

Hearings on Religious Persecution in Sudan: Eric Reeves Prepared Testimony

February 15, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

My name is Eric Reeves; my only institutional or organizational affiliation is with Smith College in Massachusetts, where I am Professor of English Language and Literature.

I come before this Commission humbled, profoundly humbled, by the enormity of the suffering and human destruction to which I must attempt to bear witness. Though I have not been to Sudan, I have with the eyes of a professional researcher seen the searing, nightmarish sights already described to you, sights which will receive ghastly expansion in the course of this day. Indeed, long ago, the overwhelming force of Sudan's agony forced me to see with more than the eyes of a researcher. Long hours and days of assiduous reading, archival retrieval, and real-time communications with Sudan experts in and out of government have given me access to a reality that is simply soul-destroying.

What makes the suffering and destruction in Sudan so intensely dispiriting is that it is not the consequence of natural disaster; it is transparently the product of human weakness, ignorance and evil. What I will focus on in my testimony are those actions, decisions, and judgments which seem to me most deeply implicated in sustaining a civil conflict which is the most destructive of its kind since the Second World War.

You have heard the numbers, but the terrible litany simply cannot be too often repeated: 2 million human beings, overwhelmingly civilians in the south of Sudan, have perished---children and women disproportionately. At the beginning of the 20th century, military historians tell us that casualties of war were typically 90% within the armed forces of the warring nations. At the beginning of the 21st century, in civil war that is all too characteristic of what war has become, the figure is still 90%, but now it attaches to civilian deaths. This is one of the most basic features of what we mean by civil war in Sudan: it is defined overwhelmingly by civilian casualties. And they are typically casualties not from actual conflict, but from the ravages of famine, disease, and displacement caused by ongoing war.

Indeed, the other staggering figure that must be repeated if we are to understand Sudan's agony is the 5 million people who have lost their homes and land to internal displacement and forced exile. In fact, we can't be sure about the number because it is so immense: it represents what is far and away the greatest crisis of its kind in all the world.

What sustains such destruction and suffering? What has allowed this war to continue for seventeen years? I won't presume to give even a synoptic historical account, but rather will try to suggest what is most significant in the circumstances now obtaining. In doing so, my focusing task will be to demonstrate the critical nexus between oil development and continuing civil war.

I have supplied you with a fairly elaborate chronology of oil development in Sudan precisely so that I may concentrate my remarks on the present consequences of that development. They are, I believe, threefold.

First. There are the enormous revenues now deriving from the 185,000 barrels of crude oil per day extracted by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company, which I will be referring to simply as the Greater Nile project.

This project has four economic partners: Talisman Energy (Canada's largest independent oil and gas concern), a 25% partner; China's state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation, a 40% partner; and Malaysia's state-owned Petronas, a 30% partner. Sudapet, the state-owned Sudanese oil company, is a nominal 5% partner; but given the terms of the royalties contracts, approximately 40% of revenues go the Khartoum regime. This will generate between \$300,000,000. and \$400,000,000 per year for one of the most bankrupt countries in the world. In addition, the regime has been freed from its formerly onerous expenditures for oil imports.

What is critically important to understand is that all revenues from the Greater Nile project marked for Sudan go to the Khartoum regime utterly unencumbered and uncontrolled by any credible mechanism of distribution. If the regime wishes to use these revenues entirely for military purposes, there is nothing---presently or foreseeably---that can stop them. This has clearly provided a profound disincentive for the Khartoum regime to negotiate a just peace. Convinced that they have the revenues to win the war militarily, and to insulate themselves economically from diplomatic pressures, they refuse to enter into good faith peace negotiations under the auspices of IGAD, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development.

This consortium of East African nations is hardly the robust peace negotiating forum we might wish for. But there is no credible alternative, and to abandon it now would be to confront the daunting difficulty of starting from scratch. It is crucially important for peace that the IGAD talks be productive; the US and its allies are fully committed to the IGAD process. But the process will clearly not be successful as long as oil revenues convince Khartoum that it has more to win militarily.

