudan remains on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Bashir's latest assault against the people of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states has rarely been front-page news in the Western media. But the lack of media attention is no excuse for policymakers and government officials to claim to be unaware of the unfolding tragedy. In July 2011, the Satellite Sentinel Project (SSP), created by actor George Clooney in partnership with the Enough Project and Not On Our Watch to collect satellite images along the borders of Sudan and South Sudan, released photos indicating mass graves in Southern Kordofan. The group said the images corroborated "new eyewitness reports, obtained by SSP, of systematic killings and mass burials in this conflict-torn region of Sudan. The evidence found by SSP is consistent with allegations that the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and northern militias have engaged in a campaign of killing civilians."

In November 2011, I joined the three other co-chairs of the Sudan Caucus, with 58 additional Members of Congress, in raising this and other concerns with the Obama Administration. In a bipartisan letter we urged that a new approach be adopted in dealing with Khartoum.

We outlined the imminent crisis, writing, "[a]ccording to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since the beginning of September, a steady stream of refugees from Southern Kordofan fleeing the fighting has surged from about 100 a day in August to about 500 people a day currently, while 25,000 people are reported to have recently fled from Blue Nile into Ethiopia.

"There are credible reports of ongoing aerial bombardments in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, as well as verified bombing attacks across the border in South Sudan. In civilian areas controlled by the SPLM-North, there are reports of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, disappearances, and attacks against civilians.

"Evidence gathered through satellite imagery by the Satellite Sentinel Project shows at least eight mass graves found in and around Kadugli, the capital of Southern Kordofan. The situation is made worse by the fact that the people of Southern Kordofan are enduring this violence at the height of harvest season.

"By preventing proper harvest of crops and precluding any opportunity to plant for next season, in addition to denying access to vital humanitarian aid, the Government of Sudan is essentially using food as a weapon. If left unaddressed, this region will soon face severe famine, as well as unceasing violence and displacement."

Since that time, the situation has become more dire. These conditions served as the backdrop for my trip. I felt it was critical to see with my own eyes what was happening and then shine a bright light on this unfolding humanitarian crisis. I also want to formulate policy recommendations that could help save lives and engage in oversight, in my capacity as a member of the State Foreign Operations Appropriations subcommittee, which funds the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), the World Food Program, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian assistance programs.

## YIDA REFUGEE CAMP

After arriving in Juba, South Sudan, on the morning of February 19, I boarded a small prop plane for a two-hour flight north to Yida, located just south of the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The area is now home to more than 25,000 refugees who have fled the fighting in the nearby Nuba Mountains. New refugees arrive every day after walking for days. Both Muslims and Christians live in the camp, which is predominantly made up of women and children since a large majority of the men have been killed in the fighting.

I was accompanied on the flight by a representative from the non-governmental organization (NGO) Samaritan's Purse, which established the camp in August 2011. I spent the night in Samaritan Purse's primitive compound in the camp.

Samaritan's Purse is a nondenominational Christian organization "providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world." Sadly, the refugees in Yida are indeed hurting. While the camp itself is extremely well run – in fact, it exceeded my expectations – the people living there have fled almost unimaginable circumstances. Any sense of safety they may have had upon crossing the border into South Sudan was destroyed in November 2011 when the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) crossed international borders and reportedly bombed the refugee camp, a profoundly disturbing escalation of tensions.

Samaritan's Purse has long had a presence among the Nuban people, helping rebuild schools and churches destroyed during years of civil war. It was the first NGO on the scene in Yida to help the thousands of refugees who began streaming across the border to South Sudan last summer to escape the brutal attacks and aerial bombardments. It has been there ever since.

Some have described the organization of the camp, including the camp leadership and internal structures, as consistent with what you might find in a traditional African village. Divided into quadrants, families from the same region are placed in the corresponding quadrant when they arrive. I have visited many refugee camps over the years, and this is by far one of the most organized, well run camps I have ever seen. Samaritan Purse's credit is doing an admirable job of working with the camp leadership to meet the needs of the people. What makes this camp exceptional is that it is run by the refugees; Samaritan's Purse only provides oversight. At the daily staff meeting I attended, all but one report on the camp's operations was provided by refugees. The only non-refugee to speak was the camp's nurse, a graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

Despite the daily challenges of persistent food shortages, significant lapses in education for the children of the camp and the ever-present fear of crude bombs being rolled out of the cargo bays of Khartoum's Antonov planes flying overhead, the refugees have maintained some sense of normalcy to their lives even in the midst of their displacement. The Samaritan's Purse team has been intimately involved in food distribution, with support from the UN World Food Programme. It also has assisted in the provision of temporary shelter, medical care and other basic necessities. Several wells have been dug to provide clean drinking water for the sizeable refugee population and the refugees themselves built a three-quarter-of-a mile long air strip. The two-week project was completed totally by hand.

