

United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Sudan Experience Project

Interview #4 – Executive Summary

Interviewer: Barbara Nielsen
Date of Interview: April 6, 2006
Copyright ADST & USIP 2006

This interviewee spent several months in Sudan, from July, 2005 – September, 2005. His mandate could best be described as working to keep the CPA on track, in an environment which he describes as “the most complicated account” he had ever worked with. The interviewee notes that both the U.S. and the Sudanese practiced a kind of diplomacy that has a long history in the Middle East, referred to as the politics of the “hair of Muhawieh,” referring to the 7th century Caliph of that name. The principle of this politics is not to break the strand that joins two parties, even though it may be a slender thread. If one side pulls, the other loosens, and vice versa. Thus, even while the U.S. - Sudanese relationship was not very good, the US never broke relations, and both sides practiced this kind of diplomacy. In the view of this interviewee, the most significant strand now uniting the two countries is the CPA, outranking in importance even the bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism.

Stressing that US policy is not to prejudge the outcome of the referendum on Southern independence provided for in the CPA, the interviewee notes that currently both Northerners and Southerners are divided on the question. During his tenure, the interviewee mentions several positive developments within the CPA framework. A Unity cabinet was formed fairly rapidly and Northern forces withdrew from Juba as scheduled. In addition, while the death of John Garang was a severe blow and outbreaks of serious violence occurred in Khartoum in the aftermath, both sides decided not to let that event scuttle the accords. They showed a remarkable ability to cooperate, for example, in orchestrating his funeral.

Difficulties in implementing the CPA abound, however, ranging from the need to start from zero to establish a government infrastructure in the South, to an apparent lack of transparency in accounting for development and reconstruction funds there. The interviewee notes that on balance, though, the high degree of specificity in the CPA, which provides explicit timelines and clear descriptions of how criteria are to be met, is an encouraging factor to help ensure compliance.

With respect to the effect on the CPA of the conflict in Darfur, the interviewee observes that neither side wants to let Darfur become a deal breaker for the CPA and government of national unity. The interviewee concludes with the recommendation that the U.S. Government, since it is committed to making the CPA process and Government of National Unity succeed, recognize the need for a permanent Chargé or Ambassador.

Taking this step would not, as some have argued, reward the Khartoum government for its behavior, but rather it would recognize the depth of our commitment and the fact that our engagement will be significant and long-term.

United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Sudan Experience Project

Interview # 4

*Interviewer: Barbara Nielsen
Date of Interview: April 6, 2006
Copyright ADST & USIP 2006*

Q: Before we speak specifically about the implementation, I want to ask you what you thought were the primary incentives for the Sudanese government to agree to the CPA after many years of tough negotiations.

A: As I mentioned, I was not party to the negotiations. I came very late to the whole process, but it was certainly obvious that there was no military solution to the civil war which had gone on for so long and also, starting actually several years earlier, the Sudanese government in Khartoum had undertaken an effort of rapprochement with the United States. They had been in the mid to late '90s in just about every penalty box that we had, including being on the wrong side during the first Gulf War. They decided and embarked on a campaign to try to work their way out of these penalty boxes. It was by fits and starts, and I can't say that relations are all that good, but I would say they probably reached a low point about 1998 after the bombings in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam. In that sense, for the Sudanese, there was no where to go but up and certainly pursuing these negotiations from a number of points of view was in their interests.

Q: I was interested to have you affirm that, because, when we look at what happened subsequently you have to wonder whether the Sudanese are going to pay lip service to the agreement or whether they are really committed to it, and how that will affect the implementation of the accord. So, you arrived in Sudan in July, 2005?

A: Early July, just in time for the 4th of July reception.

Q: Would you describe your mandate with respect to the implementation of the CPA and how that played out during the time you were there?

A: Well, it was a modest mandate because I wasn't there very long. I was another in a series of TDY charges who had been sent out. In the absence of ambassadors it was decided that we needed representation at a senior level, but there was still no decision to go with long-term representation either at the level of ambassador or permanent charge. The first question that the Sudanese asked me or everyone asked me when I arrived was "oh, you're the latest, how long are you going to stay?"

Q: It was known that you would be there for a fixed period of three months?