I should add that this is precisely the conclusion of the long-awaited Harker report made public yesterday in Canada. African specialist John Harker and a team of investigators were commissioned last October by Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy of Canada to investigate the consequences of oil development for Sudan, given the prominence of Canada's Talisman Energy in the Greater Nile project. I will return at several points to the findings of this enormously significant report.

Secondly.

There are numerous reports of extremely intense destruction and wide-spread forced civilian population removals in the oil regions of western Upper Nile Province, with related armed conflict extending into southern Kordofan and eastern Bahr el-Ghazal provinces. In my judgment, the most striking and significant finding of the Harker report is the extent of these forced population removals in service of past, present, and future oil development. The scorched-earth warfare of the Government of Sudan and its local military allies has the clear goal of creating a "sanitized" security corridor for the Greater Nile project in all its forms: the pipeline, the rigs in the oil fields, the attendant infrastructure, and the concessions where future development and extraction will take place.

Scorched-earth

warfare includes the killing, raping, enslaving, and torturing of those with the misfortune of having homes in the oil regions. It includes the bombing and burning of villages. It includes the deliberate destruction of foodstocks and cattle and the means of food production. It has as its purpose making the oil regions utterly uninhabitable for those who might, in the eyes of the Khartoum regime, be a threat to the security of the oil project.

Thirdly. The resources and personnel of the Greater Nile project are being used directly for military purposes. In January, prior to the release of his report, John Harker indicated both to Foreign Minister Axworthy and to the news media that Talisman Energy's Heglig oil field airstrip was being used for both defensive and offensive military purposes by the Government of Sudan. The evidence, he insisted---despite denials from the Khartoum regime---was completely convincing. Helicopter gunships and Antonov

bombers, key elements of the Khartoum regime's war on civilians, had access to this extraordinarily well-positioned airstrip. The Canadian government issued a stem demarche to Khartoum at the time.

Moreover, it has been clear from the first stages of design and construction that the 1000-mile pipeline, which reaches to Port Sudan on the Red Sea, would pass by one of Sudan's most significant refineries, that at El Obeid. This refinery, which previously had required imported oil, now siphons off its full 10,000 barrel per day capacity from the pipeline of the Greater Nile project. There is not nearly enough civilian consumption in this part of Sudan to justify such refining production: it is clearly the key forward source for the aviation fuel, and diesel fuel, used by the aircraft and combat vehicles of the Government of Sudan. I will return to the significance of the El Obeid refinery in my concluding comment.

I also wish to point out the implications of an on-the-scene report that has recently emerged from a humanitarian mission to the Bentiu region of western Upper Nile. It comes from Derek Hammond, a South African who for three years now has been conducting humanitarian missions to the most dangerous areas in southern Sudan, areas to which the Khartoum regime has denied regular humanitarian access. I have spoken a number of times with Mr. Hammond, to whom I was introduced in telephone conversation while he was in Washington last fall; I am fully convinced of the authority of his accounts. He very credibly reports evidence of direct logistical and engineering support by Chinese nationals for combat efforts by the armed forces of the Government of Sudan.

His report to me---and I have provided for you copies of his full account, as well as a very detailed map he supplied of the immediate Bentiu region---indicates, I believe quite convincingly, that the putative "neutrality" of the Greater Nile project is simply a convenient fiction. In other words, the partners of the Greater Nile project are not simply the key economic allies of the Khartoum regime. In the form of Chinese logistical support they are now providing direct military aid.

This conclusion comports fully with another, related form of Chinese military assistance to the Government of Sudan: massive amounts of combat weaponry. I have also made copies for you of the relevant section of an August 1998 report by the widely respected Human Rights Watch. It provides a compelling digest of the evidence for an extensive arms trade between China and the Khartoum regime.

