



## Briefing on Recent Developments in Sudan

**Andrew Natsios, Special Envoy to Sudan**

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**MR. GALLEGOS:** Good morning, ya'll. I appreciate your time and your participation. We have United States Special Envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios with us this afternoon -- this morning. And with that, he would like to make a few brief introductions and then he will take your questions.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Am I ready?

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Yes, sir.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Okay. This is Andrew Natsios. I wanted to talk to the press today. I came back about three weeks ago from my last trip to the region to both southern Sudan, Khartoum and to several days in Darfur and then I went to the Tripoli conference. And we're now in the last week at two critical turning points in the conflict in Darfur, the crisis in Darfur. The first of course took place last week when the Security Council approved a resolution which the Sudanese Government has agreed to and which got a unanimous vote that was not a divided vote, which should accelerate the introduction of the hybrid UN/AU peacekeeping force. But what I wanted to focus on today was the political process because the Arusha meeting that just concluded a couple of days ago in Tanzania was I think a re-energizing of the political process and now we'll begin a formal series or sequencing of events that I hope will lead to a political settlement. The only way the crisis in Darfur is going to be resolved is through a political settlement.

In many respects, the purpose of the peacekeeping force beyond protection of civilians and noncombatants and the relief effort is to implement a peace settlement. In fact, that's specifically called for in the resolution. Many of the rebels have told me they will never turn their weapons over to the Sudanese Government. They don't trust them. And I doubt very much that the militias that have been associated with the Sudanese government are going to turn their weapons over easily to the rebels. There's going to have to be a neutral body there and that's the purpose of the -- one of the purposes of the peacekeeping force.

The situation on the ground -- I'm sorry, the situation at Arusha when it ended, was I think very encouraging. Jan Eliasson and I spoke on Sunday. He was very pleased with the unfolding of events. He said, well, the negotiations were difficult and very complicated because there were so many factions, countries in the regions are involved in this. There are a lot of complications within Sudan about the -- how the Darfur settlement would affect other areas of the country. I think Jan and Salim Salim were both very encouraged by how this -- how the factions came together. They did agree on a common platform. There is now an agenda in a set of agreements as to what'll happen at a potential peace conference.

And most importantly, from my perspective, the way to get public support in Darfur for this settlement, beyond the rebel leaders and their commanders is to involve civil society which is the traditional chiefs, the traditional sheikhs, the leaders of the internal displacement camps, the IDP camps. And third, women's groups and local Sudanese NGOs. The meeting of rebel commanders and rebel leaders affirm the importance of getting civil society involved in this, because without public support, there isn't going to be any peace settlement.

And the final comment I wanted to make was that the situation I found -- and I'd been going as you know, to Darfur since 1990 -- is very fluid. Things are changing fairly rapidly on the ground. There's formation and reformation of alliances between different groups. What was very interesting to me is that there's now a concerted systematic effort by commanders in displaced camp after displaced camp. They're going systematically, camp by camp, saying that we should be focused on ideas, not on factions or individual people in terms of leaders. We want them to participate. We need them to negotiate. But this really is about the people of Darfur. It's not about one particular personality or one particular movement versus another. There is a sense that I did not see in previous visits of identity of the IDP camps political movement, not so much as a faction, but the sense that the people who suffered the most or the people who've lost their homes, the 2.6 million people who are in those camps. And they have a sense of identity that I didn't see exist before. I have asked other people in the UN and the NGO community whether my two-day visit was -- did I get a distorted view and they said, no, they're seeing exactly the same thing. People particularly who live there and who are working there.

And I think finally, that there is a sense in those camps that there needs to be a political settlement because if there isn't, people are going to lose their land and people are worried about that and I think that political settlement is one way of ensuring that people can go back to their villages and get their land back.

If there are any questions, I'd be glad to answer them.