The Samaritan's Purse staff in Yida is extremely impressive. Their unselfishness and sense of compassion is inspiring. They operate under difficult conditions yet always have a smile on their faces.

### **YIDA REFUGEES: IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

While in Yida I had the opportunity to walk through the camp and meet with several representatives of the refugee population to get a better sense of what had forced them to leave everything they knew behind.

The women I talked with – all mothers – told me they had each walked for days to get to the camp. They had left their villages, homes and livelihoods in the Nuba Mountains to escape the attacks by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the daily aerial raids by the Antonovs – a trademark of the Bashir regime. Their stories are reflective of the experiences of countless others at the camp.

The first woman I spoke with was a Christian. She had seven children. She told me that before her family arrived in Yida the Antonovs flew over her village every day – sometimes four times a day. “We didn’t have any rest,” she said. “We didn’t have any food. That is why we are here.”

She still fears the planes, which now fly over Yida camp, continuing to terrorizing the refugees. “We walked all the way here and now they are still bombing us,” she told me.

I asked her if the bombs were filled with shrapnel. She explained that if a bomb fell in the hut where we were speaking, everyone sitting there would be killed.

I asked what she wanted the world to know or do about her situation. She said she wanted Sudanese President Omar Bashir to be arrested and judged.

“What have we done here as women that has made him attack us?” she asked. “We are forsaken. We don’t have our own soldiers. What Omar Bashir is doing should lead to him being arrested. What he has done has forced us to come live here where there are mosquitoes eating us every day, there are snakes in the bush, there are scorpions in the bush and what he has done has forced us to live in these conditions. What have we done to make him want to do that?”

I asked if there was anything she would want me to tell President Obama. She said the only thing she wants is for Bashir to be arrested.

“What is the reason we are being attacked?” she asked.

“We are a humble people,” she continued. “We are a poor people. We have nothing.”

Another woman, a widowed mother of two, said she had been waiting for someone to come to Yida to hear her story. She spoke of how the Arab soldiers would let their cattle roam

anywhere, grazing on their farms and eating the sorghum they had planted. The soldiers told the villagers they would let their cattle go and eat wherever they wanted.

She told me that when a man in her village attempted to get the cows to stop eating the sorghum, an Arab soldier shot and killed him. She said when her brother ventured out to see what was happening, he was shot in the leg. The soldiers then instructed the local villagers to dig a grave for the dead man. One of the men digging the grave was made to get in the grave to see if it was big enough. When he did, the Arab soldiers shot him, she said.

She summed up the problem this way: “We weren’t living along with the Arabs and they weren’t living along with us.”

The issue, she said, is the color of her skin. She said the Arab soldiers would come and burn their houses and kill all the men. Her husband was killed by the soldiers. She said the soldiers would come week after week to attack the villages and then SPLA-North soldiers came to defend the villagers.

“We understood, that our color, black, was not accepted by these people,” she said. “It didn’t matter if you were a woman, a child or a man. I can see that my color is black and that was the reason they were killing us.”

This was a constant theme in my conversations with women in the camp, and was not unlike what I heard on my trip to Darfur in 2004 where black Muslims were targeted because of their color.

To this day I will never forget talking to two young girls I met in a refugee camp in Darfur who had been raped just days before I arrived. They had left the camp to collect straw and firewood when they were brutally attacked. As they were being raped, their attackers told them they were hoping to make more lighter-skinned babies.

Clearly, ethnic cleansing is familiar territory for Khartoum.

This same woman also raised the issue of religion, saying that soldiers armed with AK 47s would come to their villages in trucks with machine guns in the back and say “we don’t want anyone who says they are a Christian in this village.” She spoke of rapes and brutal attacks carried out by uniformed Sudanese soldiers. These government soldiers would tie people up and then execute them, she said.

[It should be noted that that Amnesty International recently released a report detailing how the supply of various types of weapons and munitions to Sudan in recent years “by the governments of Belarus, the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, have allowed the Sudanese authorities to use their army, paramilitary forces, and government-backed militias to carry out grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan.”