What I believe this report also clearly suggests is that China (a net oil importer since the mid-1990s) and the utterly bankrupt Khartoum regime

have been engaged in extensive "in kind" trading: Chinese weaponry for anticipated Sudanese oil and oil revenues. Indeed, there is no other way to account for Khartoum's ability to conduct a war that has been repeatedly characterized as costing \$1 million dollars a day. Nowhere is the nexus of oil and ongoing war more obvious, or more consequential.

There is no simple way to end testimony about such cruelly indifferent pursuit of oil profits, or to summarize the immensely destructive consequences of present oil development for the nation of Sudan. But I have been deeply haunted---I will go further and say traumatized---by a news report from this past week. In the Nuba region, in the town of Kaounda, it has been reliably reported by Reuters news service and the BBC that a Government of Sudan Antonov bomber deliberately targeted a primary school of over 300 students. 13 students studying English under a tree outside the rudimentary classroom buildings were torn apart and killed when one of four high-explosive, shrapnel-loaded bombs dropped on the school area. Another student and a teacher died subsequently. Many more are severely wounded, and may not live.

What you should know is that the aviation fuel for this Antonov bomber was almost certainly refined at the El Obeid refinery, not far north of Kaouda. The El Obeid refinery is, as I've indicated, directly on the pipeline route of the Greater Nile project. In other words, crude oil from a well developed by the Greater Nile project, flowing through a pipeline built by the Greater Nile project, daily supplies the refinery that produces the fuel that enables these bombers to fly on their deadly missions. Again according to Reuters, officials of the Government of Sudan have defended the attack on Kaouda, saying that the school was a legitimate target in the war. In the unfathomably callous words of Dirdieri Ahmed, a minister in the Sudanese embassy in Nairobi, who had seen graphic video footage of the carnage following the attack: "The bombs landed where they were supposed to land."

So I must ask: how can any of us countenance complicity in such cruel and barbarous forms of human destruction? What oil profits can possibly justify acquiescence in policies of war that deliberately target schools for young children? But that complicity is precisely what defines the economic partnership of Talisman Energy, China National Petroleum Corporation, and Malaysia's Petronas with the Government of Sudan. For this reason, and for the others I have indicated, I believe that is our profoundest moral obligation to respond vigorously and with decisive effectiveness to this obscene nexus of oil development and ongoing civil war in Sudan.

Beyond resolutely independent humanitarian aid, America's most effective means of response to what is finally genocidal destruction in southern Sudan lie ultimately in the enormous strength of our capital markets. The American grass-roots divestment campaign against Talisman Energy will succeed. But beyond this, in the present extraordinary case, I believe it is both practical and legal to deny American capital market participation to all companies presently partners with the Government of Sudan in its Greater Nile project. I urge you, with all possible conviction, to make this recommendation to the Congress and to the President.

Materials supplementary to the testimony of Eric Reeves before the
US Commission on International Religious Freedom

Washington, DC

February 15,2000

[1] "Oil Development in Sudan: A Chronology";

[2] Excerpt on Chinese arms trade with Sudan; from an August 1998 report by Human Rights Watch;

[3]
Narrative account of Derek Hammond, detailing evidence gather in western Upper Nile Province (late January to early February), with an accompanying, detailed map of the Bentiu area;

[4]
Documentary video ("Under Siege: The Nuba of Sudan"), with an accompanying narrative by Gary Kenny Director, Inter-Church Coalition on Africa [Toronto, Canada]).

For the US Commission on International Religious Freedom Washington, DC ---February 15,2000

OIL DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN: A CHRONOLOGY

[by Eric Reeves]

1959 ---oil exploration begins in Sudan;

1979 ---oil discovered in Sudan;

1980 ---Unity oil field (north of Bentiu) discovered;

1982 ---Heglig oil field discovered (40 miles north, northwest of Unity oil field);

1983

---Sudanese civil war recommences; the US oil corporation Chevron has three workers killed in its oil concession and withdraws (abandoning an \$800,000,000. investment); this ends US involvement in Sudan's oil development;

1992 ---The Canadian entrance:

