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

Interview # 12 - Executive Summary

Initial Interview Date: 7/13/06
Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy

The interviewee was designated by the Secretary of State at one time in the negotiating process to be the lead person to work on the Sudan situation. It was noted that Sudan at the time was viewed as a hostile terrorist state. The North-South war continued with hundreds of thousands killed and wounded with no end in sight. There was no dialogue between the North or South, or between Washington and either Khartoum or the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). A team of experts was formed in the State Department's Africa Bureau. The team first approached the leader of the SPLA, John Garang, who was open to the idea of negotiations. Ultimately, both North and South could see that a stalemate was not helping either cause, and Khartoum was interested in a dialogue with Washington.

As momentum built towards negotiating some sort of peace, the British, Norwegians and Swiss became interested. The Swiss were particularly helpful in putting together a battlefield ceasefire.

The interviewee said that the conflict was based less on religious than on cultural differences. At the same time in the U.S. Congress, there were those who came from the American religious right who castigated the interviewee for turning his back on the Christian religion. The interviewee said that there were those he termed 'crusaders' who wanted to fully arm the SPLA and help it capture Khartoum for Christianity. Another group wanted the South to be independent. These American groups did not think that there could be a diplomatic solution. Some of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were actively supplying arms to the SPLA as well as relief supplies, while others were working for peace.

The Swiss, being seen as a neutral power, played a very useful role in setting up the ceasefire line. The Egyptians acted more as a spoiler, asking Khartoum not to do certain things because the U.S. had proposed them. Other neighboring countries, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, played only minor roles during the negotiations.

Former President Jimmy Carter was of tremendous help in keeping the Evangelicals in the U.S. from ruining the negotiations. The 9/11 attack in New York initially caused concern because of Bin Laden's former connection with Khartoum. However, when it was established by U.S. intelligence that the connection was severed,

negotiations were actually helped because Khartoum saw the strong reaction of the U.S. in Afghanistan and did not want to incur undo attention by being too obstructive.

The interviewee discussed the human rights situation in the Sudan. During the actual negotiations, the Norwegians were quite aggressive and felt they had a unique perspective on the Sudan. Some of their NGOs were working in the South. The British were excellent team players.

Once the ceasefire was in place, the problem was to make it stick. The negotiators came up with a six-and-a-half year trial period under a Government of National Unity. A major obstacle was deciding where and how Sharia law would apply. The compromise was that, if you are Islamic you are under Sharia law and if not, you are under common law.

The interviewee left before the peace was signed, but he understood that there were several minor problems that could not be solved until the Secretary of State stepped in and resolved them. The Secretary played a major role in keeping domestic pressure off the Africa Bureau during the peace process, as did former Senator Jack Danforth. There was an unusual alliance in Congress between the Republican Evangelical conservatives and the Black Caucus. This made things difficult for the negotiators, but also was helpful, since the North became aware that there were pressures in the United States for a Southern victory of some sort. This made the North more flexible in its approach.

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Q: Today is the 13th of July, 2006. This interview is being done on behalf of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training as part of the Sudan Experience Project. We're going to be concentrating strictly on the Sudan period. I was wondering if you could describe the role you played with in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005.

A: As a State Department official covering Africa when the Bush Administration began, Colin Powell and I met early in 2001 and looked at some of the challenges that were ahead for Africa for this brand new government. And we both understood that Sudan was going to be one of the top two or three issues on our plate, whether we wanted it or not. And Secretary Powell said to me, " I look to you to be the lead person on this. You're my battalion commander for Africa and you will lead us on how we proceed. What do you think?" And I said, looking back on the Clinton Administration, which just finished off, "You have to come to the conclusion that the Sudan policy did not produce results that really got anything for anyone." If you recall, that's when we had attacked the aspirin factory with Tomahawk cruise missiles, the bilateral relationship was in complete shambles, there was no diplomatic relationship to speak of, Sudan was viewed as a hostile terrorist state, and the North-South war continued to rage with hundreds of thousands of people getting killed and really no end in sight. So it was a complicated picture of an internal civil war, with one side of that civil war in a very bad relationship with the U.S. Government. How can we affect a peace process when we are clearly seen as very hostile to one party in the war and also seen as very supportive of the other party? How can you be a fair-minded, objective referee in a civil dispute like that?

Q: To put this in context, this would have been when?

A: This would have been early '01.

Q: And Darfur was not an issue at the time?

A: No. That really didn't come up until '04. This was the North-South war.

Q: Was there a negotiation process on at that time?

A: None whatsoever. There was no dialogue at all between North or South; no dialogue between Washington and Khartoum. There were good relations between Washington and John Garang and the SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army), which were the Southerners.

Q: Well then how did things evolve as far as developing a negotiating process?