**OPERATOR:** If you would like to take a question -- I'm sorry, if you would like to ask a question, you may press star, then 1 at this time. Please record your first and last name to announce your question. One moment for the first question, please.

Michelle Kelemen, your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Yes, hi. I wanted to ask -- I know you talked about this not being about --

**MR. NATSIOS:** Can you tell me what -- just what --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, it's Michelle Kelemen with National Public Radio.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Okay, fine.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. You talked about this not being about a particular person, that this is about a lot of -- about the people of Darfur. But there's been a lot of focus recently --

**MR. NATSIOS:** That's actually not what I said; it's what they're saying in the camps.

**QUESTION:** There's been a lot of focus on this man Suleiman Jamous.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Mia Farrow even offered to go into prison if he is released and I wonder if you see him as a key player and if you've asked the Sudanese to let him out.

**MR. NATSIOS:** I met with Suleiman Jamous for about four or five hours. I think it was up in the desert, you know, right on the edge of the Sahara Desert. I think it was back in early 2005, so I know Suleiman. I was very impressed with him then because some of the younger commanders didn't quite understand the humanitarian principles that we operate under when we provide assistance to people. And he explained it to them in a very clear way, which meant he understood it.

Since then, I have -- I recognize there's been an issue over the -- his being in a Egyptian military hospital in -- I think it's in Kordofan, actually. And I asked President Bashir, as did Jan Eliasson and Salim Salim earlier this year, to release him. And we had a discussion about it. I said -- President Bashir said that he was willing to release him and Lam Akol, the Foreign Minister, affirmed that, when political negotiations begin. And they wanted some guarantee that he would be constructive in the process and not cause more division or factionalism.

I called Suleiman -- I think it was in April or May -- and we had a very long conversation. And he assured me that he would continue to play the constructive role that we know he had been playing in terms of trying to unite rebel commanders and trying to reunify the movements that started the rebellion rather than divide them further. And so I think he has played a constructive role. I have spoken recently at senior levels of both UN officials and Sudanese Government officials and I think there is a willingness to discuss this seriously because we are now at the beginning of the political negotiations.

Arusha was, in fact, the beginning of the political process, so given that and given the commitment that the Sudanese Government made to me in March, I think that this would be a good time for it, but we want to have some conversations about it.

**QUESTION:** Was the fact that he wasn't there in Arusha problematic or do you think --

**MR. NATSIOS:** It appears that the outcome was what we wanted, which was a unified rebel negotiating position. All the factions agreed to it. His commanders were there. And in fact, if you read the final communiqué of the conference, he had mentioned it and in there, they asked for his release. And so we're going to do what we agreed to earlier and that is to continue to raise it with the Sudanese Government. I think there's going to be some movement on this based on conversations we've had.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**OPERATOR:** The next question is from Bill Varner of Bloomberg News. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hi, Mr. Natsios.

**MR. NATSIOS:** How are you?

**QUESTION:** Fine, thank you. Just a couple things. One, what is your view of the Sudanese Government's approach to all this, their willingness to participate in negotiations? They've been very forward-looking and so forth in -- you know, how they feel about this, what's going on. And also, can you -- to what degree can you be more specific about the timetable? We've heard the next two or three months. What's -- sort of, what's the next meeting and -- you know, where and when, you know, how nailed down is a timetable for proceeding?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, what was agreed to at Arusha was that the meeting would take place no sooner than two months and no later than three months, which places it in October. And so I expect that the conference will begin sometime in October. I'm hoping a lot of issues can be resolved prior to the conference actually being held face-to-face. You know, people assume that the only way you can have peace is if there's a big meeting and thousands of people are there and the news media and all that. Actually, the best way to resolve a crisis is to do a lot of background work to resolve a lot of the issues that aren't really that contentious.