[The report also noted that “in addition to small caliber ammunition, Amnesty International has also gathered evidence of the use of Chinese manufactured weapons and large caliber ammunition elsewhere in Sudan during 2011. In particular, QLZ87 35mm grenade launchers and grenades, supplied to Sudan by a Chinese company under a contract dated 2008 according to packaging markings, were captured from SAF forces in Southern Kordofan in June 2011.”]

She went on to ask why larger and stronger countries than Sudan are not doing anything to stop Bashir. “We have now had to come and beg white people to give us food,” she said. “If we had stayed (in our villages) we could farm and plant food to feed our families and children. What is wrong with our color? Why do people hate us?”

She ended our conversation by saying if there was no way for Bashir to be arrested and judged, then at least the international community should try to stop the bombing raids by the Antonovs and the long range rockets that are now being used.

“We don’t want to keep running from place to place to place looking for the best tree to sleep under with our kids... We just want to raise our kids,” she told me.

A third woman I talked with was from Kadugli, the capital of Southern Kordofan. She told me that when Antonov raids began last June, everyone began to leave her village. She explained how people were captured, tied up and then shot by uniformed Sudanese soldiers. She saw neighbors have their throats slit. She saw a woman killed in front of her husband. She talked about how, as they walked from one village to another, carrying things on their heads, soldiers would attack them with bombs and guns. She said that when she reached another village, the Antonovs would come three times a day – morning, noon and night. She recalled being near a house that was hit by a bomb – six were killed, all civilians. What she described was gruesome. She said shrapnel cut open a pregnant woman’s stomach, killing both her and her baby. She said a person lying on a bed in the house was sliced in half by shrapnel. She told me two children were killed, one by a flying piece of shrapnel that struck the child in the head.

She told another story of having walked 16 days with her husband and children to another village only to be attacked once again. She provided graphic details of having seen a woman killed right in front of her when shrapnel came through her back and out her chest. She said she watched her die.

I asked her to describe the feeling as the Antonovs fly overhead. Her response: “You just prepare yourself for death because there is nothing you can do when something is flying over you and you are just laying on the ground. It might fall on you or it might fall away from you. But when it falls on you, you just have to prepare yourself for death.”

I asked her if she could hear the Antonovs as they approached. She told me the planes have a distinct sound that everyone recognizes. She said when it drops a bomb it makes flash and that you can hear the bomb falling through the sky. “At that time you just get down and hope to God,” she said. “If you die, then it is your day to die.”

She told me the Sudanese Army will kill soldiers and civilians. “It doesn’t matter,” she said.

She asked for “countries with power” to do something. She wants them to stand with them. She said she did not know why Bashir is terrorizing them.

“He doesn’t have a reason,” she said, then asked, “Are we black? Is that the reason we don’t have our rights? We need our rights. And this is what we need the international community to stand with us about.”

Listening to these women’s stories I could see hear the fear in their voices and see it in their eyes. Undeniably, they have been traumatized by the Antonovs, the murder, the rape and the pillaging, all at the hands of Bashir and his government in Khartoum.

### **A LOOMING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

While in Yida, I also met with the refugees’ leaders. We spoke at length about the location of the camp, which is a source of tension between the refugee population and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

UNHCR has refused to recognize Yida as an acceptable refugee camp, arguing that it is too close to the border with Sudan and, therefore, not safe. UNHCR has proposed moving the camp to an alternative site in Nyell, in Upper Nile State. The leadership of the camp, however, say the refugees living in Yida like its proximity to the border and to their homes, despite the potential danger. They also prefer the environment and soil composition in Yida to any of the proposed alternatives, which they described as swampy and posing health hazards – namely from mosquitoes, the camp’s leaders said.

Moreover, Nyell presently is only prepared to house 3,000 refugees and has a maximum capacity of 9,000, according to UNHCR’s own estimates, raising additional concerns about its viability given the population of the current camp. Yida’s leaders have submitted a list of concerns to UNHCR but say they have yet to receive a response.

While food security remains a concern in the camp, the population at Yida is accessible to humanitarian and relief organizations, unlike the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Since the fighting started in June 2011, little to none of the people across the border in Sudan have received humanitarian aid or assistance. The food crisis in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states is further compounded by the fact that many of the people were unable to plant their crops during the last rainy season, which has resulted in dangerously low food stocks.