A: I did not make that widely known. To have done so, I think, would have undercut my own mission. It was known to just a few people. It was certainly known back here. It was known to my family, but I did not make it widely known there because if I wanted the Sudanese to take me seriously I couldn't say, "oh, I'm the latest and by the way I'll only be here for a very short time." It was a short time, but it was a very eventful three months. I think I had more in that three months than you usually get in most three year tours.

Q: I know about the visit of Condoleezza Rice during that time, but relate your experience to what was going on with the CPA.

A: Well, I arrived the 3rd of July. I had had about a week to 10 days of sort of "firehose drinking" consultations here in Washington, enough to realize how much I did not know, to affirm what I already knew, which is I didn't know very much about Sudan and it was a very complicated account. As I said, I arrived the day before our 4th of July. We had a congressional delegation visiting at the time. Less than a week later, Deputy Secretary Zoellick and his delegation arrived to be represented at the ceremonies, the inauguration ceremonies for the new CPA, at which John Garang was sworn in as first Vice President. He arrived in the capital just a few days after I did and that was a very emotional and very symbolic event in Sudanese history. The first thing that struck me was as I left the airport. I saw banners in town in Arabic welcoming John Garang. It was a little bit like if you would see in Washington in the 1860s banners welcoming the visit of Robert E. Lee or Jeff Davis to town.

Q: Tell us some more of the atmosphere and why John Garang's coming to town was such a symbolically important event.

A: Well, he had been in rebellion since the '80s. He'd been leading the rebellion in the south. He had lived in Khartoum before, but he had not been there. I believe he'd been away, if I remember this correctly, I think he said 20 years since he'd been in Khartoum.

Q: Does he speak Arabic?

A: He speaks very good Arabic.

Q: Do most of the southern Sudanese speak good Arabic?

A: They do now mainly because so many of them were displaced and had to move north. Khartoum has now one of the largest concentrations of southern Sudanese living in and around Khartoum and they've been there, some of them almost 20 years; drought, famine, pestilence, war, all of these "four horsemen of the Apocalypse" events have driven them out and they've lived in Khartoum, and particularly the younger generation has grown up speaking Arabic.

Q: So that does give them some common ground for communication. That helps.

A: Oh, the communication, the language is there. Many as well are Muslim.

Q: That's also helpful. In terms of moving forward on implementing the agreements, did you observe difficulty in making progress?

A: Well, I think everyone knew this was not going to be easy. There were a lot of events; a lot of things that had to happen and this was new territory. You have members of rebel groups now becoming part of the government. This was new territory for the Sudanese, but I should also point out that it was new territory for many people within the U.S. administration who up until then had seen the conflict as a strict "good guys versus bad guys." We back the south because the north is the enemy. We support people in the south and the government in Khartoum is our enemy. Now, those same people whom they had backed in the south, notably John Garang and his associates, are now part of the government in Khartoum. This was a major change and had to force a major change in our own thinking.

Q: Were we the only power to have this mindset with Garang?

A: That's a good question. I can't speak for others. I can certainly speak for those that I dealt with and I certainly found this current within certain parts of our own establishment, who had identified for years with the southerners, with the SPLM and with Garang personally. They were so used to being in opposition to the Khartoum government that it was difficult to accept the fact that realities in Sudan were changing.

Q: That's an interesting point; to go into that a little bit, in our establishment we could identify quite a number of actors: the Administration, the Congress and then the NGOs, , all of which became perhaps advocates for a position in Sudan. Were you thinking specifically in terms of some of those groups?

A: Well, let me preface by saying that in my 33 years in the Foreign Service, Sudan was the most complicated account that I had ever worked with. There were so many currents, multiple issues, multiple problems, multiple questions. It was like a particularly complicated model train layout where you have multiple trains running on multiple tracks and how you keep them separate, how you keep them from colliding, how you keep the whole system from breaking down was a major preoccupation. Within our own system, of course, Sudan was a little bit special in the sense that it was an issue of great interest to many domestic constituencies, where in other foreign policy issues that we're all familiar with, the interest may be deep, but narrow. You would have, let us say, the Greek-American lobby or an Indian-American lobby or an Armenian-American lobby interested in some issue, with a profound interest in some question, but the interest would rarely extend much beyond that group and some of its associates. In the case of Sudan, that was not the issue. The issue was not a Sudan-American lobby. There was a much broader interest. It went across ideologies. It went across religion. It went across race. It went across left and right, and a lot of people were interested in Sudan for a lot of reasons, both within the government, but also within the NGO community, in the academic community, within the various religious communities, and so you had multiple currents

affecting our policy. One of our observers, one American observer referred to Sudan, somewhat unfortunately I think, but maybe with some realism, as the perfect football of American politics. Every group can come along and kick in whatever direction it needed to be kicked.