In my conversations with the Sudanese leadership over the last nine months, it's clear they want a settlement; they want something that's implementable. Now, they may have a different definition of that than I do, or that the U.S. Government does, but they want a settlement and I think they told me they're going to be flexible. And from the comments I've heard privately about individual issues -- without me going into them, because I don't want to negotiate this in front of the media -- it is clear that they're willing to go beyond what they agreed to in the Abuja negotiations last April.

So, so far they've been flexible. They said they'll be flexible. They look like they're not putting any preconditions on these meetings. But when we get to the actual negotiations, I'm sure both sides are going to be intractable on certain issues. We'll have to play it by ear as things unfold.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Other questions. Hello.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Okay, I think if we don't have any additional questions, that may be the last --

**QUESTION:** Sorry, can you hear me? It's Zain Vergee from CNN. I wouldn't mind a question.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Go ahead, Zain.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Mr. Natsios, I know Mia Farrow isn't critical to the negotiation process, but I wouldn't mind just your thoughts on what you think of the whole prisoners swap idea. Is it just foolish or is it just an attempt to --

**MR. NATSIOS:** I actually -- I'm embarrassed to tell you I don't know what you're talking about. Prisoner swap?

**QUESTION:** Mia Farrow wants to take the place of Suleiman Jamous, and she wrote an open letter to President Bashir. So, just, you know, but that's one part of my question.

**MR. NATSIOS:** I just want to say, I have to be very candid with you. I think that the political situation is really gone beyond now -- it wasn't earlier. When we were dealing with the Abuja talks last year, there was a real need for specific political leaders because the sense of political consciousness had really not developed among the population to the degree that it has now; just, you know, people being in these camps for so long, they don't have a lot to do. What they talk about is politics.

So there is a real sense of what people want right now, and it's -- this common negotiating position really does represent, from what I've heard I've about it; what I heard in the camps. And so my point to you is: While it's useful to get older men like Suleiman Jamous released, it really -- we shouldn't focus on personalities, we should be focusing on the issues.

**QUESTION:** One other question is about China. What kind of work are you doing on any kinds of discussions you're having specifically with China in all of this, which, as you know, has the most leverage over Sudan.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Right. We're not at the point where the Sudanese have said they're going to stonewall the negotiations or anything like that. So I'm hoping that the Chinese can play a role in the negotiations as we go along when we reach an impasse. But we're not at that point yet. And so my discussions with Ambassador Lu, who's my counterpart in the Chinese Government, a special envoy for Darfur -- and I have had long conversations -- and he is very flexible on the role China could play in terms

of the negotiations when they actually begin in earnest. But we're not at the point yet. There's no impasse over a specific issue that would require leverage on any of the sides.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Other questions?

**OPERATOR:** Yes, the next question is from Sue Fleming of Reuters.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Sue, how are you?

**QUESTION:** The question that I had was concerning the ICC and whether the criminal court and whether the Sudanese Government has indicated to you whether they will be prepared at one stage or another to hand over some of the suspects such as Ahmed Haroun and also this Janjaweed militia leader. Now, the Sudanese Government has said that they are refusing to act on both of these warrants because they say there's no evidence against the pair. And also they point out that the U.S. is not an ICC signatory, so they don't feel under much pressure. Just wondering if you had any comment on that?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, the fact is that the Security Council actually has acted on this matter, so it goes beyond the question of the ICC itself. I believe some of the earlier Security Council resolutions did deal with the issue of our cooperation or lack of cooperation. And I'm going to leave it at that in terms of what the U.S. position is because it's in those resolutions already.

In terms of conversations on this issue, I didn't feel empowered to talk for the ICC about any specific request to get any particular people out. I know there've been conversations with them, but I didn't. So I haven't done any negotiating with the Sudanese Government about any particular people being released or, you know, sent to The Hague.