This year’s rainy season is only weeks away. During this five-month period virtually all ground access to the SPLM-North-controlled areas will be cut off. (Since fighting erupted last June, the SPLM-N has seized control of certain areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.) Food stocks will be at their lowest during the rainy season and families will need to decide whether to plant the little grain they have saved or eat it. Once the seed is planted, it will be five-to-six months before it can be harvested. This will be too long for most.



The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) predicted in November 2011 that "approximately 3.2 million people in Sudan are estimated to be food insecure." It found that "[i]n conflict-affected areas of Blue Nile, South Kordofan, Darfur and Abeyi, food insecurity is not likely to improve through the Outlook period. If limits on humanitarian access and food access continue, parts of Blue Nile and South Kordofan could reach Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity in early 2012." IPC Phase 4 is just short of famine – this status is marked by elevated mortality rates, and "high and increasing malnutrition levels." This could affect upwards of a quarter million people or more.

On February 14, the UN Security Council issued a non-binding statement regarding the humanitarian crisis in this region, expressing "deep and growing alarm with the rising levels of malnutrition and food insecurity in some areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States in Sudan, which could reach emergency levels if not immediately addressed, and with the lack of access for international humanitarian personnel to conduct an assessment of the situation and deliver urgently needed assistance."

Members of the Security Council "called upon the Government of Sudan to allow immediate access to United Nations personnel, including access to conduct a needs assessment. The members of the Security Council further called upon the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Northern Sector (SPLM N) to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations, and ensure... unhindered and immediate access of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel, as well as the delivery of supplies and equipment, in order to allow such personnel to efficiently perform their task of assisting conflict-affected civilian population in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States."

Bottom line: Bashir is using food as a weapon. We are quickly reaching a time when mere statements will prove wholly insufficient. If Khartoum persists in barring international access to these regions, there will be devastating consequences.

## **JAU ARMY CAMP**

During my trip to Yida, I drove just over an hour north to Jau army camp. I was accompanied by a young man named Ryan Boyette, whose work with the Nubans has been chronicled by *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof. Here are links to two Kristof pieces that feature Boyette:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/opinion/sunday/kristof-the-man-who-stayed-behind.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/opinion/sunday/kristof-battling-sudans-bombs-with-videos.html?ref=nicholasdkristof>

Jau is split into two different army camps. In South Sudan, the Jau army camp is made up of SPLA South Sudan soldiers. Just north of Jau, across the North/South border, is a separate camp comprised of SPLM-North soldiers from Nuba. During the North-South war, many Nubans from Southern Kordofan fought alongside the South against Khartoum. As such, the SPLM-North has a significant presence in Southern Kordofan. Each camp is run by different leadership and possesses its own equipment.

I briefly crossed the North/South border, proving among other things, that it is possible to enter the SPLM-N controlled areas of Southern Kordofan through South Sudan. I met with SPLM-N Brigadier General Namiri during my visit to Jau. He spoke at length about why he and his soldiers are fighting Bashir and his government, detailing the marginalization and abuse suffered by the Nubans because they are neither Arab nor Muslim.

Sudan activist Eric Reeves, author of *A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide*, pointedly described the events leading up to the current crisis in a February 9 *Washington Post* op-ed piece, writing that "...the ruthless regime in Khartoum is again waging war on peoples at the marginalized peripheries as a means of crushing growing rebellion. The primary targets...are the African people of the border regions between northern Sudan and the new Republic of South Sudan: the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

He went on to explain that "[l]ast May, Khartoum's military seized Abyei, a contested border region where Khartoum had refused to allow a promised referendum on self-determination in January 2011. The seizure displaced virtually the entire indigenous population of Dinka Ngok, more than 110,000 people, who fled to South Sudan, where they remain in poor conditions. Emboldened by the diffident international response to this assault, Khartoum moved in June against the rebels of South Kordofan and, more generally, the African Nuba people."

Indeed, Khartoum is emboldened and the international community has had little to say about it.

## **FIGHTING IN THE NORTH**

I learned during my conversations with people on the ground that more than 250,000 internally displaced people (IDP) are currently living in caves and temporary shelters in the SPLM-N controlled areas.

In my conversations with aid workers, refugees and SPLM-N representatives, I was told that that Antonovs, fighter jets, gunships and long range rockets have fallen in rural villages in Nuba every single day since the fighting began in June. The bombings have killed, maimed and wounded many more civilians than soldiers. Most soldiers are wounded in ground fighting. There is only one doctor, Tom Catena, an American surgeon, in the area to care for all the wounded civilians and soldiers.