Q: So there was something of interest for many groups and actually within the U.S., at least people were somewhat in agreement as to what U.S. policy should be?

A: I think that one would like to say that, but there were definitely competing schools of thought. There were groups that still saw Khartoum and the administration of Khartoum as an implacable enemy.

Q: Even by the time you were going to represent us?

A: Exactly. Before I went out, I'd gone to see a Congressman on another issue, nothing to do with Sudan, and I mentioned to him that I was going to be going to Sudan and that immediately set him off about how evil the people in Khartoum were. There had been a story in the Washington Post oh about a month or two before I left about the visit of the head of Sudanese intelligence here, a visit sponsored by the CIA and another Congressman had denounced this visit and said this person should have been arrested as a human rights violator or a war criminal. Of course, Darfur was a huge issue and Darfur touched people's feelings and imaginations in a way few other issues did, so you had churches, synagogues in places all over the country interested in Darfur. Signs outside saying "pray for the people of Darfur or Darfur remembered." There were many reasons for this, but the interesting thing was a confluence across the ideological and political spectrum.

Q: That's unique; going back to the complexity of the issue, though, how did you begin to tackle that? Looking at the broad outlines of the CPA, each of the protocols had many layers. It would indeed be difficult to get them all on the right track and move them along, but how were you going to address that?

A: Well, again, remember the limitations on the mandate. There are people out there involved in these negotiations for years who know all the ins and outs of these negotiations. My philosophy in this has always been "find out what's the main thing and focus on that." A friend of mine once said, he gave me a very good piece of advice, he said "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."

Q: Very good advice.

A: Very good advice and when you get into a situation that seems to be hopelessly complex, find out what is the main thing. Well, of course, in Sudan it's not so simple. There seem to be numerous main things out there. Darfur was certainly a main thing, but also the CPA. It was very clear to me that the Sudanese, the authorities in Khartoum realized that with all of the bad publicity they were getting in the West and in the United States, with all of the attacks against them, with all the difficulties and all the sanctions,

all the denunciations, they had two good things going with us. One was cooperation on counter terrorism. The second was the CPA and implementation of the CPA. The last thing they wanted to happen was for either of those to be derailed, but particularly the second. I would say that probably outranked the counter terrorism cooperation, which was not a small thing in itself. Keeping the CPA on track, as I said, was probably one of the few positives in the relationship. One of the few things that could keep the relationship going. There weren't many strands that linked us and we had to practice a kind of diplomacy that has a long history in the Middle East. There's a story about an early caliph named Muhawieh in the 7th Century, who once said, "if I am joined to someone by a single strand of hair I will not break it. If he pulls, I loosen. If he loosens, I pull. The Arabs know that as the politics of the hair of Muhawieh. That's what the Sudanese were practicing and that's what we, in our more enlightened moments I think, practiced as well. The interesting thing about this relationship, as bad as it was, and it was not very good, we never broke relations with the Sudanese through all of those bad periods in the '90s, when we evacuated our people, when our embassy was almost shut down, when we even attacked their facility, when we were being denounced by the Sudanese, relations never broke. We always maintained diplomatic relations at some level. We practiced this kind of diplomacy, as did the Sudanese. One of those strands, perhaps that one strand, was the CPA.

Q: Which is really quite a big strand.

A: It's a very important strand.

Q: It covers a lot of issues. To what extent were these agreements that had to be sold to the Sudanese people or to what extent did the CPA validate consensus among the Sudanese? How would you characterize it?

A: This is not a regime that has taken into account much of its public opinion; that's not been a high priority for it. This was in their interest. There has always been, my more scholarly friends tell me, a current of thought within the Arab community of Sudan that says "if the south wants to go we should let it go." That's what the CPA provides for with the six-year referendum. It provides a mechanism for the south to achieve full independence. While I was there, I had many discussions on this issue and the northern Sudanese themselves were divided, as were the southerners on this question, because it was new ground for them. What you heard from many northern Sudanese was "look, we are too different culturally. We were artificially put together into this one country. We have fought too many wars for too long; its time to separate."

Q: A very rational approach.

