

With nearly 2 million deaths, war must end in southern Sudan

by Linda de Hoyos

A renewed drive for an escalated war against the government of Sudan has been launched over December-January by circles in the United States around Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Susan Rice and Roger Winter, executive director of the U.S. Committee on Refugees. The renewed campaign for war was announced in mid-December with the U.S. Committee for Refugees' report: "Quantifying Genocide in Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains 1983-1998." The document, prepared by Millard Burr, a former director of logistics operations for the U.S. Agency for International Development, stated that a total of 1.9 million southern Sudanese have died during the course of the war in southern Sudan, which has continued since 1983. The report purports to update the previous figure of a similar paper written by Burr and released by the Committee in October 1993, which said that 1.3 million people had died in the war in the decade of 1983-93. The 1.9 million total includes not only those killed through military operations; the vast majority of the dead were not killed, but died of starvation resulting from famine caused by the war, the report states.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees, however, is not using its latest body count in order to pursue a policy of peace. Instead, the report and the timing of its release are the start of a renewed drive to demand more logistics and political commitment from the U.S. government for yet another attempt to "bring down the Khartoum government."

Jeff Drumtra, a policy analyst for the U.S. Committee for Refugees, told Voice of America on Dec. 12 that "fighting will resume and intensify this spring," at which point, he predicted, the Sudan government will block relief shipments to the famine-afflicted population. The Committee is therefore demanding that the UN Security Council declare all of southern Sudan "a humanitarian autonomous zone," supposedly to permit aid to flow to the southern population. As reported by Voice of America, Drumtra "acknowledges that the proposal raises difficult issues of sovereignty and enforcement. But in this catastrophic situation, he adds, it is time to think about changing the rules."

It is to be expected that the Committee and its backers that it will soon be pushing for a "no-fly zone" over southern Sudan as well, except for relief planes, in order to block the

Sudanese government from using its Air Force against the recalcitrant Sudanese People's Liberation Army, which the Committee supports.

On Jan. 14, John Garang, chairman of the SPLA, which has rejected all peace offers from Khartoum, will be in Washington to address a closed-door conference of the U.S. Institute for Peace on the Sudan war. It can be expected that Garang's visit will be the focus for a renewed drive by Winter et al. to ram through a policy of overt and lavish U.S. military and other backing to Garang, the implementation of the "humanitarian autonomous zone" by the United States through the UN Security Council; and other measures that will permit Garang to gain some kind of military standing in the south.

The direct funding of Garang by the United States and the use of famine and death in southern Sudan to destroy Sudan's national sovereignty has been the major theme of the intervention by relief agencies, led by Winter, who runs their U.S. government funding in his capacity as chairman of the Inter-Action Council of NGOs, since the war began.

With the war going into its 16th year, however, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and its allies are not operating from a position of policy strength.

In September 1997, Winter and his cohorts Ted Dagne of the Congressional Research Service and John Prendergast of the U.S. National Security Council, demanded a policy of full-scale war against the Sudan government, predicting that "Khartoum will fall by December." After six weeks of debate within the State Department, the war party "won," as Prendergast informed an audience at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in November. Inside Africa, the decision was followed in January 1998, by an invasion of Sudan from both Ethiopia and Eritrea, and also Uganda. It failed. Again, in September 1998, Ugandan and SPLA forces invaded Sudan with heavy tanks and equipment, but failed to make any military headway.

Winter stated at the U.S. Institute for Peace conference in September 1997 that it was necessary to wage war against Sudan, "even though I know it will cause a humanitarian catastrophe." That humanitarian catastrophe occurred, and ironically is fully documented in the Millard Burr body-count

report: “The loss of civilian life has generally occurred here and there, usually in small numbers, and in thousands of settlements from the Nile River watershed to Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile to the southern frontier. *Perhaps the most dreadful single episode was the famine that struck Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998. As this study is being completed, reports circulate that tens of thousands of southern Sudanese have died*” (emphasis added).

How many of them, mostly women, children, and the elderly, would be alive today, if Winter, Prendergast, Rice et al. had not “won” the debate in September-November 1997, and the United States instead had pursued a policy of peace in southern Sudan?