Sudanese Concorp buys Chevron's concession, sells it to the Khartoum government, which then sells it to the Canadian-owned State Petroleum Company (SPC) in 1994. Shortly thereafter, SPC is purchased by Canada's Arakis Energy, Talisman Energy's predecessor;

1997

(Spring) ---China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) successfully bids on and acquires development rights to what will become a 40% stake in the Greater Nile Oil Project, with actual work beginning shortly after the successful bid. China has by this time become a net importer of oil, and faces a critical need to secure off -shore oil sources;

1997

(November) ---By Executive Order, President Clinton imposes

comprehensive trade and economic sanctions against Sudan because of its support of international terrorism;

1998 (summer)

---Talisman Energy, Canada's largest independent oil and gas concern, takes over Arakis Energy, when Arakis is unable to meet capital obligations in the Greater Nile Oil Project (in which it is a 25% partner);

[Critically, prior to Talisman's entrance into the Greater Nile project, they are warned by Canadian NGOs about the implications of participating in Sudan's oil development project in the midst of ongoing civil war. Talisman turns aside these warnings. Talisman is also warned by the Canadian Foreign Ministry about the dangers of entering such a volatile arena, and the dangers to employees. Talisman turns aside these warnings as well.]

1999

(May) ---Talisman holds annual shareholder meeting, having refused to put on the agenda a shareholders' resolution brought by numerous groups concerned about the human rights record of the Government of Sudan, and the larger consequences of Talisman's participation in the Greater Nile; 1999 (May 4) ---Op/ed appears in the (Toronto) Globe and Mail (Canada's most prominent national newspaper), highly critical of Talisman, and demanding that Foreign Minister Axworthy invoke sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act;

1999

(summer) ---Profile of Talisman Energy in Sudan continues to rise; an op/ed in The Los Angeles Times (August 30) urges full-scale divestment campaign against Talisman Energy. Talisman achieves a 52-week high in share price at just this time (\$49.10 [Canadian]); it will subsequently lose as much as 30%--down over 25% from early September high on February 11, 2000.

1999 (October) ---Foreign

Ministry releases its policy paper on Sudan, and commissions a mission to Sudan to investigate allegations concerning Talisman Energy's role in Sudan's civil war (led by John Barker, a widely respected African specialist); [Significantly, it is not until October that Talisman responds publicly to the series of fierce attacks on its role in the Greater Nile project---attacks which have been ongoing for five months.]

1999

(October through the present) ---Divestment campaign in US gathers steam: as of early February 2000, approximately 2.5 million shares have been sold under divestment pressure. Talisman will in November 1999

announce an unprecedented (and potentially massive) share buy-back, because of distressed share price;

1999 (Fall)

---China National Petroleum Corp seeks, with the assistance of investment bankers Goldman Sachs, an "Initial Public Offering" (IPO) and listing on the New York Stock Exchange. This produces a strenuously critical reaction in Washington and elsewhere in the country. This IPO for CNPC has subsequently been restructured twice by Goldman Sachs because of the rising controversy surrounding what would amount to American capitalization of Sudan's oil project. It remains unclear in February of 2000 whether the IPO will succeed.

1999 (December) ---Barker mission returns and begins to assemble its report;

2000 (January 26) ---Barker mission delivers report to Foreign Minister Axworthy;

2000

(January) ---Credible reports emerge from the western Upper Nile that Chinese nationals are serving in direct logistical support of combat efforts by the Government of Sudan in their campaign of forced population removals from the oil regions. The reports are carried out from the ground by South African humanitarian worker Derek Hammond, and reported to US contacts;

2000 (February 14)

---Harker mission report released publicly; it contains compelling and pervasive evidence of forced civilian populations removals from the oil regions, and is a devastating indictment of Talisman Energy, China National Petroleum Corp, and the entire Greater Nile oil project as a whole. Crucially, Harker concludes that present oil extraction and revenue arrangements are prolonging the civil war in Sudan;

