



Six Months Since 1706: The International Failure to Protect Darfur

March 9, 2007

Six months ago, at the end of August 2006, the United Nations (UN) Security Council passed a critical resolution, authorizing a robust UN peacekeeping force for Darfur, western Sudan. This act was the result of years of advocacy and international political wrangling, against the backdrop of escalating violence in Darfur. The resolution expressed the will and intent of the international community to send a 22,000-strong UN force to Darfur, to supplement the African Union (AU) mission and to provide protection to civilians and humanitarian operations on the ground.

While the need for such a force was urgent, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations at the UN, Jean-Marie Guehenno, acknowledged last summer that a six-month timeframe between authorization and deployment was most realistic, given the logistical challenges in Darfur.¹

Six months after the passage of Resolution 1706, the authorized UN force has yet to be deployed. Its implementation has been stalled by Khartoum's opposition, and by the failure of the U.S. and the international community to act resolutely in response. Subsequent discussions of a compromise "hybrid" AU/UN force have not finalized agreement on the force's size, mandate and command and control, and the first two phases of a UN support package for the AU have brought no improvement in the security situation in Darfur. Senior U.S. and international officials continue to emphasize their expectation of Khartoum's cooperation, yet there is no sign of a breakthrough in the deployment of an international peacekeeping force for Darfur.

As the death toll approaches half a million people, and thousands of civilians in Darfur continue to be displaced on a regular basis, it is all too clear that the international community has failed in its responsibility to protect the people of Darfur. A robust international intervention is urgently needed to stop the violence, to protect civilians and humanitarian operations, and to create conditions conducive to a comprehensive peace process. But no such intervention is yet underway.

Two and a half years ago, the U.S. recognized the situation in Darfur as genocide. This acknowledgement still has not spurred the action needed to ensure the deployment of an international peacekeeping force to stop the violence. The inability of the U.S. and other UN members to stand firm on a message of opposition to genocide has allowed the Government of Sudan to block any effective action to stop the violence. Unless the international community follows through on Resolution 1706, the people of Darfur will be left without protection against the ongoing genocide.

The following report offers a month-by-month account of the fate of UN Security Council Resolution 1706, and the continuing failure of the international community to protect the people of Darfur.

August 2006

On August 31, 2006, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops to Darfur, with the adoption of Resolution 1706. This crucial vote passed with only three abstentions, from the Russian Federation, China and Qatar. The text of the resolution detailed the mandate, command structure, troop levels and other support necessary to provide protection for civilians vulnerable to violence in Darfur.

The African Union Mission to Sudan (AMIS), deployed since 2004, had for many months found itself lacking the resources, training and manpower to confront the overwhelming violence. As part of a transition envisioned in Resolution 1706, the UN was tasked to take over AMIS' responsibility upon the expiration of the latter's mandate on October 1, 2006, replacing AMIS's 7,000 troops with almost 22,000 UN personnel. This expanded and better-resourced troop force would provide stability, ensure the safety of civilians, and would contribute to the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, signed in May 2006.

The ultimate deadline for deployment was set as December 31, 2006. U.S. State Department officials emphasized that the lack of consent from the Sudanese government would not deter the implementation of the plan. Statements from other members of the UN Security Council made clear their support for a UN peacekeeping operation for Darfur. Meanwhile, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir denounced Resolution 1706, stating that the planned UN deployment would violate his country's sovereignty.²

September 2006

The passage of Resolution 1706 marked a new opportunity for international action, and in September the urgency of the situation in Darfur was ever more apparent. In response to the international plan to deploy UN peacekeepers, President Bashir countered with a proposal to deploy over 10,000 Sudanese troops to Darfur to enforce the peace. Reports from the ground suggested that such an offensive was already in progress, with government air strikes against rebel-held areas in North Darfur.³

On September 5, 2006, in response to the AU request for a UN transition, Khartoum said that the AU mission must leave the region by the end of the month, when its mandate expired. The Sudanese government added that the AU had no right to invite a transfer of its mission to the UN or any other party.⁴

September 9, 2006 marked the two-year anniversary of the U.S.' recognition that the situation in Darfur constitutes genocide. In response to pressure from advocates, and as a demonstration of U.S. commitment to Darfur, on September 19, President Bush announced the appointment of Andrew Natsios as Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan, charged with coordinating U.S. efforts to end the violence in the region.⁵

With the approaching expiration of the AMIS mandate on September 30, and no concrete steps to succeed that mission, the AU found itself under heavy international pressure to extend its term in Darfur. The Sudanese government condemned the AU request for a UN transition and insisted that AMIS would only be allowed to remain in the region without UN support.⁶

At a meeting held at UN headquarters in New York on September 21, African Heads of State agreed to extend the AU mandate through the end of the year.⁷ This decision, while avoiding the disastrous potential of a security vacuum, only served to maintain a deadly status quo, as the UN deployment remained stalled. The AMIS force still lacked the essential capabilities to provide protection in Darfur.