A: Well, Secretary Powell said, "Figure this one out." So my team and some other very able Foreign Service officers gathered around and I said, "Guys, this is a clean slate. We're not the Clinton Administration. We're the Bush Administration. We don't have Madeleine Albright as the Secretary of State. We have Colin Powell. Let's use this opportunity to really launch something new, something different, something that could be a little bit radical in the eyes of some in Washington. What could it be? How would you do it?" And again, the team came up with a very good roadmap of ways to reach out to Khartoum to demonstrate that we could be objective peacemakers, and also to show ways to keep the SPLA in the South comfortable with us as an ally and respect us as a peacemaker. Those steps involved some very, very well-choreographed meetings that we held with certain folks in the Khartoum Government at key times, laying out different things that they needed to do to prove to us that they were willing to have a real dialogue on the North-South civil war, and asking them to stop certain things that they were doing, particularly on the battlefield. And they, in fact, over a period of months, did cease those things. So it became clear within four or five months, maybe even quicker, that they saw this as an opportunity to for peace too. And I think that by May, June, July of '01, both sides were pretty war-fatigued. They were both a little bit glad that there was a new Administration in Washington. Both were willing to take some of those baby steps towards at least having a dialogue with each other.

Q: Had the Clinton Administration, because of the missile attacks and the linking to Al Qaeda, been sort of tainted? Was the Clinton Administration not an Administration with which particularly the Northern Government could deal?

A: Yes. I mean, I think that's fair. I think there was a very high degree of suspicion of the Clinton Administration, not the least of which was due to the rocket attacks that we launched against them.

Q: What about the Southern group, the SPLA? Where did they fit in to this? I mean, when one talks to one side you've got to make sure the other side understands what you're doing.

A: Exactly, that's exactly right. And we went to the SPLA first. We sat with John Garang and said, "John, we're tired of war. You've got to be tired of war; you're the ones fighting it. We think we can help you get a good deal. We think we can put together a peace process that brings justice as well as autonomy to the South. Will you work with us?" And he said, "Yes." So my first call was actually with John Garang in Nairobi to have that discussion.

Q: What had happened on the ground? Was the analysis that things were pretty much at a stalemate?

A: Well, things were at a stalemate. Both sides had military victories, you know. Every four weeks one side would have a significant military battle success. But Khartoum was starting to pump a couple hundred thousand barrels of oil a day. What always restricted the North from just crushing the South was logistics and distance. It's a long way from Khartoum to Juba, and it was expensive to run those supply chains and run those airlifts to basically make war that far away. So the North had been constrained in large part by economics. But with this new oil production coming on line, they were all of a sudden coming into money that they had never seen before. And I think that was one of the factors that John Garang understood. Garang realized that he might get a better deal now -- before the largesse of the oil sales came in and the North could really beef up their military, get more helicopters, and be a more effective fighting force. So I think he made that calculus. We certainly saw it coming, and I have to assume the Northerners saw that they had this opportunity too.

Q: Well what was there now on the Northern side to make them say, "Let's make a deal?"

A: The North clearly wanted to get right with the United States of America. They did not like to be on the wrong side of Washington. Obviously, from a security point of view, it had real dangers, i.e., Tomahawk cruise missiles coming into your capital. But I think politically and economically and every other way, they wanted to get right with us. That was their motivation.

Q: Were there any other parties to the negotiations you had?

A: Well initially no. This was very much an American State Department initiative. As we started gaining some momentum, it became a little bit more public. Certainly, at least in diplomatic circles, we heard, "Wow, the Americans have something going here, you know. They've actually got some low-level talks going, and Secretary A is doing some shuttling between people." And so the Brits got very interested. The Norwegians got very interested, and the Swiss became very interested. And the Swiss actually were very helpful in pulling together a battlefield ceasefire where they brought out maps. They knew the terrain, interestingly enough. They had some interesting military expertise, and the Nuba Mountains was a particularly difficult place where you were going to draw ceasefire lines, and they did a very admirable job. All the technocrats met in Switzerland, and actually the initial ceasefire was negotiated, worked out and planned in Switzerland, led by the Americans. So they were very important.

Q: There was a strong Christian element in the South and a strong Islamic influence in the North. Did these forces cause problems, you know, with the sides wanting to carry on their jihad or their crusade or whatever you want to call it?

A: You know, it's interesting that it was less religious than it was cultural. I'm sure there were some Islamic fundamentalists in Khartoum, but none of the top guys were. Bashir was not really. He's a military guy. Taha, not really.

Q: Taha being?

A: The Vice President.

Q: The Vice President?

A: Doubtful, doubtful. Was John Garang on some Christian mission because he was a devout believer in the third crusade? No. So, the spirituality and the faith of it was actually pretty minimal. What drove these people was culture. And one is an Arab, yes Islamic, but Arab culture. And one is a Black African animist/Christian culture. One of the fascinating points of discussion was where the capital was going to be for this unified government, and how could Sharia law not apply to certain parts of the capital or certain people in the capital. What was driving all of this concern from the South of "We don't want to join a government and sit in the capital of Khartoum because then we will be susceptible to Sharia and the Islamic rules of the day" was that they wanted to be able to drink beer. They wanted their beer on a Friday and Saturday and Sunday, and they did not want to be prevented from drinking beer. If they had to go sit in that capital up in Khartoum and be part of this unified government, by God, they were going to have the right to drink their beer.

Q: I can relate to that. I spent two-and-a-half years in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where we had to go over to Bahrain in order to get some beer. I'm with them.

