

# U.S. Will Coordinate Sudan Policy With the United Nations

by Lawrence Freeman

The United States will coordinate policy on Darfur with the United Nations, with no separate negotiations, according to Andrew Natsios, the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, who spoke on Nov. 20 in Washington, D.C., along with Jean-Marie Guehenno, who is in charge of Peacekeeping Operations for the UN Secretary General. The two addressed a Brookings Institution forum, after which Natsios further clarified his views at a State Department briefing session.

To many present, the level tone of Natsios's statements, in line with the UN, could almost be construed as a kind of shift of U.S. policy, from the confrontational expressions that might be expected. In fact, his remarks drew strong criticism from Susan E. Rice, now a Fellow of the Brookings Institution, who demanded aggressive U.S. action. She served in the Clinton Administration State Department as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (1997-2001), pursuing a consistently anti-Sudan approach.

Guehenno, who is well respected among the diplomatic community, prioritized the following UN initiatives to deal with the Darfur crisis: Establish a cease-fire in Darfur; drive forward the political process with the government of Sudan; and deploy an international peacekeeping force.

This UN view was countered directly by Susan Rice, who asserted that there must be a robust deployment of NATO troops to Sudan.

In reply, Guehenno stressed that the UN military peacekeeping force will be viable, only if it complements a political process supported by the government of Sudan. If that military force acts against the government, it will fail. He also pointed out that it would be very hard to muster the level of troop strength necessary to provide overwhelming force in opposition to the government of Sudan.

Natsios, who made clear that he was speaking for President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, expressed complete agreement with Guehenno, and praised UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. In doing this, Natsios presented a different image of the Bush Administration's public policy toward Darfur than that seen until recently. He also publicly thanked the Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia for helping to "persuade" the government of Sudan to agree to compromise on some aspects of the deployment of UN military peace keepers, in their diplomatic meetings in Addis Abeba recently.

Natsios gave Jan. 1 as the deadline for resolving the Darfur crisis, because that is the end of Kofi Annan's term as Secretary General, and for certain other reasons—the change in the U.S. Congress, and the end of the mandate of the African Union deployment (although the latter can be renewed).

He also spoke of the necessity of resolving the Sudan-Chad violence in the cross-border areas. The conflict between the two countries, which overlaps the Darfur fighting, has become an increasing concern that has been raised to buttress the support for the deployment of a military force into that region. On Nov. 13, Chad President Idriss Deby's government declared an emergency situation because of ethnic clashes. On Nov. 24, Chad's National Assembly extended the declaration for six months, giving regional governors power to enforce security.

## Water, Economic Development?

For the first time, the need for economic development of the region—including the potential use of the untapped water resources of the gigantic Nubian Sandstone Aquifer was also brought up by Natsios. He stressed that water shortage was the common problem throughout the entire region (see accompanying article).

When Rice confronted Natsios specifically about the call by President Bush in late July, for the use of NATO troops in Darfur, Natsios responded that, after the Israeli-Lebanon War, and the escalation of fighting in Afghanistan, a NATO deployment was not possible, due to the shortage of troops.

But Natsios further singled out for criticism, by name, a co-thinker of Susan Rice, John Prendergast, for his column in the Nov. 19 *Washington Post*, "So How Come We Haven't Stopped It?" slamming Bush for mouthing "genocide," while the Administration persisted in "U.S. inaction on Darfur." Prendergast, now senior advisor to the International Crisis Group, was director for African Affairs with the Clinton National Security Council. Members of the International Crisis Group are part of an intense activation of publicity for military action against Sudan.

Natsios derided Prendergast's recent article, specifically for the "conspiracy theory" that the United States is not putting pressure on the government of Sudan, because of the United States' need for Khartoum's intelligence service collaboration in the war on terrorism.

At one point Natsios said straight out that “John should stop writing this stuff. It is not helpful.” Natsios said that U.S. policy toward Sudan is not “intelligence-driven,” but is driven by concern for what is happening in Darfur.

Natsios’s rebuff of Rice and Prendergast, was somewhat startling to those present who are involved in African policy. Rice and Prendergast, along with Anthony Lake—former National Security Advisor (1993-97)—were the hard core of the anti-Sudan Africa policy grouping which consistently misled President Clinton, until the very end of his two Administrations. In an Oct. 2 *Washington Post* guest column, Rice, Lake, and Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.) issued a bone-chilling demand for military action against Sudan, in the name of fighting genocide. Titled, “We Saved Europeans. Why Not Africans,” the trio referred to the use of force to “save” Kosovo, and called for bombing, blockading Port Sudan, and other actions against Sudan.

At immediate issue is the make-up of an international peacekeeping force in Sudan. What is referred to as a “hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping mission” has been proposed by Kofi Annan, after consultations with the UN Security Council and the African Union (AU). This “hybrid” idea is the latest UN proposal to Khartoum, after the vote in August of Security Council Resolution 1706, authorizing a UN peacekeeping force, that is intended to supercede the current African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). As of late November, it was unclear what kind of UN deployment would be accepted by the government of Sudan, even if the chain of command is run by African military leaders at the top, since Khartoum in the past has rejected any deployment of troops with Chapter VII mandate.

On Nov. 20, Natsios simply stated that Jan. 1 is his deadline for Sudan to agree to a UN plan, or else “Plan B”—which he did not specify—would be the recourse. Whether Natsios’s more conciliatory tone represents a real shift in policy, or reflects the military limitations for a robust military deployment into Darfur, is also unclear. However one should not underestimate the desperation of Dick Cheney’s controllers to start a new war in response to the monetary-financial meltdown now gathering speed. They may have already anticipated the rejection of the UN-AU hybrid force by the Sudan government, and are preparing for some type of Plan B military action against Sudan using the Darfur crisis, and/or the escalating conflict between Sudan and Chad, as the pretext.

### **Darfur ‘Mini-Summit’**

Within 24 hours of the Washington, D.C. policy event—with its undertone of a potential policy shift—Arab and African leaders of the six nations of the region gathered in Libya on Nov. 21 for a “mini-summit,” to agree to work together to resolve the conflict in Darfur “without foreign intervention.” This took place on the eve of a deadline requested by Secretary Annan, for a decision by Khartoum on Nov. 22, of what the

nation’s answer will be on the UN peace-keeping proposal. Annan and Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir spoke on Nov. 23 on the matter, with no resolution.

Attending the conclave in Tripoli were the top leaders of the region: President of Libya, Muammar al-Qaddafi, the host; Hosni Mubarak, President of Egypt; Omar Hasan al-Bashir, President of Sudan; Idriss Deby Itno, President of Chad; Isayas Afeweki, President of Eritrea; and François Bozize, President of the Central African Republic.

The attendees issued a five-point Tripoli Declaration, committing to act, “Within the frame of bolstering fraternal relations among the participating countries and in line with the founding law of the African Union and the security charter for the Comessa states [Community of Sahel-Saharan States], and to implement the Tripoli Declaration and agreement signed on February 8, 2006. . . .” The first two points concerned strengthening political and diplomatic ties among the participating countries. Point three called for regular visits among the leaders; in particular, President al-Bashir renewed an invitation to President Idriss Deby Itno to visit Khartoum; and al-Bashir extended an invitation to President Bozize to visit Sudan at the earliest time.

The fourth point states that, “The leader [Quaddafi] and the Presidents agreed to intensify efforts toward achieving reconciliation in Darfur and encouraging all movements in the region to join in the peaceful process there.” The last point of the Tripoli Declaration expressed thanks to President Qaddafi for his efforts.