**QUESTION:** But isn't this a key issue in terms of -- well, I mean, this is one area where the Sudanese Government is very sensitive there, along with sanctions and other things, this -- you know, that's sort of being -- becoming a pariah -- being very --

**MR. NATSIOS:** I'm sure that they are very sensitive about this. I've heard lots of stories, but they're always secondhand about what the reaction was when the indictments were made. But you really have to ask someone who's more expert in this than I am.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then just one more thing. In terms of UN peacekeeping plans, as far as you're concerned, do you think that they'll be ready by the end of the year when they're meant to be in place?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, we're not going to get -- whatever the number -- 20,000 more troops, plus these formed police units, which would make up around 26,000 total by December 31st. That's never been -- well, basically, that's never been the plan and that's not what the debate was over. The debate was over how fast we can have UN funding take effect and UN command and control. What's the date that that takes place on? I have no doubt that they'll have it -- those systems in place by December 31st. We are hoping, though, that even though that's the date that's in the resolution, that they will be able to establish UN command and control and UN funding prior to that date. We're urging the UN to try to move this up as rapidly as possible because there's a funding issue with the AU and there are issues with -- in terms of the cost of the operation and where the funding is going to come from. And also the way in which the commands are being given and all that. So that needs to happen as soon as possible. We support that in terms of the U.S. Government and we're hoping we can move it up. But I'm sure that by December 31st, those things can be in place.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Thank you.

**MR. NATSIOS:** But just to conclude, Sue, we're not going to get all those troops in place by that date. It's going to be phased in over time. A number of countries have, in fact, volunteered troops and there's going to be a systematic effort now -- and it's already begun -- United States Government, Secretary Rice gave instructions to our ambassadors around the world to make inquiry, once the formal UN appeal goes out for a troop contributing countries that we will help with that process.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Thanks.

**OPERATOR:** The next question is from Charles Wolfson of CBS. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hi, Andrew.

**MR. NATSIOS:** How are you, Charlie?

**QUESTION:** Good. Just to follow up on one loose end on the troops, understanding that they won't be in by December 31, is there a rough target date of how long it will take to get the full complement of the troops in?

**MR. NATSIOS:** I don't know that. I mean, that's something you'd have to ask Jean-Marie Guéhenno. I've seen various dates, but I don't want to quote them because it's a UN figure, not my figure. But troops will start to come in by the end of the year. It's just we're not going to get all 20,000 of them in by December 31. I think everybody realizes that.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And switching back to the political side, you seem to stress strongly at the beginning of this call how Arusha was the beginning of the political process. Whatever happened to Abuja in that regard and what is -- do you have more hope for the Arusha process than, you know, you did for Abuja when that was taking place?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, first, we all agreed November 16th in Addis, when Kofi Annan and Konare chaired this very famous meeting where we set out both the political process, the humanitarian principles and the whole three-phased peacekeeping force that would go in. And if you read that document, what it says is the basis for peace in Darfur is going to be the Darfur Peace Agreement that was negotiated in Abuja last year. So that's the foundation, but there are issues that were not dealt with adequately to satisfy some of the factions -- the factions and that's why they didn't sign. And that's the -- when I say the political process, it's really basically a continuation of what was started last year. There are issues with the rebels in terms of that document, because there was a sense that that document did not have the support of the public in Darfur and I think that's why it's so important to have civil society involved in this, so that they have a sense of ownership or whatever comes out of this process.

**QUESTION:** Okay. All right, thanks.

**OPERATOR:** Okay. The next question is from Farah Stockman of *The Boston Globe*. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hi, thanks for being with us. I just wanted to ask whether or not you expected most of those 26,000 to be from African countries. It looks like Sudan, even today, has made some remarks -- Sudanese officials have made some remarks about how, you know, their sovereignty is not going to be infringed upon and it seems to be very important to them that the troops be from Africa and I'm just wondering is that realistic. Do you have a sense of whether --

**MR. NATSIOS:** The agreement that was reached by Ban Ki-moon with President Bashir and with the Sudanese Government that was announced publicly says that we will have an African force commander, Luther Agwai, I think is his name, was the former chief of staff for the Nigerian military. He's worked as a senior commander of UN peacekeeping forces before. He's worked in the PKO -- with the PKO before -- in office UNDPKO, the peacekeeping office at the UN, and he's in place already. And he is going to command the entire UN/AU force. So that's already done and that's one of the things they were very concerned about, that an African commander be in charge and that's happened already.