The civilians are understandably scared to go to their farms because of the constant bombing. If the bombing stopped, the people who live far from the front line would be able to plant this year without fear and fewer civilians would be killed, wounded and maimed. In addition, an end to the aerial raids would ensure the safety of a possible humanitarian corridor either by road or plane.

## **KHARTOUM'S REPRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON**

As I heard stories of bombings, targeted killings, rapes and other brutal attacks on innocent men, women and children, I could not help but marvel in disbelief at the fact that the Obama Administration's Office of Foreign Assets Control at the Treasury Department saw fit to provide a license to Washington lawyer Bart Fisher to provide legal representation for Khartoum.

Khartoum is paying Fisher \$20,000 a month to engage in political activities, among them, “[r]epresentations (including petitions)...to U.S. government agencies regarding sanctions...”

Why has a high-powered and well-connected Washington lawyer been given the green light by the Obama Administration to represent Bashir and his government, the very people that are ordering the Antonovs to indiscriminately shell civilian populations – wounding, maiming and killing men, women and children?

It is a disgrace that this has been permitted to happen and it will be a blot on the record of this administration.

## **JUBA**

### **THE WORLD'S NEWEST CAPITAL**

On the afternoon of February 20, I arrived back in Juba for meetings with several Government of South Sudan officials, including President Salva Kiir Mayardit, one of the original founders of the of the SPLM.

I also met with Vice President Riek Machar, Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nhial Deng Nhial, Minister for National Security Oyay Deng, Minister of Finance Kosti Manibe, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports Cirino Hiteng, Deputy Minister of Cabinet Affairs Wek Mamer, and Minister of Parliament (and former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs) James Kok.

We had wide-ranging discussions about the conditions in South Sudan and some of the challenges facing this new nation, which, according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), include “the absence of good infrastructure and skilled labor, heavy dependence on oil revenues, and corruption.”

South Sudan is located in a tough neighborhood. No one should forget that the people of South Sudan were at the tip of the spear in the global struggle against radical Islamic terrorism. It is well known that the same people currently in control in Khartoum gave safe haven to Osama bin Laden in the early 1990s. Moreover, Khartoum was a revolving door for Hamas and other designated terrorist groups. The State Department has noted that after Bashir came to power in a coup in 1989, his government “supported radical Islamist groups in Algeria and supported Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Khartoum was established as a base for militant Islamist groups; radical movements and terrorist organizations like Osama Bin Laden’s al Qaida were provided a safe haven and logistical aid in return for financial support.”

Many of the leaders of the government of South Sudan today are transitioning from a lifetime of war and fighting to the practice of actual governance. Their success as a young, stable democracy will have challenges, but I am confident they will succeed. The West, notably the United States as a guarantor of the CPA, has a vested interest in – and a responsibility toward – this new nation. As such, I stressed in my meetings with government officials that in light of the importance of international assistance, there must be zero tolerance for corruption since it only would undermine foreign investment at a critical juncture.

## **WESTERN ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

Among the sectors that are most in need of development are health care, education and agriculture. Health concerns are amplified by the fact that roughly half of the population of South Sudan lives below the poverty line. Infant mortality is 102 per 1,000 live births; under five years of age mortality is 135/1,000.

An estimated 78 percent of households depend on crop farming or animal husbandry. If the country's natural resources are properly stewarded, there is the potential for South Sudan "to become a regional bread basket," according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. But that is a long way down the road and will require strategic vision on the part of the government and Western institutions, like the World Bank, foreign governments and colleges and universities.

One such example is a partnership between the USAID and Virginia Tech that focuses on agricultural research and education in South Sudan. According to USAID, "[o]ne of USAID's two university partnerships in South Sudan promotes collaboration between Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the University of Juba, and the Catholic University of South Sudan (the other partners Texas A&M with John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology)."

I understand a recent planning meeting between the stakeholders resulted in an agreement from the University of Juba to open a Virginia Tech local liaison office. I am told the stakeholders also agreed to develop a three-year diploma program in applied agriculture sciences, create centers to teach English as a second language, undertake a curriculum review (particularly for Catholic University of South Sudan's campus in Wau) and provide training in international accounting procedures. Similar progress is being made in the other university partnerships. Such partnerships will be central in promoting food security, economic development and, ultimately, lasting peace in South Sudan.

