

**Leonard Marks Foundation Essay Contest Award for
Creative Thought and Writing on American Foreign Policy**

Decision Memorandum for the Secretary of State

**ALLEVIATING THE HUMANITARIAN TRAGEDY
IN THE DARFUR REGION OF THE SUDAN**

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DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FROM: LUDOVIC HOOD
RE: ALLEVIATING THE HUMANITARIAN TRAGEDY IN DARFUR, SUDAN
DATE: 04/19/2005

Introduction and summary:

Over 300,000 civilians have died, and up to 2,000,000 have been displaced, as a result of the Government of Sudan's crackdown on rebel groups in Darfur in the past 26 months. Thus far, the US has sought to act through the UN Security Council (UNSC). However, intransigence by China (fueled by its petroleum interests) has prevented the UNSC from taking meaningful action. The US is in a position to ameliorate the situation by significantly scaling up support to the African Union (AU) monitoring force in the region. This memorandum recommends that you propose such an action to the President.

Discussion:

More than a year of concerted international attention has failed to bring about agreement on stemming the unfolding humanitarian tragedy in the Darfur. UNSC resolutions have threatened sanctions in the event of non-compliance by the authorities in Khartoum, but have been considerably undermined by Chinese pronouncements that it will veto any resolution which imposes sanctions on the Government of Sudan. In any event, UN and other reports from Darfur point to continued atrocities by the Janjaweed militias, which are directed by the authorities in Khartoum.

The US invested considerable diplomatic resources to support peace negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, which resulted in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 9 January 2005, ending the two-decade civil war in southern Sudan. Congressional circles encouraged proactive US diplomatic involvement in this long-standing conflict, and these same parties expect the US to actively support the implementation of the CPA. This will require sound diplomatic relations with the Government of Sudan (and other factions), so as to maintain US leverage over the situation.

Congress has also expressed specific concern about the situation in Darfur. In July 2004, the House of Representatives unanimously approved a resolution condemning the genocide in Darfur and urged "multilateral or even unilateral intervention to prevent genocide should the United Nations Security Council fail to act." (Two months later, your predecessor "concluded that genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and the Janjaweed bear responsibility.")

It is clear that UNSC resolutions and high-level US diplomacy have not deterred the Government of Sudan from continuing military operations in Darfur, which have resulted in

300,000 deaths and 2,000,000 refugees and internally displaced persons. A new course of action is required to alleviate the suffering in Darfur, and to prevent a spillover of the violence and atrocities into other regions of Sudan, as well as neighboring Chad.

Two options present themselves for the swift and effective amelioration of the situation in Darfur. First, the US could significantly increase US logistical support and technical assistance to the AU force by: establishing at least two brigade-sized bases in eastern Chad and/or eastern Central African Republic (CAR); providing military advisors for certain AU monitoring operations in Darfur; providing US-operated air transport for AU monitoring operations; providing vehicles, fuel and maintenance for AU monitoring operations; and providing some force protection measures for AU monitoring operations. It is important to note that logistical and other support by UN member states to the AU monitoring operation in Darfur is mandated by UNSC Resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004.

Alternatively, the US could undertake unilateral military action in Darfur to alleviate the suffering in the region by: establishing at least three major US bases in Darfur (and/or eastern Chad and/or eastern CAR), with an expeditionary force of at least 10,000 soldiers/marines; imposing a no-fly zone over Darfur, to be maintained by the US Air Force; and vigorously patrolling and monitoring known flashpoints to stem atrocities against civilians and to facilitate the delivery of aid by NGOs and UN agencies.

The first option, a US-bolstered AU monitoring presence, would put considerable pressure on the authorities in Khartoum to rein in the Janjaweed and halt Sudanese Army air and ground operations in the region, leading to fewer atrocities, less suffering, and enhanced humanitarian aid provision by NGOs and UN agencies. Naturally, this effort should be accompanied by continued diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sudan, as well as further UNSC monitoring of Sudanese compliance with UNSC resolution 1556. Securing the participation of NATO would be highly desirable, both in terms of burden sharing and in terms of public diplomacy: many countries in the region and in the Middle East would view a multilateral effort with considerably less suspicion than they would a unilateral action by the US.

The second option, while ensuring a swifter and more effective end to the atrocities and suffering, entails more risks. Unilateral action of this nature would (i) likely cause severe damage to diplomatic relations with the Government of Sudan, potentially leading to the collapse of the CPA, (ii) incur considerable criticism from governments in the Middle East and North Africa, many of whom have publicly supported Khartoum's position on Darfur and criticized UNSC resolutions pertaining thereto (potentially undermining efforts to involve Arab nations' in Iraqi reconstruction efforts), (iii) incur considerable criticism from the Chinese Government, given China's considerable commercial interests in Sudan, and (iv) risk embroiling the US in a complex and multifaceted civil war. Securing NATO support for such an action would do little to mitigate against the above-mentioned risks.

Public diplomacy should be employed vigorously under either option to promote the action as strictly humanitarian in nature, thus allaying potential suspicion about US motives in Sudan on the part of other Arab nations. Such public diplomacy would also help to allay China's concerns about US actions in Darfur.

Emphasizing the humanitarian nature of such an endeavor would also add consistency to the Administration's stated goal of promoting freedom and democracy around the world. Playing a proactive role in stopping violence that the US has formally called "genocide" would bolster the Administration's position on this front, and undermine accusations of inconsistency about promoting freedom.

Options:

1. Status quo: maintain pressure on the Government of Sudan via unilateral diplomatic overtures and UNSC resolutions

PROS

- Avoids US military casualties which might be the outcome of Options 2 and 3.
- Preserves current US leverage for CPA implementation.
- Avoids deterioration in relations with certain Arab and Islamic states, as well as with China, which might be the outcome of Options 2 and 3.

CONS

- Continued atrocities and suffering are likely.
- The Administration may face domestic criticism for inaction if atrocities continue.
- The US will face accusations of inconsistency if it continues to promote freedom loudly around the world without taking any decisive action to save lives in the face of genocide.

2. Significant increase in US logistical support and technical assistance to the AU force (possibly in coordination with NATO).

PROS

- Would significantly contribute to diminishing the atrocities and suffering in Darfur.
- Would be consistent with the United States' goal of promoting freedom around the world.
- Would be within the legal mandate of UNSC resolution 1564.
- Would be well received in Congress.

CONS

- Risk of mission creep, if US forces are requested to undertake activities in addition to bolstering the AU force.
- Will cause concerns with certain Arab and Islamic nations which have publicly supported Khartoum, as well with the Chinese Government, possibly affecting relations with those countries.

3. US and/or NATO (unilateral) military action to halt attacks on civilians and provide aid workers with unfettered access to all affected civilians.

PROS

- Would substantially end the atrocities and suffering in Darfur.

CONS

- Would likely result in a deterioration of US relations with the Sudanese Government, thus threatening the CPA.
- Risk of mission creep, both in terms of mandate and geography (e.g., if violence were to re-erupt in southern Sudan).
- Would be poorly received by other Arab nations, undermining US diplomatic ties with key Middle Eastern allies (at a most inopportune time, given Iraqi reconstruction and renewed hopes for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians).
- Would be poorly received by China, resulting in a deterioration in relations with China, likely manifested by increased intransigence in UNSC proceedings.

Recommendation:

Option 2 is recommended. A significant increase in US support to the AU force will reduce the number of attacks on civilians and facilitate the provision of increased humanitarian aid, thus substantially stemming the unfolding humanitarian tragedy. This action will also add consistency to the US public posture of promoting freedom around the world.