Two, we are going to try to -- the international community -- recruit from Africa, but it's very clear from already talking to African leaders and African military that there are not enough African troops that are trained in peacekeeping operations to make up this force. And Kofi Annan made that clear to President Bashir and so did Jean-Marie Guéhenno at a lower level. He is the head of UNDPKO. And Ban Ki-moon has done the same thing. So I think there is an understanding in the Sudanese Government that we're going to go -- have to go outside of Africa. This is a sensitive issue internally within certain constituencies of the Sudanese Government. And so they're going to keep repeating these things. But an agreement has been reached and the -- and we expect the Sudanese Government is going to implement what they've agreed to, which is that if we can't get sufficient trained troops, we will go outside of Africa, which I have to say I expect is going to happen.

**QUESTION:** I guess I'm just wondering is whether there'll be another hitch that will cause resistance or whether -- I mean, would it surprise you if they did raise some kind of last-ditch account to prevent this force from going in?

**MR. NATSIOS:** One, nothing in Sudan surprises me, after having dealt with it for so long. Two, there is a history of Sudanese on this issue -- Sudanese Government on this issue -- on these kinds of issues. But three, and more importantly, the whole world's eyes now are on Sudan and on Darfur and I don't think any of you are going to allow the world community to take their eyes off of Darfur. And so that is going to be the biggest, it seems to me, constraint on any backsliding. President Bush has said and so has Dr. Rice that if there is an attempt to renegotiate what was negotiated already with the Sudanese Government, then we will present a sanctions resolution before the UN. And I'm just simply quoting what the President has said. I don't think that's going to happen. I think the Sudanese are going to be cooperative because of the amount of pressure they're under and I think they've run out of options in terms of how to resolve this. But we'll see. I'm always cautious in making predictions on Sudan.

Any other questions?

**OPERATOR:** The next question is from Adam Graham-Silverman. Your line is open, sir.

**QUESTION:** Hi. Thanks. This is Adam Graham-Silverman with CQ. I have two questions for you. First of all, the Congress came pretty close to clearing a new set of sanctions on Sudan before they went on for their recess and may do so when they come back. I'm wondering if you think this progress officiates the need for that type of action.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, you know, I don't know exactly the precise wording of the latest document or the latest piece of legislation before the Congress. It would have to be in terms of presidential discretion. They simply can't impose things by -- there has to be some enforcement mechanism that gives us some discretion in the Administration. I think simply randomly imposing sanctions without them being tied to specific benchmarks doesn't make a lot of sense from a political standpoint or from a security standpoint. What we want is certain actions to take place on the ground. We want protection for civilians. We want attacks against non-combatants to stop. We want villages no longer to be burned. We want the aid effort to be protected. And when those things happen, then there's no reason for us to impose sanctions. When they don't happen and we know the Sudanese Government is blocking the realization of some of these benchmarks, then that's the time to put some sanctions in place. So I think the critical element is not so much what the sanctions are, is how they are tied to specific benchmarks in terms of actions on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Okay. The other question, you talked about this hybrid force creating the political space for an agreement to be reached, but you also pointed out, you know, the rebels aren't going to turn over their weapons to the government and nor will the militias. And given that, you know -- I guess I'm wondering how effective will the force be at creating that space, given their limited mandate that can, you know, that can't seize weapons for example.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, actually if you read the UN Security Council resolution very carefully, it says that the Darfur Peace Agreement can be enforced. If you remember that, that's one of the three things that they can do. And the Darfur peace agreement calls for the disarmament of the Janjaweed. It's already in the existing DPA, which the government has signed, endorses and supports. So that in fact by implication there is a provision calling for disarmament in the existing resolution.

