

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on Sudan
July 30, 2009

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U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Republican leader Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing:

I thank Chairman Kerry for holding this hearing on the continuing humanitarian and security challenges in Sudan. I join in welcoming our distinguished witnesses.

I appreciate that General Gration has taken time to join us today. I know that he understands Congress's deep interest in this issue. The appointment of a special envoy underscores the President's intention to provide international leadership on the Darfur crisis. But time is not on our side.

The Darfur crisis is now in its sixth year and the prospects for peace in the region appear to be little better than they were when the international community first responded with a massive humanitarian intervention. In the face of direct obstruction and willful delays by Khartoum, these humanitarian efforts probably saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

But millions of refugees continue to be at risk of violence, malnutrition, and disease. The Khartoum government's expulsion of thirteen humanitarian organizations that were providing for roughly a million people has exacerbated conditions for the displaced. The safety net of organizations now operating in Darfur is doing its best to shoulder more responsibility, but the sheer number of displaced and the difficulties presented by the rainy season are straining their capacity.

In July 2007 hopes for security were raised by the U.N. Security Council's approval of an enlargement of the peacekeeping force in Darfur to 26,000 troops. Unfortunately, two years later the peacekeeping force still lacks elements key to its success. The force does not have sufficient helicopters and other types of equipment that are essential to achieve mobility and to deliver humanitarian supplies.

Moreover, the overall stability of the region depends on full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South Sudan. With the referendum on independence of the South due in 2011, most indicators are that voters will choose to separate. Unless some formula for stability can be constructed, the tensions between North and South will be highly volatile and could inflame the entire region.

General Gration is charged with one of the most difficult diplomatic assignments in our government. Given that President Bashir has been indicted for war crimes and his government has demonstrated little interest in resolving the political situation, the Darfur problem does not lend itself to straightforward diplomatic negotiation.

Any successful strategy is likely to involve building broad international support for measures that pressure the Khartoum government to accept a settlement to the Darfur crisis. Such a settlement should allow refugees to return to their homes, establish procedures to guarantee their security, and extend some level of autonomy to Darfur.

The United States must lead in finding ways to address these political and logistical shortcomings. The Obama Administration is conducting an ongoing review of Sudan policy. I am hopeful that this review will soon yield a plan that clarifies and galvanizes U.S. policy and encourages far greater multilateral support for a resolution of a crisis that has produced immense suffering.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how U.S. plans and efforts are progressing and what more we can do.

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