A: Again, I'm not in a position to judge if it's rationale; at least, this you certainly heard. On the other hand, our official policy was to support the CPA, which provides for a government of national unity, and not to prejudge the outcome after six years. That is our policy.

Q: Things like wealth sharing and power sharing, which are also aspects of the accords, were the Sudanese beginning to implement those provisions as described in the agreement?

A: Slowly, slowly. No one believed this was going to be easy. While I was there there were protracted negotiations over forming a unity cabinet.

Q: How protracted were they, to give us a time frame?

A: Well, a couple of months. Again, now perhaps I had the advantage or the disadvantage to being very new to these problems, but it seemed to me that coming after an extended period of a long civil war, a long period of disagreements, a couple of months to negotiate these things perhaps was not so surprising. The unity cabinet was announced just a day or two before I left, but there was a tremendous focus and interest in that process back here in Washington and I was constantly getting telephone calls from people in the Department saying, "what's happening, what's going on, why haven't they formed it?" I was getting a sense of near panic, and maybe I didn't help the situation by being seemingly so unworried about the whole thing. We see how protracted these kinds of negotiations can be. Certainly the case of Iraq is a case in point. One thing that I remember from my negotiation class is when you reach a negotiation; both sides have to feel that they have gained something. That means the implication of that means that this is going to be time consuming because an agreement is not a surrender.

Q: You have a "win-win" agreement.

A: Well, I would call it win-win because if you walk away from the table feeling that you've been cheated, that agreement isn't going to hold up very long.

Q: Exactly, so you observed they wanted a cabinet.

A: They did form it. I mean until that time the southerners were in town, the southerners were in the hotel, the southerners were occupying the vice presidency, but they were not yet part of the government. Well, this was going to take time. Were the northerners negotiating in good faith? Who can say? Obviously giving up power, sharing power was a difficult step to take.

Q: It usually is.

A: It is just about anywhere. I was listening to the Senate debates yesterday about the immigration bill and the question seems to be more of not over the merits of the bill, but who controls the agenda in the senate.

Q: Yes, we know from our own domestic politics it is not easy to give up power. The death of John Garang also occurred while you were there. This was, I imagine, a cataclysmic event. What did it mean?

A: Very much so. It was a very difficult period. It meant a couple of things. One obviously, it risked the collapse of the CPA process, the government of national unity in which Garang had much personally invested. It also risked the collapse of civil order and could have been a direct danger to our mission and to our people, to the safety of our people there. When I went there, it was funny, I guess my reputation had preceded me, because the first question people said was “oh, we’ve noticed places that you’ve been in the past, there have been problems. When you were in Guinea there was a military mutiny. When you were in Mauritania there was a coup. We noticed you went to Iran, things fell apart. You were in Iraq and things weren’t very good there either. Is there something we ought to know about? I said, “let’s keep our fingers crossed.” Well, there it was again and the curse sort of caught up with us there as well. I think when it happened there was a risk, both sides got to the edge of the precipice, there was a risk the whole process would fall apart, but, I guess, without having any particular, any special insight to the process, it appears that both sides felt we have too much invested in this. There was too much at stake. We don’t want the death of one man, as important as he is, to scuttle the whole process, because, remember what I said earlier. This was, for the Sudanese, one of the few positive things they had going. I mean, when you’ve got an image as bad as the Sudanese had, you need any positive that you can get. To preserve it, I think they decided they were going to keep this process on track. Now, there were a couple of very violent days in Khartoum particularly, and it was, frankly, very scary.

Q: You would think there would have been more violence in the south.

A: There was violence in the south, but remember, Khartoum is a very mixed city. There are, by some estimates I have seen, two to three million southerners living in and around Khartoum.

Q: They’re armed?

A: You don’t have to be very well armed to create a civil disturbance.

Q: Maybe I’m naïve about this, but the SPLA was an army of sorts and those folks had some weapons.

A: They did, but the SPLA units had not come into Khartoum. This was one of the issues that was under discussion, which elements of the SPLA would come into Khartoum and under what conditions and with what weapons. As I remember, that was still under discussion at the time I was there.

Q: So, we could assume that they were not present in the capital. The forces were outside in their camp.

A: Exactly.

Q: But you still had a lot of angry people.

A: You have very angry people on both sides. It was mostly mob action one way or the other and one could criticize the authorities for not taking more decisive action, but there was a great deal of mob violence directed against stores, shops, homes, people.