Claiming that the UN harbored an “agenda” against Sudan, President Bashir again rejected the proposal of Resolution 1706, asserting that the UN “wants to make a pretext through the Darfur issue to control us and recolonize Sudan.”⁸ Security in Darfur continued to plummet, as aid workers were increasingly targeted, contributing to decreased humanitarian access to displaced civilians and to a growing food crisis.⁹

October 2006

In October, as the Sudanese government continued to express staunch opposition to Resolution 1706, the international community remained deadlocked on next steps.

On October 2, more than a month after the passage of Resolution 1706, President Bush met with Special Envoy Natsios and criticized the UN response on Darfur, stating that it “should not wait any longer to approve a blue-helmeted force, a UN force of peacekeepers, to protect the innocent people.”¹⁰ Yet the U.S. failed to articulate a strategy to advance UN action towards this goal.

In mid-October, Andrew Natsios traveled to Darfur for the first time in his capacity as U.S. Special Envoy. He visited camps for displaced people, met with AMIS and UN officials, and held talks with senior officials and political leaders in Khartoum.¹¹ Sudan persevered in its vocal rejection of Resolution 1706. In October, the Sudanese government once again flouted the authority of that international body, when it expelled UN Special Envoy Jan Pronk for statements made in his web log concerning Sudanese military defeats in Darfur.¹²

While expressing concern over the declining humanitarian situation and escalating violence in Darfur, the international community failed to rally the political will to pursue Resolution 1706 to address the worsening crisis. Sudan continued to receive diplomatic and economic support from its allies in the UN Security Council, Russia and China, and encountered only rhetorical opposition to its position on peacekeeping from other major international actors.

November 2006

In November, the international commitment to a peacekeeping intervention in Darfur continued to wane, and President Bashir grew increasingly vocal in his opposition to Resolution 1706, likening it

to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Meanwhile, the violence on the ground forced increasing numbers of aid agencies, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, to suspend or shut down their operations, leaving hundreds of thousands of vulnerable civilians without a humanitarian lifeline.¹³

In the face of Sudanese opposition to the implementation of Resolution 1706, international attention shifted to the search for a solution to the violence in Darfur that would accommodate Khartoum's concerns.

On November 14, 2006, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for an international meeting to determine the role of the UN in a peacekeeping force for Darfur. Representatives of the AU and the UN met with Sudanese representatives on November 16, 2006 for a High Level Consultation on the situation in Darfur at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In the resulting document, Sudan agreed in principle to allow a joint AU-UN peacekeeping operation into Darfur. However, Sudanese representatives said that the final approval would depend on consultations with their superiors in Khartoum.¹⁴ Secretary-General Annan said that President Bashir's "agreement" to the operation was a "turning point" and that the key was then to "press ahead with immediate implementation because we cannot afford a gap [or] a vacuum at the end of the year."¹⁵

This new compromise sought to create a hybrid AU-UN force of some 27,000 soldiers, mainly African troops and including the 7,000 AMIS soldiers currently deployed.¹⁶ However, it rapidly became clear that the developments in Addis Ababa did not improve the prospects for the deployment of a protection force for Darfur. President Bashir maintained that any UN role in Darfur be limited to technical and logistical support, and that only African troops under AU leadership would be acceptable.

There was, in fact, no agreement reached in Addis Ababa upon the command responsibilities, mandate, troop levels or timeline for an international peacekeeping operation for Darfur. In the aftermath of the meeting, Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol explained that Khartoum would accept some UN logistical support for AMIS efforts in Darfur, but no UN peacekeepers.¹⁷

The "Conclusions" document, emerging from the Addis Ababa consultation, made a clear distinction between a hybrid "force" and a hybrid "operation", opting to reference the latter exclusively, contrary to what had been authorized in Resolution 1706. This distinction was made on Khartoum's directive, to underscore Sudan's opposition to any UN military peacekeeping presence in Darfur.¹⁸ On November 18, Sudan's UN envoy commented: "This is a new plan that can be largely accepted by Sudan and takes 1706 to the graveyard."¹⁹

At a November 30 meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council in Abuja, the AU adopted a proposal for the deployment of a hybrid force and the AMIS mandate was once again renewed through June 2007, under the expectation that UN would provide "backstopping and command and control structures."²⁰ In a concession to Khartoum, the AU stated that the UN should only have a supporting role, emphasizing the African composition of the mission. President Bashir added that he would be willing to "take technical, advisory and financial support from the UN, but no UN force."²¹

In a public attempt by the U.S. to apply pressure on the Sudanese government to agree to an enlarged peacekeeping operation, Natsios began to reference an unspecified “Plan B.” Under this vague plan, Sudan was given until January 1, 2007 to demonstrate its willingness to accept an international peacekeeping force, or the U.S. would implement measures in response.²²

December 2006

By December, agreement was emerging on next steps in the UN’s involvement in Darfur, but there was yet no plan for the deployment of UN peacekeepers to western Sudan.