In my meeting with President Kiir, I shared my observations from the Yida refugee camp and what I had learned from the people I spoke with living there. President Kiir promised to assist the refugees in the camp and to press the UN and the government of Unity State in South Sudan to get them seeds, tools and school supplies, all of which will allow them to become less dependent on humanitarian aid until the fighting subsides.

We also discussed inter-ethnic violence in Jonglei State and the current oil shutdown that could have serious consequences given that 98 percent of South Sudan's revenues come from crude oil production. In addition, I urged President Kiir to convey to other heads of state in the

region that they should not allow Bashir, an internationally indicted war criminal and architect of genocide, to visit their countries.

### **UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE**

While in Juba, I also met with Hilde Johnson, the special representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) and her team at the UN mission serving in South Sudan. I have known and worked with Ms. Johnson for years. She is extremely knowledgeable about the situation in South Sudan. I briefed her team on what I saw in Yida and raised the following issues:

- As previously discussed, the refugees do not want to move from the camp in Yida. While there are legitimate concerns about its proximity to the border, it was clear that the people living in the camp do not want to move farther south. The alternative site that has been discussed is said to be swampy, mosquito-infested and not hospitable to farming. I shared my concern that some of the refugees indicated that they would head back across the border if forced to move.
- The NGO administering food distribution in the camp should be given 30 days worth of food supplies (as is customary) as opposed to two weeks (which is what they are presently working with). The current set-up makes it challenging for them to properly distribute food on two-week intervals.
- Both the refugees and the NGO would like to receive seeds and tools so crops can be planted. I stressed that time is of the essence in light of the coming rainy season. I communicated to Ms. Johnson that the refugees believe that if they are given sufficient seed and tools, they could grow enough food to sell to the local Dinka tribe who lives near the camp.
- I also conveyed that the refugees would like school supplies. There are a number of teachers in the camp and they would like to resume teaching. They are not looking for materials to build schools. They just want basic supplies like pencils, paper and books. The UN officials recommend UNICEF's "School-in-a-Box" kit, which was developed in the mid-1990s following the genocide in Rwanda, to serve thousands of displaced children whose education has been disrupted. The kit allows teachers to essentially establish a make-shift classroom. It contains supplies and materials for a teacher and up to 40 students. The UN officials seemed open to trying to secure kits for the refugees.

On my final day in South Sudan, I met with Rebecca Garang, the wife of the late Dr. John Garang, the leader of the SPLM and a key architect of the CPA. Mrs. Garang and I, along with her two sons, visited the memorial built to honor her husband who was killed in a helicopter crash in July of 2005. I first met John Garang on my second trip to Sudan in 1989.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Omar Hassan al-Bashir needs to be brought to justice. The U.S. and other Western countries went to great lengths to detain and try those responsible for the genocide in Bosnia and Serbia in the 1990s, including Slobodan Milosevic, the former president of Serbia, and Radovan

Karadzic. Yet today, years after the issuance of an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court, Bashir travels around Africa and to China with virtual impunity. The world should be outraged at this situation and countries that fail to detain Bashir should be considered pariahs. Unfortunately, it appears that ethnic violence in southern Europe is more concerning to the international community than ethnic violence in Africa.

- No American tax dollars should be going to countries that welcome Bashir. I have zero hope or expectation that Bashir will ever change. He has been a constant in all of the conflicts and misery that have plagued this land. His is a history of murder, broken promises and a shrewd manipulation of the international community. He is an international pariah and should be treated as such. No U.S. aid should be given to any country that allows Bashir to visit, especially those that are signatories to the International Criminal Court. Malawi, is a prime example. It rolled out the red carpet for Bashir and yet it is a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) recipient. Its compact is presently suspended in light of other governance concerns; it should be outright terminated.
- Time and again in the camps the people we spoke with pleaded that we do something to make the Antonovs stop their deadly bombing raids. In Nicholas Kristof's February 25 column he writes: "An immediate priority must be to call on Sudan to stop indiscriminate bombings and allow food aid...The United Nations Security Council could also seek a ban on offensive military flights in the area..." A variety of policy options could be considered to accomplish this end, but at the end of the day the Antonovs must be stopped.
- The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control should immediately revoke the license it granted to Washington lawyer Bart Fisher to represent the genocidal government of Khartoum. As this report clearly indicates, Khartoum's offenses against its own population are ongoing and devastating. Bashir's government should not be afforded the privilege of an advocate in Washington, especially as it relates to the lifting of sanctions.
- Having spent extensive time listening to the concerns of the refugee population in Yida, I understand their desire to stay at this location. If there are refugees who voluntarily want to move to an alternative location, they should be permitted to do so, but they must not be coerced, pressured or otherwise influenced. Ultimately it is their choice. They have already suffered too much to be twice victimized.
- The refugees in Yida should be supplied not only with food, but with seeds and tools for planting and basic materials for the schooling of their children. The refugees presently residing in Nyell have been provided with these material but UNHCR has so far declined to give the refugees in Yida access to the same items in an effort to prompt them, against their will, to move to Nyell.
- USAID should work on developing additional partnerships with land grant and other universities similar to the Virginia Tech program described earlier. These partnerships in South Sudan should center on agriculture, health, and greater educational opportunities.