Q: Indiscriminate.

A: Well, I mean targeted, ethnically targeted.

Q: The violence subsided within?

A: About three days.

Q: Were they able to issue a credible report of the investigation of the air crash, to lay to rest any rumors?

A: This was still going on. We sent a team over to investigate. It went to Nairobi. It went to Uganda, spent a lot of time in Uganda. The best account I had was it was bad weather and pilot error that caused it. The Sudanese, I believe, sent a representative to this commission and at some time the commission was supposed to come to Khartoum, but it didn't come there while I was there. As far as I could see, the Sudanese authorities were cooperating, although this occurred in a remote area. It was even a question whether the helicopter came down inside Sudanese territory or inside Ugandan territory.

Q: Such events always spawn conspiracy theories.

A: I mean they were there, but I didn't see them having a lot of currency.

Q: The IGAD partners who had worked all along to achieve the agreement, once it was concluded, how did they continue to influence the situation? Presumably they wouldn't just walk away, but they would try to maintain a presence.

A: Everyone did. I mean the main, the big, players were there. The United States was a huge player. Despite our bad relations with Sudan, President Bashar in his speech at the inauguration, I think July 9th was the day, explicitly thanked the United States for its work in achieving the agreement. That was very gracious. The Dutch were very involved. The British were very involved and the Norwegians were very involved. Some of the other European players who usually take a role in these things, the Germans and the French, were not players, for whatever reasons. The Dutch and the Norwegians and the British were our major European partners. Then the Ugandans, the Kenyans as well. The African Union, of course, was involved, but the African Union had its hands full in Darfur.

Q: In terms of monitoring the cease-fire?

A: That was to be the UN.

Q: Was it happening?

A: It was happening slowly.

Q: Some of the other aspects of the agreement, what about the Abyei boundaries accord? What occurred with the implementation or non-implementation of that?

A: That was difficult as well. That was going on while I was there. The commission had issued its report which was seen as favoring the local southern Dinka tribes at the expense of the Arab tribes in the area and the UN's representative there was working very hard to try to keep that situation calm.

Q: Was it going to involve a lot of transfers of people?

A: No, it was a matter of where to draw the boundary between the north and south, which part of that area was north and south. That's also an oil-producing region. There are also issues of water and who is where. I must say again, all of these issues, the wealth sharing, the power sharing, the Abyei boundaries, cease-fire monitoring, any of them by themselves, I suppose, could have derailed the whole thing. You had to sort of keep them going. The important thing was keep the process going. Don't torpedo the process because you disagree with a subparagraph here or there of the finding of this or that commission.

Q: Once one aspect started to unravel, I would think it would be dangerous for all.

A: Exactly. Any of these things had the potential, were very explosive and had the potential to bring the whole process down.

Q: Who would you say were the most responsible parties to make sure things were staying on track?

A: Well, from the outside, certainly UN rep Jan Prank. I certainly would give credit to Deputy Secretary Zoellick. The Norwegians had their special rep; I can't remember his name. He'd been ambassador to Washington.

Q: From within?

A: That is an interesting question. Certainly John Garang. Some people put a lot of hope in him because he was among the southerners the one who had traditionally been most committed to unity, to staying within. He had his own presidential ambitions. He saw himself as a candidate of the whole country.

Q: I guess that would be attractive to him.

A: He was not among the traditional northern politicians, from political families who had been involved in Sudanese, at least northern Sudanese, politics for decades and hadn't

brought a great deal of credit on themselves. It is intriguing, had Garang lived, whether he could have emerged as a national figure vice a southern figure. The question after his death was “is there anybody else that could operate on the national stage as Garang could?”.

Q: What was your thinking on that?

A: We didn't know. We didn't see any obvious candidates.

Q: Democratic institutions in Sudan are not well developed in any event. Democratic elections or multi-party elections are not part of their history. To what extent were those institutions part of the CPA?