During Natsios’ visit with President Bashir and other Sudanese officials in the second week of the month, he urged the deployment of the first two phases of a three-phase UN support package.²³ The three tiered plan for UN support, unanimously backed by the UN Security Council on December 19, 2006, provided for escalating UN involvement towards a hybrid force.

The first or “light” phase would supply 105 military officers, 33 UN police, 48 international staffers, armored personnel carriers, night vision goggles and global positioning systems, among other logistical support.²⁴ The second or “heavy” phase of support to AMIS would involve the deployment of several hundred UN military, police and civilian personnel, with aviation and logistical equipment. The third and final phase would constitute the AU-UN hybrid force, led by a jointly appointed special envoy and with a significant UN role in command and control.²⁵

In a letter to then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, dated December 23, 2006, President Bashir stated: “I would like to reaffirm the readiness of the Government of Sudan to start immediately...the implementation of the Addis Ababa Conclusions and the Abuja Communiqué.”²⁶ But the key elements of a hybrid force, such as the size, mandate and command of the mission, remained unresolved. Furthermore, Sudan’s participation in the “Tripartite Committee” charged with the implementation of a peacekeeping plan ensured that it would have veto power over any effective action to protect civilians.

While international diplomats exchanged contradictory statements over the terms and composition of a protection force, civilians on the ground in Darfur continued to be vulnerable to escalating violence and attacks. On December 31, the originally intended deadline for the deployment of UN peacekeepers under Resolution 1706 passed, and the further extension of the AU mandate until mid-2007 offered no substitute for the deployment of a robust force to protect Darfur.

January 2007

On January 1, the U.S. deadline passed for Sudan to demonstrate its commitment to the deployment of the hybrid AU-UN peacekeeping force. The international diplomatic community remained stalled, and there were no consequences for Khartoum and no new plans to break the deadlock.

Deployment of the first phase of the UN support package progressed haltingly through the month. On January 11, the UN Mission in Sudan transferred the first set of equipment and supplies to AMIS, which included generators, tents, cookers, sleeping bags, mosquito nets, ground positioning systems and night vision goggles. The implementation of the second phase was yet to be decided upon.²⁷

In early January, the new UN Envoy to Sudan, Jan Eliasson, met with Sudanese President Bashir to discuss the crisis in Darfur. Eliasson described his talks with Bashir as productive, and said that he had been assured of the Sudanese government's "very strong cooperation and assistance" with the UN and the AU.²⁸ But Bashir continued to resist the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Darfur.

During a visit to China in January, Natsios met with a State Councilor and other officials to discuss Darfur, declaring the talks during this four-day visit to be "productive."²⁹ He added that the U.S. would like to maintain communication with China to make progress on the Darfur issue.

In a letter to President Bashir, the newly appointed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon requested Khartoum's permission for the deployment of a first wave of UN troops, numbering 2,300, to begin the process of installing the hybrid force.³⁰ Meanwhile, in January, thousands more Darfuri civilians were displaced as a result of new attacks, further swelling the population of the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.³¹

February 2007

In the beginning of February, Secretary-General Ban finished a five-day visit to Sudan, during which he met with President Bashir. In an interview with BBC, Secretary-General Ban claimed to have established trust with President Bashir and hoped to rely on his promises in the negotiating process.³²

In reporting the results of his consultations, Secretary-General Ban also stated, "The next step is to wait for a positive and clear agreement from the Government of Sudan which will pave the way toward the deployment of hybrid operations in Darfur."³³ Yet their discussions did not produce an agreement on the deployment of a hybrid protection force, and the UN has yet to receive a response to the Secretary-General's letter concerning the next steps in the deployment of UN troops.

The AU and UN continued to engage in consultations attempting to finalize the proposed hybrid force. These consultations worked to produce a "basic framework", which would allow for a mission of 17,300 troops and 5,300 police and a joint command mechanism based in Addis Ababa.³⁴ The Secretary-General's monthly report on Darfur, dated February 23, provided an update on the progress of the deployment of the first or "light" phase of UN support. Of the UN advisors meant to support AMIS, only 81 military and police officers were currently in Darfur.³⁵ This represented less than half of the agreed-upon number.