**QUESTION:** So you do think, I'm just curious about how this military force does create the political space of its primary objective as (inaudible) and --

**MR. NATSIOS:** Is what?

**QUESTION:** -- if their primary objective is --

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, if you read the Security Council resolution, there are three circumstances under which they can use force. One is to protect themselves, that's obvious, under Chapter 7. Under Chapter 7, they may enforce a peace; the existing peace agreement plus any other new peace agreement. So a lot of provisions that require the peacekeeping forces' intervention in the peace agreement to get enforced already, even if we don't negotiate anything further, which, of course, we're going to.

The third thing is the protection of civilians. So there are provisions in it calling for the carrying out of our implementation of a peace agreement that's in the resolution, if you read it.

**QUESTION:** I mean -- and you think that's sufficient to create the space for a political agreement?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay, thanks.

**MR. NATSIOS:** I have to say, I think there's going to be a ceasefire; a real ceasefire, not a fake one, because there have been dozens of ceasefires that are simply on paper. The rebels and the government have got to stop fighting. There needs to be no more bombings of any kind by the Sudanese Government. But the rebels have to cease all military activity, and sometimes they don't. You know, usually it is the government's fault, but sometimes the rebels are at fault.

**QUESTION:** Okay, thank you.

**OPERATOR:** Larry Luxner with *The Washington Diplomat*, your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Natsios. Could you please say a few words about the Tripoli conference you attended, and more specifically, the role of the Government of Libya in trying to help negotiate a settlement to the crisis in Darfur?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Yes. I have been working with Ali Treki, who is a former Foreign Minister of Libya, and we've been talking on a regular basis. We worked -- I visited Libya, now, three times. He has been very helpful, and the Libyan Government has been very helpful and been constructive in trying to get one, the regional players to work with the United Nations and under the United Nations and African Union leadership.

So I think the Libyans have sponsored two of these conferences now. They have been -- we've moved forward in those conferences. The last Tripoli conference is what led to the Arusha meeting that just concluded, and also led to the notion of the participation of civil society in the peace negotiations and that we have a strong role for all the regional players, which is to say, Libya and Chad and Eritrea and Egypt. And we appreciate that help.

**QUESTION:** Is there indication that Libya's help in this regard to -- go a long way toward improving its own relations with the United States?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, it's certainly not hurting. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR. NATSIOS:** I think it's helping.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Thank you.

**MR. NATSIOS:** And anyone else have a question?

**OPERATOR:** The next question is from David Sands. Please announce your affiliation, sir.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, hi. David Sands, *The Washington Times*. Can you just talk about the absence of Abdul Al-Nour from the recent rebel conference? And are you working with him or trying -- is the U.S. doing anything to try to get him to come in to the peace talks?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, if you read the communiqué of the Arusha talks, you'll see that the 45 people who were there agreed, or encouraged, anyone who didn't attend to sign on to the unified position that was agreed to by all these forces at this meeting. And I think by implication that means Abdul Wahed. Abdul Wahed's military commanders -- many of them were there. So while Abdul Wahed himself did not participate, the fact of the matter is his commanders did, and they have a lot of influence in the camps and they have a lot of influence with the Fur people who, of course, are about 70 percent of the people who are in the displaced camps. So they are ethnically Fur.

Abdul Wahed certainly helped start the rebellion, but I think, really, this has moved beyond personalities, at this point. And it's more focused on what the issues are. Certainly it's important; it would be useful to have Abdul Wahed involved, but he chooses not to be involved, then there's going to be a peace agreement, I think, one way or the other.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**OPERATOR:** The next question is from Parameswaran. Please announce your affiliation.

**QUESTION:** Parameswaran Agence France-Presse. Mr. Natsios --

**MR. NATSIOS:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** You spoke of the need for a so-called real ceasefire. When do you see the prospects of such a ceasefire and do you see it coming soon?