A: There are parties that were traditional northern parties which had had more or less a democratic structure there. That was a whole other series of problems. I'll talk about another track if you like that was running, because part of the CPA was the establishment of a government of southern Sudan, and it had to be from zero. I'll never forget. I got a note from somebody from an NGO who got USAID money to build what he referred to as southern courthouses and they decided, it was decided somewhere in USAID, one step in establishing the government is you need a court system so you'd have to build southern courthouses. The only thing I could think of was some scene out of To Kill a Mockingbird. Big marble buildings with pillars in front and Gregory Peck in suspenders walking up the steps of these courthouses. I think they had something less grandiose in mind, but that tells you sort of the state of political development in the south, which was far behind, again far behind what was in the north. Another part of this was building something viable in the south which would be either a regional government at least at the beginning, and maybe down the line would become an independent state.

Q: Starting from zero, which is of course what everyone has commented on, is basically very little to build on in order to achieve the democratic state that we envision; if this is the base that you're starting from, were the accords really too ambitious to work or did they take that into account and figure out a framework that was plausible?

A: I can't say. What I was told was that the accords were, unlike most accords of this kind, which are usually agreements in principle and leave the details to later, they were quite detailed. That was done deliberately.

Q: To keep them on track?

A: To help people stay on track so that certain criteria which both sides had agreed to, that power sharing had to be done in a certain way, the divisions had to be made in a certain way and that the boundary commission had to operate in a certain way, - there were timelines for doing all these things and that probably was a good thing. It gave you a clear set of criteria to say are we meeting this criterion or are we not?

Q: The complaints that we hear in the press are primarily from the south, where they say: “ we’re not getting the funding that was promised and the wealth sharing.” How much validity would you think is in those complaints?

A: I don’t know; I can’t judge. This was something going beyond my mandate, but certainly within a few months after the inauguration in July the south was certainly not seeing immediate benefits, although there was a lot of talk about development and projects and rebuilding and reconstruction. There was an awful lot to be done in terms of infrastructure, physical infrastructure and political infrastructure. The details of the money and how that was going to be done, clearly there was a lot of negotiation to be done and the whole issue also frankly of who in the south got the money and who was going to control it. It was by no means clear that there was going to be a transparent or honest administration in the south. One heard reports about Swiss bank accounts, money being diverted here and there. I don’t know if it was true. I should make one point, which is that it wasn’t a uniformly bad picture. For example, the agreements called for Khartoum, for the northern forces, to withdraw its forces from Juba within a certain period of time. They were doing so and in August when I accompanied our presidential delegation to Juba for the funeral of John Garang, the interaction and the mixing of the southern and the northern military units was quite impressive.

Q: Is that right? What happened?

A: Both units were there. They each had a share, they had a mixed, responsibility for security. They worked together very well. When Garang’s body was brought back on the airplane, there was a mixed guard with two flags.

Q: So it was nicely orchestrated?

A: It was very nicely orchestrated.

Q: Who was responsible for that?

A: I don’t know. I don’t know the details of how it was done, but it was done with a great deal of style and very impressive.

Q: Is one of the tasks of the government to build a consensus for unity?

A: Again, I think this new government is supposed to be a government of national unity.

Q: Would most Sudanese say they support the idea of a government of national unity?

A: That’s a very sensitive question. One of our officials who came, who had a long association with the south and with Garang, got himself into hot water by making an ill-advised statement, what I think was an ill-advised statement about the results of the polls, saying such a percentage of southern Sudanese want independence. What polls were these? Who took them? How valid were they, and how relevant is a poll taken today for

a referendum six years away? Not very useful and frankly not a very useful statement, not a very helpful statement. He may have been misquoted, as often happens, but to prejudge that case, as I said earlier, the opinions were mixed. At least on paper, the Khartoum government had admitted the principle that if the south decides for independence after a certain period, so be it. Now, the issue is if you have an independent south, what is it going to be? A very poor, landlocked, isolated, under developed kind of “gimme” state dependent forever on foreign handouts? Or do you want to be a part of something bigger?

Q: The oil resources are heavily concentrated in what would be the south?

A: Between the two.

Q: Hence the border.

A: Hence the border, hence the oil wealth sharing. Hence the border issues, hence the issue of wealth sharing.

Q: Something that I'd like to clarify because it seems a little strange, given the fine degree of detail that you mentioned in the CPA, wouldn't the drafters have gone to great lengths also to specify the handling of the money so that transparency would be part of these accords?

A: I don't know, again I don't know that much about the accords to tell you how much detail there was. I do know that according to some accounts, the southerners were claiming that they didn't get the money they needed. Now a question in my mind is that if they had gotten more money, would that money have been spent wisely or well as it was supposed to be. Where would it have gone, what would it have been spent on when you have essentially no administration.?

