



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
January 5, 2009

Statement by National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley

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Today, President Bush announced his approval of the airlift of equipment for the United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The President also authorized the waiver of the 15-day congressional notification requirements to allow the airlift assistance to proceed immediately, because failing to do so would pose a substantial risk to human health and welfare.

The U.S. provision of airlift will deliver equipment and vehicles that are critical to the UNAMID deployment, and will thus help UNAMID directly protect civilian lives and improve the safe and effective delivery of lifesaving humanitarian aid to areas of west Darfur currently inaccessible due to security concerns.

Today's announcement is further evidence that Nicholas Kristof's portrayal last week of this Administration's response to the genocide in Darfur (A New Chance for Darfur, December 28, 2008) was inaccurate. President Bush has been committed to resolving the crisis there since the United States first labeled it genocide in 2004. Even prior to the Darfur crisis, the President showed his commitment to the cause of peace in Sudan by pressing for a historic peace agreement between the North and South that ended the country's 22-year civil war which took more than two million lives.

The President has named three special envoys to advance peace in Sudan: Senator John Danforth, who helped achieved the North-South peace and initiated our efforts on Darfur; followed by the appointment of Andrew Natsios, and finally the appointment of Rich Williamson in January 2008. Prior to Williamson's appointment, more robust military options were considered by the President for Darfur. The decision not to pursue those options was driven by the pleas of the leading church, advocacy, and humanitarian organizations dedicated to Darfur, who argued that United States military action would imperil their ability to deliver the kinds of life saving assistance that continues to keep more than 3.5 million Darfuris alive each year. Experts within the U.S. Agency for International Development were making similar arguments, as was the African Union, which at the time had more than 7,000 peacekeepers deployed across Darfur. And in a meeting just this month with a leading Darfuri human rights activist, the message was once again reiterated that U.S. military action would only worsen the situation for the very people we are trying to save.

This is not to say that increasing pressure on the Government of Sudan to relent in its campaign of violence is not a crucial element of U.S. policy toward Sudan. It is. U.S. financial sanctions against Sudan are among the toughest we have. Over the last five years, hundreds of millions of dollars in Sudanese transactions have been blocked or disrupted. Last year, the President further tightened these measures, announcing sanctions against dozens of companies tied to the Bashir regime or linked to violence in Darfur. Sudanese companies lost access to international markets and financing, including one of the regime's primary bankers in Europe. Within months of this action, the Sudanese government relented in its opposition to allowing United Nations peacekeepers to deploy to Darfur.

Unilateral pressure alone cannot be our policy. And it is not. That is why we are working closely with the United Nations to ensure that the peacekeepers are actually deployed and that they are trained and equipped effectively to carry out their mandate. It is also why we are supporting the work of the U.N./AU Mediator, Djibril Bassole, who has slowly gained the trust and confidence of government officials and rebel leaders alike. Bassole knows that, regrettably there are no silver bullets or quick fixes to this great human tragedy. The United States will continue to lead the international community to stand by the people of Darfur and to deploy and support the U.N. peacekeeping operation.

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