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, that's something that the rebels and the government are going to have to agree to face-to-face. There is a mechanism in place that was agreed to and negotiated and signed. It's the -- actually, the only other agreement other than Abuja that was signed between the rebels and the government in March of 2004 that establishes a mechanism for enforcement of a ceasefire, so that's already in place.

I think the government has to do this. It's -- we've been pressing them. Every time I meet with them, I tell them we need a ceasefire, we need a ceasefire. So does Jan Eliasson, so does Salim Salim. The question is whether everybody will exercise the discipline necessary to simply stop fighting. That's the way we got the progress we did in Southern Sudan. I think if we had not had a cessation of hostilities in Southern Sudan, we wouldn't have the CPA now.

**QUESTION:** And Mr. Natsios, just a quick one. On the -- going by what you said (inaudible) by the Sudanese Government to really bring about a resolution to this crisis, do you see any immediate prospects of the United States removing Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list?

**MR. NATSIOS:** I think that -- and again, I said this to leaders in Sudan and on all of my trips, that the only way there's going to be an improvement in relations between Sudan and the United States, generally or on these specific issues like the one you just mentioned, is after we resolve Darfur and after we have a full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and the South.

Those are the two issues that are preeminent in our relationship. And without a resolution of those two issues, without implementation of the CPA and a implemented DPA, a Darfur peace agreement, it's going to be very difficult politically in the United States to propose any specific measures that would improve our relationship with the Sudanese Government. I've told them that privately and I'm reiterating it publicly now.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, sir.

**OPERATOR:** And the last question we have in queue is a follow-up from Michele Kelemen. Ma'am, your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Yes, sorry, I just wanted to ask very quickly about the peacekeeping force; what the U.S. is planning to do to help make that happen and to get them there. I understand the U.S. is in arrears with the DPKO.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Well, I mean, the dues for the DPKO are paid for by an assessed contribution that is required under the UN Charter. It's not something that's voluntary. Some UN agencies are voluntary and some are not. The peacekeeping force is not voluntary. I think my memory is we still paid about 26 percent of that. We're the largest donor by far in the international community to peacekeeping operations, generally. So we will pay this -- they estimate that this is going to cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 billion a year and the United States will be paying 26 percent of that, which is -- you know, in the -- a ballpark \$500 million a year.

We did provide logistic support to move the African troops that formed the AMIS force, the African Union force. That was to say we provided transportation, I think, through NATO, but U.S. did provide logistics. We have observers there now and if they call on us to do that again, I am sure the Administration will take it -- you know, into consideration and be cooperative. I don't see us -- and I don't think most people suggest that we send U.S. combat troops to Darfur. I think there's several reasons why that would not be a very good idea.

One is that we are not perceived as a neutral force by both sides and the UN force is supposed to be there as a neutral force. We're seen by one side as favoring another side. I mean, I don't have to go into the details of what that means. Number two, the United States does not typically participate in many peacekeeping forces, as you may or may not know, anywhere in the world. We just don't do that. We do other things whether -- when there is actual combat operations needed, for example, in the 1990s

in the Balkans, in Kosovo and in Bosnia.

And third, I think also -- there's also an issue of the fear in the Sudanese Government that there's another agenda behind the extremely aggressive American position on this issue. There's a fear that the purpose of all of this is to send American troops into occupied parts of Sudan. And I think if we sent troops in, it would simply feed that fear, if we contributed troops. I don't -- it's not going to happen. I don't see it happening. It would not be a good idea from the perspective of the peacekeeping force and it would not facilitate the political process; in fact, it would undermine it. I know there are a few people calling for it, but most people I think who know what's going on, who understand the issues realize it's not a very good idea.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**OPERATOR:** At this time, we have no further questions in queue.

**MR. NATSIOS:** Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Thank you, Andrew. You have a safe vacation.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Yeah, bye.

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