Q: Just to wind up, let me focus the last couple of minutes on Darfur and how it affects Khartoum's commitment to the CPA and the south's commitment to the CPA. Is Darfur simply a distraction or is it playing a role?

A: As I said, the CPA was perhaps one of the few good things that Sudan had going in its relations with us. You remember the line; “we'll always have Paris?” We'll always have the CPA.

Q: Yes.

A: As badly as Darfur was going, the progress of the government of the CPA and the government of national unity sort of acted as a limiting factor on both sides as to how far each side would let Darfur become a deal breaker. I won't even get into the complications of the Darfur issue itself which is a very complicated issue. The question that was often posed and never really answered and not answered until today was “is the model of the CPA and the government applicable to Darfur?”

Q: A good question.

A: There was never any good answer. I never heard a good answer to that. The Darfurians in their statements almost never spoke of independence; it was never an issue for them.

Q: What would be the best outcome, for the government, of Darfur?

A: If you were cynical, you would say the best outcome for the government is that the Darfurian factions continue to squabble among themselves, which allows the government in Khartoum to take a moral high ground and say, well, we're always ready to talk, but we don't have anyone to talk to until the rebels can get their act together and if they spend all their time fighting each other, what can we do? That was the position that the government was in, at the same time, using chaos in Darfur and the lack of unity and discipline among the rebel forces as an excuse for arming its own militia. If you don't like hypocrisy, Sudan is not a good place to work.

Q: That's a very provocative statement. It brings up the question of how we can work with the leaders in the Sudan if we want to negotiate in good faith, but we can't negotiate with someone who's not going to honor their commitment.

A: It's not a case of honor or not honor. The fact of the matter is that disunity among the rebels played into the hands of the central government. I can't tell you the number of meetings I was in where the officials would say, "oh, yes, the situation in Darfur is terrible. We're working on the humanitarian side of it. We want to solve the humanitarian side, but now we need a political solution and we really do need a political solution, but who are we going to talk to?"

Q: I see. When at the same time that government was actively doing things to arm the militias?

A: Well, the metaphor of crocodile tears comes to mind.

Q: So Darfur clearly does affect how the CPA is implemented?

A: Well, it limits what we can do. For example, I and others urged that we have a stronger representation in Sudan, either at the level of ambassador or a permanent charge, someone who was there long-term, someone who was senior, someone who had the tenure and the rank to deal seriously with the Sudanese. As long as the Darfur issue remained where it was, that was politically very difficult to do, politically difficult to do here for us. It would be seen as a reward. Now, the point of many was it's not a reward, it's something in our interest to do, but it was still seen as a reward. In a way we tied our own hands at a time when our mission there -- one of the things that surprised me when I got there was how large our mission was and how important our interests were. I mean, we were a major player in Sudan.

Q: Most of our personnel were USAID types?

A: There was a lot of USAID. Most in the north was humanitarian assistance and disaster assistance. In the south, it was more traditional development aid, trying to build a political infrastructure, but it was a very large program. Also, even the embassy was big. I mean by some standards; I guess by our overall standards, you'd call it a medium-sized embassy. We had about 60 to 65 Americans. We had, of course, lots of AID contractors coming in and out. I think we had about 65 direct-hire Americans there, which is a pretty good size considering that the state of our relations was so bad. That's what I always had to remind myself. Talking with the Sudanese, they were always very articulate, very pleasant to deal with, very polite. Then you always had to remind yourself how come the relations are really terrible. We are not friendly. As friendly as we might be on a personal level, our political relations are not friendly at all. These people are not our friends.

Q: You had to remind yourself of that.

A: Yes.

Q: You were a good diplomat.

A: That's right.

Q: Are there any final comments that you'd like to regarding your experience with the CPA and with its implementation?

A: I think, again, I would only make one point, which is that whether we like it or not we are very involved.

Q: Involved in keeping it on track.

A: In keeping it on track. That has put us and the Sudanese together. We have to stay engaged. We don't like what they do. We don't with many of the things that they do, but we are committed to making the CPA succeed, or the process succeed and the government of national unity succeed. That reality means that like it or not we are going to be engaged in Sudan for probably a long time.

Q: In that case, we'd definitely like to see it succeed.

A: Yes.

Q: Well, I thank you very much for sharing your experience today.

A: Not at all. A pleasure to talk about it.