- Recognizing U.S. budget constraints, I nonetheless believe that South Sudan is a strategically important country which merits the establishment of the Peace Corps there, especially as the Peace Corps makes determinations that their presence is no longer needed in countries that have made significant strides toward greater development. As the Peace Corps closes down operations in certain countries, they should make South Sudan a priority country for opening a new office.
- USAID and institutions like the World Bank should consider creating incentive programs to entice some of the former Lost Boys and Girls of South Sudan, who already know the culture and love their home country, to return for this strategic period, which will be critical in the life of this new nation.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the U.S. federal employees – embassy personnel, Foreign Service officers and other government staff – serving in South Sudan. As recently as 2008, prior to independence, a USAID employee and his Sudanese driver were killed in Sudan (Khartoum). South Sudan is not an easy place to be stationed. The conditions are tough, the hours are long and spouses are not allowed. It also is worth noting that the daily routine of these dedicated and committed federal employees includes taking a regimen of antibiotics and anti-malarial drugs to combat deadly diseases.

I want to especially thank Sandya Das who serves in Juba, South Sudan. She did the lion's share of the logistics work for the trip, along with Deputy Chief of Mission Chris Datta, and Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) Team Leader Andrea Tracy. I also commend the leadership of the first U.S. ambassador to the new nation of South Sudan, Susan Page. I am grateful for her hospitality. She leads a capable team. Their service is greatly appreciated.

As already noted, I was greatly impressed by the selfless service of the Samaritan's Purse team. They are: ex-patriots, Gavin Gramstad, Kelly Nau, Keren Massey, Frederick Asamoah, Ben Emuat, John Moritz, Gabriela Ovington and Lorelee Planas. National staff: Kacho Musa, Kodi Maurice, Yassir Osman, Hamza Kodi, Jabra Hassan, John Ali, Kalo Tira, Alfil Abdurahman, Faisal Ali, Abdu Osman, Nikola Ali, Yohannes Mudir, Anwar Abdullah, Muhammed Abdu, Sam Jacub and Alamin Habila. They do incredible work in challenging circumstances, which has a real impact on people's lives.

I want to thank Ryan Boyette, whose translation skills were invaluable. His love for the Nuban people is apparent, and I appreciate his contribution to this trip.

In addition, I want to commend *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof and NBC News correspondent Ann Curry, who along with her producer, camera man and sound man, travelled to Yida and then into Southern Kordofan just before my visit. They left Yida the morning that I arrived. Kristof already has written three columns on his trip (<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/nicholasdkristof/index.html>) and Curry is expected to report on her trip February 29.

This story – one of racially motivated killings, imminent starvation and mass movements of civilian populations across international borders in pursuit of safety – has not garnered the media attention it deserves. But there are notable exceptions to this observation and these two journalists are at the forefront. Their willingness to travel into a virtual war zone, at great personal risk to their own safety, is courageous and befitting the high calling of their profession, namely shining a bright light on the truth.

I also was pleased to be able to spend some time with Ambassador Scott Gration in Kenya during a layover on my way back to the United States. During his tenure as Sudan Special Envoy earlier in the Obama Administration, he played a significant role in implementing the CPA in the lead up to independence. Ambassador Gration is the son of a missionary family in Africa and his wife was born in Kenya. They both know the region well and are ably serving their country. I also want to thank foreign service officer Matt Goshko, who serves in Nairobi, Kenya, for his assistance with my trip logistics.

Finally, I want to thank my staff, especially Elyse Anderson, Christina Mangano, Tom Culligan, Kalinda Stephenson, Joe McNulty and Dan Scandling, for all the work they put into making this trip such a success.

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