

Sudan Hearing - Testimony of Earl Gast

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before the

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Good morning Madam Chairperson and members of the Commission.
Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement and our path ahead.

As this Commission has noted, the collapse of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) would likely result in a "return to a bloody north-south civil war." Sudan is facing the overwhelming challenges of securing a fragile peace, halting persistent violence, overcoming a lack of resources, and parsing delicate regional relations. For the people of Sudan, the stakes are enormous, which is why the U.S. Government, led by Ambassador Williamson, is providing assistance that comprehensively addresses the political, economic, and social injustices

that are tearing Sudan apart.

Since 2005, the U.S. Government has provided Sudan more than \$5 billion in assistance, including humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping support. It has been, and will continue to be, our highest priority in Africa. USAID's carefully targeted and integrated approach to bolster the CPA is the most important investment we can make in Sudan's future.

Since the CPA was signed in 2005, USAID has focused on mitigating threats to Sudan's fragile peace in three ways: by providing visible peace dividends to the people of Southern Sudan;

by strengthening the capacity of the Government of Southern Sudan to implement the peace agreement; and by supporting the achievement of key milestones in the CPA roadmap.

Public support for the CPA can be secured only through legitimate, democratic governance that delivers the benefits of peace to the Sudanese citizens. Without improved governance, social services, and infrastructure - disenfranchisement and feelings of alienation could return, dampening support for the peace agreement, opening the southern government to criticism, and hindering conflict resolution. This is why USAID's programs specifically focus on improving access to healthcare and education, on increasing economic opportunity and the infrastructure to support it, and on strengthening the capacity of the southern government to respond to the needs of its people transparently and effectively.

The Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) did not exist before the CPA created it in 2005. Since that time, USAID has launched assistance programs to bolster the capacity of 11 southern ministries, and tremendous progress has been made in establishing functioning institutions where there once were none. Ministries are becoming more functional. Revenues are coming in and payments are being made. Yet development gains have been slow, and many fundamentals need to be improved. In the GOSS itself, stronger and more consistent linkages among policy priorities, policy development, legislation, budget, and implementation need to be forged; in the states and counties, the capacity needs to be reinforced to plan development and manage service delivery.

USAID is working with the GOSS to address these challenges by assisting in the establishment of core institutions and systems, transparent financial management, and civil service payroll and pension systems. USAID will also help facilitate the adoption of a government-wide anticorruption strategy to improve transparency and oversight.

At the same time, USAID has been providing extensive

logistical and technical support toward the achievement of the CPA's three main political milestones: a nationwide census, national and regional elections, and a referendum in Southern Sudan on unity.

As Ambassador Williamson has noted, in addition to being an enormous logistical challenge, the census was an exercise in political brinksmanship, salvaged only after eleventh-hour negotiations and sustained U.S. and international pressure. We expect to have initial results by December, but given widespread skepticism about the validity of the data by some parties and concerns about manipulation by government, those results may be rejected or discounted by Southern Sudanese. That outcome would complicate USAID and other-donor initiatives to facilitate the CPA's second key milestone: national elections.

USAID has invested heavily in laying the groundwork that will contribute toward an informed and active electorate-raising awareness of the CPA, building peace, and promoting reconciliation. Our civic education and radio programs encourage group discussions and help Sudanese understand important issues such as the CPA, census and elections.

USAID is also helping grassroots civil society promote reconciliation and mitigate conflict among diverse ethnic and religious communities by arranging meetings between northern and southern Sudanese that seek to break down stereotypes and suspicion and to identify common interests and goals.

But in spite of our investments, preparations for the national elections are at an impasse and we are nearing a crossroads. Unless and until we see an empowered National Elections Commission appointed, as mandated by the CPA, neither USAID nor the international donor community will be able to support the complex and costly logistics operations needed to conduct a credible election in a country so divided and inaccessible. We are rapidly approaching a crisis point, beyond which the CPA-mandated timeline for elections-and the referendum to follow-will be very difficult if not impossible to achieve.

We are ready to provide technical support for the National Elections Commission when it is fully operational. We are prepared to fund ballot production and other logistics support requirements when our Sudanese counterparts have devised and shared a logistics plan with donors for support. We are prepared to support oversight of the election process through the funding of international and domestic election monitors. And we will continue to expand our elections-related assistance in the North and in Darfur in support of a credible electoral process when our staff and partners can conduct their work in a permissive environment free from government-sanctioned

harassment.

Despite these challenges-or perhaps because of them-it is now more important than ever to remind ourselves that the goal posts have not moved. While fragile, the CPA is still the key to north-south peace, and to the safety and security of millions. USAID is strongly committed to supporting its implementation and its promise of stability. But in the end, the impact of our assistance will hang on the willingness of the Sudanese to follow this roadmap to a peaceful future.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and members of the Commission for your continued interest and dedication to Sudan and its people. I welcome any questions you might have for me at this time.