2000 (February 15) ---US Commission for International Religious Freedom holds hearings on Sudan in Washington, DC;

2000

(February? March?) ---Human Rights Watch will release a massive and comprehensive report on the subject of the consequences of oil development for the human rights situation, concentrating on forced civilian population removals from the oil regions. This is widely expected in the No community to be a devastating indictment;

[Footnote

observations: Arakis Energy admitted (August 1997) to the Toronto Star's Middle East reporter (Kristine Dow) that it had serviced broken military trucks for the Government of Sudan, and had provided electricity lines to Government of Sudan military barracks. In January 2000, Canadian newspapers break the story that Talisman Energy's oil field air strip has been used for both offensive and defensive military purposes by the combat aircraft of the Government of Sudan. This produces a strong demarche from the Canadian government. Despite Harker's insistence on the unambiguous nature of the evidence for these military uses of Talisman's supposedly civilian air strip, the Government of Sudan continues to deny emphatically any such use.]

Human Rights Watch Report on Sudan (August 1998):

IV. ARMS TRANSFERS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN

A

number of states have supplied arms, military equipment, or military training to the government of Sudan, or have failed to prevent their nationals from providing arms or services to Sudan. Very few of these transfers have been publicly documented (for example, via submissions to the U.N. register on conventional arms). Below we list some of the transfers that have surfaced; they are by no means exhaustive, but merely indicative of the scope of the trade. Human Rights Watch has written to a number of governments to inquire about particular transfers or training arrangements. The replies received are referred to below.

CHINA

The

People's Republic of China, which has sold arms to successive Sudanese governments since the early 1980s, became one of the country's principal arms suppliers in 1994 and remained so into 1998, largely because China had what Sudan wanted and attached no conditions, other than monetary ones and oil concessions, to their sale. Chinese weapons are relatively cheap, and much of what Sudan has been purchasing is

fairly old stock. In perhaps one of the most significant transactions, China is said to have sold the government of Sudan SCUD missiles at the end of 1996 in a deal underwritten by a \$200 million Malaysian government loan against future oil extraction, according to a high-level Sudanese defector, who claimed the deal, which he said he witnessed, was arranged by Sudan's state minister for external relations, Dr .Mustafa Osman Ismail. [83] SCUD missiles are notoriously inaccurate medium-range rockets that have been used against civilian population centers in past conflicts, such as the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War.

The government of Sudan began to increase its purchases of new weapons from China under the Nimeiri government, according to ex-Sudanese military officers based in Eritrea who were in the government of deposed president Sadiq al-Mahdi at the time these transactions took place. [84] But these and other purchases have risen in the 1990s due to Sudan's enhanced capacity to pay for new arms as a result of financial support from Iran and Malaysia and enhanced international credit based upon efforts to exploit the country's oil reserves. Weapons deliveries since 1995 include ammunition, tanks, helicopters, and fighter aircraft. According to at least one published report, in late 1995 China supplied the government of Sudan with fifty Z-6 helicopters, a hundred 82mm and 120mm mortars, and other equipment.⁸⁵ Sudan reportedly also bought six Chinese Chengdu F- 7s (MiG-21s) financed by Iran. [86] In 1997 , the government of Sudan also was reported to have a new type of Chinese-made, light-weight antitank weapon in its arsenal-probably a Chinese copy of the Russian SPG-9-mounted on two wheels that could be pulled by hand by soldiers. [87] One Sudanese army defector, formerly with an air defense unit, claimed he witnessed Chinese experts assembling Chinese-supplied jet fighters at the Wadi Saydna base north of Omdurman in 1993. [88] China also became a major supplier of antipersonnel and antitank mines to Sudan after 1980, according to a high- ranking government official, who claimed, however, that Sudan has not received any new landmines since 1993. [89]

While China's motivation for this trade appears to be primarily economic, it has provided easy financing for some of these purchases, including one soft loan payable in 2005, according to a high-ranking Eritrean military official who said he pointedly criticized these arms transfers in discussions with Chinese officials, who in turn defended their right to make the sales. [90] Human Rights Watch wrote to the government of China in March 1998 to solicit its comments on some of the above allegations, as well as the discovery of large amounts of Chinese weapons, especially landmines, in captured Sudanese army stocks (see chapter 3), and as of mid-August 1998 had not yet received a reply.