President Bashir emphasized the continuing negotiations on the second and third phase of UN support, reiterating his rejection of Resolution 1706 and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping

force.³⁶ He elaborated, “That plan to transform the peacekeeping job in Darfur from African Union to United Nations held a hidden agenda aimed at putting Sudan under the United Nations trusteeship.”³⁷

After months of secrecy, the contours of the Bush administration’s “Plan B” were partially revealed and included stationing four U.S. Army colonels along the Sudanese border with Chad. This move, along with a reported plan to block U.S. commercial bank transactions to the Sudanese government, was designed to send a message of U.S. censure to Sudan.³⁸

These sanctions, according to a statement by Natsios, would be triggered by: (1) renewed attacks on displaced persons camps or driving NGOs from Darfur, (2) blocking the progress of peace negotiations, and (3) refusing to implement the hybrid force.³⁹ Advocacy groups pointed out that all of these conditions had already been met. The U.S. strategy remained unclear, and the threat of “Plan B” achieved no breakthrough.

At the end of February 2007, a full six months after the passage of Resolution 1706, there had been no progress towards the deployment of the authorized UN force for Darfur.

Conclusion

There continues to be an urgent need for an international peacekeeping force for Darfur, to prevent violent attacks on civilians and displaced people, to ensure the safety of humanitarian aid workers, and to pave the way for a peace process. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said in his most recent report to the Security Council at the end of February, “As long as violence and attacks continue in Darfur, the efforts to reach a political settlement will not succeed.”⁴⁰ A newly released report from the U.S. State Department highlights the genocide in Darfur as the worst human rights abuse of 2006, and the crisis is escalating.

The African Union mission in Darfur must immediately be supplemented by a robust UN peacekeeping mission, as authorized last August by UN Security Council Resolution 1706. The three-phased UN support package for the AU, currently being implemented, must quickly proceed to the deployment of a 20,000-strong UN peacekeeping force with a robust protection mandate.

To advance the deployment of this force, the U.S. must use its leverage directly with the Sudanese government to achieve its cooperation with the international community. The U.S. must also make Darfur a factor in its bilateral relations with Khartoum’s allies – China and Russia – and other key countries. All members of the UN Security Council must engage in the pursuit of the force authorized in Resolution 1706. They must challenge Khartoum’s opposition to a UN peacekeeping force, and secure the deployment of this force on an urgent basis.

A UN force is not a panacea for Darfur, but in the immediate term, it is the most important priority in order to stop the violence, provide protection, and offer hope for future peace. The international community must now find the political will to take the next steps towards the deployment of the authorized UN peacekeeping force for Darfur. The people of Darfur cannot continue to wait for international protection from genocide.

Links:

- 1 <http://sudanreeves.org/Sections-article567-p1.html>
- 2 http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-08-31-darfur_x.htm
- 3 <http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=60831>
- 4 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5314544.stm>
- 5 <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060919163043atiayduj0.6807978>
- 6 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5314544.stm>
- 7 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5362762.stm>
- 8 <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=61173>
- 9 <http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=61084>
- 10 <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=October&x=20061002115412eai fas0.3288843>
- 11 http://khartoum.usembassy.gov/pr_102006.html
- 12 <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article18355>
- 13 <http://newsite.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=61526>
- 14 <http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/58811.aspx>
- 15 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20687>
- 16 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,20777514-2703,00.html>
- 17 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,20777514-2703,00.html>
- 18 <http://sudanreeves.org/Article154.html>
- 19 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,20777514-2703,00.html>
- 20 http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.2294393/k.B69D/January_2007BRsudan_DarfurChadC AR.htm
- 21 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6197166.stm>
- 22 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/20/AR2006112001126_pf.html
- 23 http://khartoum.usembassy.gov/pr_dec1306.html
- 24 <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/245/97/PDF/N0724597.pdf?OpenElement>
- 25 http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-12-19-darfur-un_x.htm
- 26 <http://www.sudanreeves.org/Article144.html>
- 27 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21217&Cr=sudan&Cr1>
- 28 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21217&Cr=sudan&Cr1>
- 29 http://english.people.com.cn/200701/12/eng20070112_340408.html
- 30 <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article20625>
- 31 <http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=65351>
- 32 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6319359.stm>
- 33 http://radio.un.org/print_all.asp?NewsDate=2/7/2007
- 34 http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.2461257/k.3A5D/February_2007brsudan_Darfur.htm
- 35 <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/245/97/PDF/N0724597.pdf?OpenElement>
- 36 <http://www.dpado.org/article.php?ID=1257&Section=news>
- 37 <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L2615019.htm>
- 38 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/06/AR2007020601935.html>
- 39 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/06/AR2007020601935.html>
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