The time for peace is now

The course of the war effort, being directed out of the State Department by Rice, has proven to be an unmitigated failure. The SPLA has made no significant military gains. The switching of SPLA former leader Kerubino Kuanyin Bol from the government side to re-join the SPLA in April, was the major cause of the famine in Bahr al-Ghazal, even according to such traditionally anti-Sudan sources as Human Rights Watch. The SPLA was closer in 1985 to taking the southern capital city of Juba than it is today.

In addition, the coalition of Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea that had been cobbled together by British intelligence and the Rice nexus in the United States fell to pieces in May, when Ethiopia was invaded by Eritrea. Attempts by Rice and U.S. Special Envoy Anthony Lake to patch the alliance back together for purposes of targetting Sudan, have failed.

Any rational appraisal would lead to the conclusion that many southern Sudanese had already reached when they signed the April 21, 1997, peace accord with the government: *There is no military solution to the war in southern Sudan. There must be a negotiated settlement.* This was the conclusion reached by four relief agencies in October 1998—Save the Children, Oxfam International, Doctors Without Borders, and Care International. In joint statements, the agencies—all of which were part of the UN’s Operation Lifeline relief airlift in Sudan—issued a call to the UN and to “regional and other governments” to effect a “gear change” in attitude toward the war, and force through a meaningful negotiating process.

The same conclusion is being reached among the opponents of the Sudan government in the northern part of the country. In an interview with the Sudan News Agency on Dec. 2 from Cairo, former President Ja’far Muhammad Numayri declared that he was for the “national accord that is based on specific principles which are agreed upon by all the former political and partisan forces and the Salvation government,” SUNA quoted Numayri as saying: “Disputes and the use of force will never contribute in solving the problems facing the nation, but will, on the contrary, weaken the homeland and scatter its resources.” He further said that the principle of

federalism, as being implemented by the Khartoum government (see accompanying interview) had his full support as being “vital for the solution of all the controversial issues facing the homeland.”

The body-count report

While the quantification of deaths in the report released by the U.S. Committee and conditions on the ground lead to the conclusion that the war has run its course and must be brought to an end, that is not the report’s intent, as the report’s fallacies of composition show.

First, it is assumed throughout, that Khartoum is responsible for all deaths, no matter the actual cause of death. The report attributes the deaths of thousands of people to Sudan Air Force bombing raids, but then states: “The number of civilian deaths directly attributed to the Sudan Air Force air attacks is numbered in the several hundreds. Indirectly, however, the number of deaths that can be attributed to the bombing campaign is numbered in the tens of thousands.” The report claims that the actual intent of the air attacks “was to drive villagers from their homes. Once villagers were displaced, tens of thousands of aged, sick, and malnourished perished as they moved from site to site to escape *the conflict*” (emphasis added).

The report’s documentation shows conclusively that the major causes of death have been famine and disease, for which the SPLA must be held at least equally accountable, for waging a no-win war while its opponent was ready to negotiate.

The report’s cataloguing of incidents of actual war also show the war is now essentially a civil war within southern Sudan itself. This has been the case throughout the 1990s, when the SPLA leadership command structure broke down in the face of Garang’s methods. However, since 1997, many of the groups that had formerly combined in the SPLA have signed a peace accord with the government. This raises the question: Why won’t John Garang come to the negotiating table and seek a meaningful end to “the conflict” which has caused the deaths of so many Sudanese—not through bullets, but through famine and disease it has caused?

The answer lies not with Mr. Garang himself. The answer lies in those who have goaded all forces onward for war, “even though it will cause a humanitarian catastrophe.” Without the logistical and political support mustered for Garang by Winter et al., the war would have been ended. *EIR* investigations have shown that Winter, along with a “relief agency” called Norwegian Peoples Aid, have been directly working to militarily aid Garang and keep the war going—whatever the cost to human life.

Given the measures taken by the Sudan government for peace, and given the manifest inefficacy of further prosecution of the war, it is hard to escape the conclusion that those in Washington and London who are demanding the war be escalated, are, in fact, actively seeking to increase the body count as a goal in itself.