[83]

Human Rights Watch interview with Abdelaziz Ahmed Khattab, The Hague, November 15, 1997. Khattab also claimed, in a written statement, that the Malaysian national oil company was used as a cover to ship arms to Sudan: "Arms deals agreed upon have been shipped by sea in the name of the Malaysian National Petroleum Company and that of the Chinese National Petroleum Company, under the guise of petroleum exploration equipment according to an agreement concluded between the government in Khartoum and these companies in Kuala Lumpur under which they provide weaponry and military equipment in exchange for being given concessions for oil explorations. " "Statement by the Administrative Attache, Embassy of Sudan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: To the People of the Sudan and World Public Opinion," signed by Abdelaziz Ahmed Abdelaziz Khattab, the Netherlands, September 29, 1997. Human Rights Watch has been unable to independently confirm this allegation. The Canadian oil company Arakis Energy Corporation is known to have been involved with a number of partners in an oil-exploration and development scheme in Sudan, the Sudan Petroleum Project, since November 1996. According to news reports, two of Arakis' s partners in the project, China National Petroleum Corp. and Petronas, the Malaysian state oil company, have covered start-up costs, giving credit to Arakis for its spending from 1993 until the formation of the consortium in November 1996. In July 1998, Arakis's attempt to raise enough funds for its share in the development appeared to be faltering. Jeffrey Jones, "Cash crunch may force sale of Canada's Arakis Energy ," Reuters, July 7, 1998. See also, "Arakis Announces 1997 Results," Company Press Release, Business Wire, Calgary (Canada), April 1, 1998.

[84] Human Rights Watch interviews with Gen. Fathi Ahmed Ali and other officers, Asmara, September 10, 1996.

[85] Indian Ocean Newsletter, December 23, 1995.

[86] International Security Digest (London), January 1996.

[87]

Human Rights Watch interview with a Sudanese prisoner in SPLA custody, a noncommissioned officer who said he was captured by the SPLA on March 22, 1997, western Ethiopia, March 29, 1997.

[88] Human Rights Watch interview with a former Sudanese military officer, western Ethiopia, March 29, 1997.

[89]

Human Rights Watch interview with Maj. Gen. Muhammad Sanousi Ahmed, deputy chief of staff for military intelligence, Sudan People's Armed Forces, Khartoum, November 20, 1997.

[90] Human Rights Watch interview with Gen. Sebhat Ephrem, chief of staff of the Eritrean Defense Forces, Asmara, September 10, 1996.

Notes

transmitted to Eric Reeves by South African Derek Hammond immediately upon Hammond's return from an extremely dangerous humanitarian mission to the western Upper Nile Province in Sudan.

He

records what he witnessed in the Bentiu area of western Upper Nile for several days in late January and early February 2000, and what he learned from interviews in the region. Bentiu is the epicenter of the oil development region in Sudan. [[he names of all persons indicated here have been changed so as to protect those relatives or friends who may have survived; all real names have been securely recorded.]

Particularly

ominous are the reports suggesting that Chinese nationals, presumably connected to the presence of China National Petroleum Corp., have been providing direct logical aid to the combat efforts of Government of Sudan forces.

FROM DEREK HAMMOND,

February 5, 2000:

[1]

I landed in Nimne [an area of many displaced people], just northeast of Bentiu. Nimne was attacked and suffered much devastation as a result of scorched-earth tactics between July and October 1999. In this area there are thousands of displaced people, and most have lost everything, including family members. The testimonies offered by these people, and the accounts of what they went through, are horrific.

