



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

An Open Letter to the American People: Peacekeeping Support for Darfur

Jendayi E. Frazer, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs

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I returned from my recent trip to Sudan with a heightened sense of the challenges before us in resolving the crisis in Darfur. As a member of the Department of State delegation led by Deputy Secretary John Negroponte, I met with government officials, visited camps in Darfur for internally displaced persons (IDPs), witnessed the progress of peace in Southern Sudan, and urged the Sudanese to work constructively with the international community on Darfur and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Americans have expressed their sincere compassion for the people of Darfur in very visible and vocal ways, and I want to keep you informed of our steadfast commitment to end the crisis. I share your deep concern for the innocent civilians who have suffered grave injustice far too long.

The situation in Darfur has a complex history marked by intra-tribal conflict and the Khartoum government's neglect and marginalization of the region. Despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) by the Government of Sudan and one of the rebel groups in May 2006 – an agreement brokered by the African Union with strong U.S. backing – the past year saw an intensified level of violence committed by the government and the rebels, increased splintering of rebel factions, and blatant targeting and harassment of humanitarian workers.

President Bush is personally committed to stopping the tragedy, and the humanitarian support we provide to the region – more than \$1 billion annually since 2005 – is saving lives. We are gratified that through the efforts of the United States government, mortality rates in Darfur have decreased.

We, along with the international community, seek to halt the cycle of violence with passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1706 in August 2006. The resolution calls for the transition of the current 7,700 troop African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to a larger and more robust UN peacekeeping force of approximately 17,000 UN troops to take over peacekeeping responsibilities. Regrettably, the Sudanese government continues to defy the international community by not complying with the resolution.

Nevertheless, in a high-level meeting co-chaired by then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson Alpha Oumar Konare, in Addis Ababa on November 16, 2006, international partners and the Sudanese government reached an agreement on a three-phased approach to Darfur peacekeeping. The plan calls for the UN to provide AU troops first with technical support, and then with additional UN troops, known as the AU/UN "hybrid" forces. After initially rejecting the second phase of UN support, President Bashir has now agreed to allow 3,000 UN troops and their equipment into the country to support the African Union force. We are watching closely to see that he fulfills this commitment.

In remarks delivered at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on April 17, 2007, President Bush said that the time for promises is over -- President Bashir must act. He must respond to the demands of the international community and allow deployment of the full, joint UN - AU peacekeeping force, end support for the Janjaweed, reach out to the rebel leaders, and allow humanitarian aid to reach the people of Darfur. If these obligations are not met, then we will act. President Bush announced that the administration is prepared to employ aggressive economic sanctions if President Bashir does not meet the commitments he agreed to and allow the deployment of the full, joint UN-AU peacekeeping force with UN control and single chain of command.

I know we can succeed in achieving a diplomatic resolution to the Darfur crisis when I see the progress we have made in Southern Sudan. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, brokered by Kenya with the backing of the United States, brought an end to a brutal civil war waged for 21 years. Now, with continued peace, more and more people displaced by the war have begun to return home to Southern Sudan. Schools are being built. Government institutions are functioning. Reconstruction is moving forward.

We are resolutely moving on all fronts – humanitarian, security, and political – to assist the parties to the Darfur conflict in reaching a lasting peace agreement. Our energies are focused on building the capacity of the negotiating teams. To this end, we strongly support the AU and UN Special Envoys in their discussions with rebel factions who did not sign the DPA. Andrew Natsios, appointed by President Bush in September 2006 to serve as Special Envoy to Sudan, spearheads our efforts to attain political reconciliation in Darfur.

Pressure in the United States and in the international community has been mounting for more forceful measures. With more than 200,000 dead in Darfur and approximately 2.5 million displaced by war it cannot, and should not, be otherwise. Still, we are using all available diplomatic and governmental resources to achieve a durable peace. The burden is on the Government of Sudan to work with the international community so that the fleeting opportunity for a diplomatic resolution of the Darfur crisis is not lost.

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