

Hearings on Religious Persecution in Sudan: Mr. Richard McCall Prepared Testimony

February 15, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

Mr. Chairman, I want to express my appreciation for the invitation to appear before the Commission's hearing on the ongoing tragedy in Sudan.

The people of southern Sudan have been suffering from civil war for the past 15 years and for 32 of the past 43 years. They have suffered more war related deaths than any single population in the world. Sudan continues to be the world's greatest humanitarian crisis. The responsibility for the suffering and the deaths of an estimated 2.0 million southern Sudanese over the past 15 years must be laid squarely on the shoulders of the Government in Khartoum.

The U.S. continues as the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to the people of Sudan. U.S. humanitarian assistance to all populations in both northern and southern Sudan totaled more than \$365 million from fiscal years 1997 through 1999.

U.S. goals are focused on improving food security, rehabilitating health care systems, and strengthening civil society in Southern Sudan. This focus on self-reliance -- meeting local needs with local resources requires increased emphasis on capacity building activities in such a manner as to reinforce developmental potential, such as increasing Sudanese management, coordination and delivery of services.

USAID's Sudan Transitional Assistance for Rehabilitation or STAR program as it is more commonly known is funded out of the Development Assistance account. The STAR program has been instrumental in promoting grass roots reconciliation initiatives and building the capacity of southern Sudanese. Over the next three years, greater emphasis will be placed on reduction of conflict among the ethnic groups in the South, increased good governance, and strengthening civil society organizations.

Due

to the changing nature of the situation in Sudan, the U.S. government has not allocated a precise amount of funding for FY 2000, with the exception of the STAR program, for which \$3.4 million is being made available.

Both the STAR and humanitarian programs have been integrated into an overall strategic framework to insure our tools are mutually reinforcing. Last year, \$64 million was provided in P.L. 480 food aid, \$68 million in Section 416 surplus commodities, nearly \$25 million in disaster assistance from OFDA, and \$2.2 million in STAR funds.

To avoid dependence on the UN's Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), which is subject to periodic government flight bans, USAID has increased support to organizations that operate outside of OLS in opposition-controlled areas. Last year, USAID provided \$24 million in food aid and \$4.6 million in other emergency assistance through non-OLS NGOs. USAID is also supporting the rehabilitation of roads in order to expand the number of areas accessible by overland transport to better enable the movement of surplus agricultural commodities into deficit areas and to decrease our reliance on costly airlifts.

During this year the STAR program will be included to include areas in Eastern Equatoria, parts of the Upper Nile, Eastern Sudan, Southern Blue Nile, and the Nuba Mountains. OFDA also will expand further into areas, which have been historically under-served by the international relief areas such as the Nuba Mountains, Upper Nile and southern Blue Nile.

Areas

controlled by the National Democratic Alliance civil authorities will also receive capacity building sub-grants to strengthen civil administration and empower civil society organizations.

I would like to briefly outline for the Commission some of the highlights of the STAR program. These include:

* The Wunlin Peace Conference and follow-up activities have helped bring reconciliation between the Nuer and Dinka ethnic groups. This has been a major success as there has been longstanding distrust between the two groups that has been exploited by the Government of Sudan.

* In the past year, 34 Sudanese organizations have participated in our

capacity building program and have received sub-grants for such economic activities such as milling, trade, transport and micro-enterprise.

* In addition, 47 local administrators for three counties (Tonj, Rumbek and Yirol) have received training. An economic governance conference in which 130 Sudanese from both civil society and civil authorities participated to learn how good governance practices could be put in place such as taxation, transparency, accountability, and administrative capacity.

Just last month, Vivian Derryck, our Assistant Administrator for Africa, traveled to Rumbek where she announced a \$300,000 grant to the only secondary school in southern Sudan.

As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, our humanitarian programs compliment what we are attempting to achieve with our STAR resources. Some examples include:

* The significant increase in surplus food production in Western Equatorial that has allowed use of local food and seeds to be provided in other areas of need.

* The significant expansion of the road network that will reduce dependency on costly relief flights in certain regions. Approximately \$2 million was saved in air transport costs in 1998 by moving 8,000 metric tons of food by road to Bahr el Ghazel. Last year an estimated \$9.3 million in transportation costs was saved.

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USAID supported primary health care centers, with better-trained Sudanese health care workers, have been established, reducing crude morbidity and mortality numbers in the South.

The Commission has requested USAID's view on the scope and practical significance of the flight bans imposed by the Government of Sudan. The flight bans, coupled with the scorched earth tactics of Government of Sudan sponsored militias, has been the primary reason for much of the famine conditions that have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands innocent civilians. While the flight bans do not stop us altogether from providing assistance, they do severely limit our ability to get

critical commodities to people residing in remote areas.

The Administration believes that there should be full and unimpeded access to those civilians in need. That is why we continue to expand our assistance to non-OLS NGOs. And that why we are seeking to expand our assistance in opposition-held areas that have never received assistance under OLS. However, there is no doubt that UN agencies and those NGOs who operate under the OLS umbrella bring critical resources to bear in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. For this reason, it is important that we continue to support OLS, while also expanding our support outside OLS channels.

We have also been working with the UN on ways to continue assistance to remote areas during extended flight bans. Such a plan would include formal notification to the Government of Sudan that the international community will not adhere to access restrictions that place vulnerable people at risk, and use non-OLS NGOs and non-OLS flights to reach banned areas. And if necessary break the flight bans for humanitarian reasons if access is not granted.

Mr. Chairman, our differences with the Government of Sudan boil down to some very simple values. If the Government in Khartoum wants to be treated as a legitimate member of the international community, they have an obligation to treat all their people equally. If the government of Sudan wants to be treated as a legitimate member of the international community, then they have an obligation to accord all their citizens basic rights, including the right of individuals to freely exercise their own religious beliefs. Legitimate governments do not create famines and then purposefully deny assistance to their own people. It is untenable and unconscionable for the international community to accord a government that engages in such practices and other heinous crimes against their own people any semblance of legitimacy.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my remarks.