[2]

Nimne is just one place of many that have been destroyed; others in the region include, Duar, Adok, Leer (the latter is now a big Government of Sudan [GOS] base). Huts are burnt, crops destroyed, cattle have been taken or killed, and water has sometimes been poisoned.

[3]

A mother, Nyala Tor, had her home burnt down in October 1999 and was forced to watch as a number of GOS soldiers raped her 20 year old daughter and finished her off by forcing a burning piece of wood up her uterus.

[4] This same woman told of the hundreds of women that are still hiding in the swamp area, naked and in fear; they are living off water lilies and fish if they manage to catch any.

[5]

During the raids many children disappeared along with family members and have not been found. One father, Robert Nyum, lost his young son in the raids and does not know if he is alive or dead. He witnessed people being tied up and burnt alive in burning huts, which are made of wood and dry grass.

[6] I received many testimonies of brutal killings, along with the raping of women.

[7]

Three young widows, Victoria Sulwa, Ruth Kuothra, and Mata Raina lost their husbands in October 1999. Victoria's husband was mown down by a helicopter gunship. Rya Deng saw her son killed. Hespera Moleng lost her husband in the fighting.

[8] I saw evidence of destroyed villages and homes for many miles.

[9]

I received dozens of reports of vomiting, eye problems, breathing problems, and swelling, which the local population says is caused by the bombs. (Remember, these are very basic people, essentially peasants: they have no reason to fabricate or make up stories.)

[10]

Health is very poor, with many dying from basic problems and diseases. Doctors and health workers cannot reach these folk because of the dangers involved. Two children died last Tuesday; the cause of death is unknown.

Benjamin

Septa (27 years old) escaped from Bentiu and met up with me on February 2, 2000. Benjamin gave an eyewitness account of what is happening in Bentiu, which was verified by a number of other folks from the area. They stated:

[11] There are two helicopter gunships in Bentiu which have been used in a number of attacks around the oil region.

[12]

There are many hundreds of Chinese working on building a tar road and bridge over the Jur River. On the north bank is a very large GOS garrison at Yoynyang, with much heavy equipment. Bentiu is on the south bank. The significance here is that the bridge serves not only for the Chinese to move south for the oil, but it also enables the GOS to move its troops and armour south across the river.

[13]

Many witnesses testify that they have seen Chinese drivers and trucks transporting GOS troops. The locals have seen the Chinese providing technical support with the transporting of troops, artillery and heavy weapons, although no one has seen armed Chinese at this stage.

[14]

Apparently the Chinese have their own transport planes as well as road building equipment (graders, bull dozers, etc.) and are active in building a road into the south. One of these graders was stuck on a road just one hour walk from where we were (the locals had removed the batteries from it).

Again the roads will be of great assistance for the GOS in penetrating the south with armour .

[15]

Monday January 31 and Tuesday February 1 there was heavy fighting around the edges of Bentiu; some of the wounded soldiers were returned to our area.

[16] The GOS Antonov bombers flew 11

flights overhead to the south on Wednesday , February 2; this indicates they are busy moving troops or equipment into the south, which on its own is serious and ominous.

[17] There are reports of surface to air missiles at various GOS bases in the south.

[18]

The most serious development is that the Chinese are moving south, and have started drilling just east of Koch in a place called Wathrier. This new location is about 50 miles south of Bentiu. The next town is Leer, which was captured by the GOS second half of last year. I witnessed the attack from the swamp areas, together with the folk that fled the fighting. The next town south of Leer is Adok, which has also recently been captured. Adok was surveyed in the early nineties/eighties by either TotalFina or Chevron and was abandoned when the fighting started. All this shows a very clear pattern---the path that oil development is following. And with this development comes a very sharp thrust into the southern regions by the GOS.

[19]

SUMMARY: The entire region (western Upper Nile) is extremely volatile and looks very serious for the South. The GOS is either preparing for a number of large offensives, or they trying to get themselves into a dominant position from which to negotiate a truce while they continue a buildup and eventually take control.

"Under Siege:
The Nuba of Sudan" ---Produced by the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa
(main office in Toronto, Canada; Gary Kenny, Director)

[Summary by Gary Kenny, Director, Inter-Church Coalition on Mrica]

"Under

Siege: The Nuba of Sudan" is a 36-minute video documentary that was co-produced by the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa (Canada) and Visafric Productions. It profiles and documents the spectre of the hidden war in the Nuba Mountains, a remote region of central Sudan. The story of war in the Nuba Mountains, and more particularly, the story of the efforts of the Nuba people to resist violent and systematic persecution by the Government of Sudan, is told chiefly by Nuba men and women themselves --teachers, religious leaders, guerrilla commanders, activists, farmers, and so on -- rather than through external narration.

The

video celebrates the extraordinary anthropological and cultural roots and history of the Nuba people. "Nuba" is a derogatory term meaning "people who can be enslaved" in ancient Egyptian. The Nuba are actually a conglomerate of some 50 different ethnic groups and cultures whose ancestors migrated from various parts of northeast Africa (some from West Africa) to Sudan's central mountain region to escape other, slave-raiding, peoples. Some Nuba ethnic groups can be traced to the 8th century BC Kingdom of Kush. Over the centuries these distinct groups developed a common identity as Nuba of which they are fiercely proud. This identity is forged from their common experience of persecution and shaped by the rugged landscape and harsh living conditions of the mountain environment.

Nuba

religious leaders explain how Nuba Christians, Muslims and followers of traditional African religions (sometimes referred to as "animists") have historically and traditionally lived together in relative peace and harmony. In the Nuba Mountains, Christians and Muslims not only tolerate but respect one another and share in each other's rich religious traditions. Much intermarriage has taken place and it is common to find Christians and Muslims in the same family. It is common for Christian prayers to be said at Muslim ceremonies and vice versa. As one Muslim holy man says, it is the Islamist government of Sudan, and its particular version of Islam, that tries to drive Christians and Muslims apart in Sudan.

The video explains how war came to the Nuba Mountains in 1985 and how it is connected to the civil war in Sudan generally. Sudanese in the Nuba Mountains and southern Sudan are fighting against Sudanese government political and economic domination and for their right of self - determination. The video asserts that the Nuba merely want to live in peace and security to do what they have always done --farm their lands, express their cultural traditions and practice their religions. Instead, they are forced to defend themselves against a regime that wants Nuba lands for their fertility and the minerals that lie beneath them, and that despises the peaceful co-existence of Nuba Muslims and Christians because it undermines the regime's project to create a uniformly Arab, Muslim state.

The video also puts a "human face" on the war, and describes, through the words of Nuba men and women, the horror and human toll of Sudanese government land and air attacks on towns, villages and farms. Nuba women and men tell how their husbands, wives and children were murdered by government troops. They describe how government soldiers come out from their garrison towns in trucks and tanks and burn entire villages and farms to the ground as well as crops and food stores. They tell how high-flying Antonovs come and drop bombs, including anti-personnel cluster bombs, on schools, clinics, mosques, and churches. They describe the impact of a 10- year blockade on all official humanitarian aid to areas of the Nuba Mountains under control of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, which they regard as their protectors; indeed, SPLA guerrillas are the Nuba --farmers, teachers, craftsmen, women, and youth who have taken up arms to defend Nuba lands and assert their people's right of self-determination, a right that the Sudanese government flatly and brutally denies.

A
Nuba man describes how government soldiers abduct civilians from their villages and fields and take them to what are euphemistically called "peace villages" but what in reality are concentration camps. He describes one incident --a common occurrence --in which many young and middle- aged women were taken to the camps and raped repeatedly. Other Nuba narrate how the camps are places where Nuba are taken to be "Arabized," "Islamized," forced into hard labour, forced to fight on the government side against their own people, and severely beaten if they resist. The video ends with an appeal by the Nuba to the international community, and to the United States and Canada in particular, to help stop the "genocide" in the Nuba Mountains and Sudan.