A: I was with them, too. I said. "Absolutely, man." But that's what was driving it. It wasn't some notion that the Southerners wanted to have unlimited access to a church or a parish. That was partially it, but it really was because they wanted their beer.

Q: Well
Right. Did this get involved? Missionaries and all that?

A: Yes. They got heavily involved. I was castigated on the Hill for being someone who had turned his back on his Christian faith. They got very personal and very ugly. They wanted to know why would I be reaching out to these Godless Islamic terrorists? You know, what is going on here? So the Christian Right played a very questioning, very doubting role, saying, "What are you doing? Are you abandoning our friends in the SPLA in the South?" There was a lot of, "This had better work. We don't think it's going to work." And actually, if you go back and look at the hearings, some of them got quite pointed and quite heated.

Q: Was there a feeling that somehow within this really very powerful constituency in American political life that the South could come out as a separate state?

A: No, because the Evangelical community in this country that had this on their radar screen and cared about it had different shades of ideology. Some were what I would call the crusaders. They wanted us to weaponize the battlefield on behalf of the South and they wanted John Garang to march into Khartoum and take it militarily. They wanted victory. So those who were very aggressive contended that the only correct outcome would be a military victory by the South over the North. So, we would kind of work with them and explain, "You know, that will never happen for a whole assortment of reasons, not the least of which being that the South didn't want that." But you had those kinds of fanatics. And the next layer down in the community proposed an independent state, saying: "Let's get the South to be an independent country. That's where we need to go with this. Let's make that happen." I remember having long meetings with a number of congressmen and people who really, in every sense of the word, deeply cared about this issue. They really did care about it, and they really did not believe that there could be a peaceful resolution drawn up from a diplomatic effort. They were highly suspicious of that.

Q: What about UN agencies? European Union? Other agencies? Did they get into this? As you got on this, was there sort of the feeling, "Let's keep these out until we can really make some progress because too many cooks will spoil the broth?"

A: Yes, but we didn't have much of that. The UN was only too happy to see the Americans take the lead on this. We would keep the UN informed and they would always say, "Good riddance. Go for it. We've got enough problems." The Egyptians wanted to play, and of course the historic link between Egypt and Sudan is deep and complicated. Egypt didn't like us particularly succeeding as they watched some success develop, and so they kind of played around and they tried to go to the UN and do some things. But in essence, most people were only too glad to see us deal with this very thorny and difficult issue.

Q: This was an issue that straddled the African Union between the Black and the White, if you want to call it that, or whatever you want to call it.

A: We call it the Green-Black Line, with Green being Northern Muslim.

Q: Yes. And the African Union, how did they play in this?

A: They were conflicted, as you say. At one point we counted up 13 Sub-Saharan countries giving some kind of aid or assistance to the SPLA; 13 Black African countries giving assistance to John Garang. And there were probably at least five Magreb and Northern African countries giving aid and assistance to Khartoum. So it was, you know, a split thing. And they were very careful, and they would always call for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and then rub their hands and do nothing.

Q: If the North began to feel stronger with oil money and all, and saying, "Get more helicopters," was there the idea that perhaps we might take the Afghan route and give the South Stinger missiles and that sort of thing?

A: Oh well, some of the Evangelicals on the Hill definitely wanted that. I mean, they wanted to see a covert military operation be developed. They specifically asked for it.

Q: Okay, they're asking for it but was this in a way a help? Not that you're going to do it. But at the same time, there's this threat, which means, "Come on. Let's sit at the table and talk because we could blow this thing up more than either side really wants."

A: Yes. Ultimately it probably was a help. On a day-to-day basis, it made my life miserable. It was very, very difficult. We weren't going to have a covert military program because we were actually trying to be peacemakers. not war-producers. And you know, we couldn't really be supplying Stingers to the SPLA if we were at the same time trying to be a peace broker. And so that was a step too far for some to grasp. But there was definitely a pressure, and I think ultimately Khartoum knew it. And so to your point, yes, I think it probably did help.

Q: Well, you're always able to say, "Well you know, if you don't do this, I think you might be right. But you know, Congress will do that."

A: Absolutely. And we used it all the time, you know. We would say, "Look, you guys in Khartoum need to do this, this, and this, because I've got to go in front of the Hill and explain why I'm being so nice to you. Help me. Help your own cause actually. Stop those trains going down and raiding Southern villages. Do this and do this and do this." And I mean, it worked. It was effective in the sense that they were smart enough to realize that we were under pressure too.

Q: Well what about the SPLA? Was this really a unified operation or were there splinter groups off doing their thing?

A: Some splinter groups existed, but John Garang was a very strong, charismatic, powerful military leader. And he ran a relatively tight ship. There had been historical splits between the Dinka and Nuer, the two primary tribes that make up the SPLA, and those splits nine times out of ten were along ethnic or tribal lines. But all in all, John ran a pretty tight ship.

Q: How did he operate when you were dealing with him? I mean, when you got into this, was this the first time you had met him or talked to him?

A: No, we had known each other before.

Q: Well, how did he strike him from the time you'd known him?

A: Oh John was a fascinating guy. He went to Grinnell College in Iowa and was actually an agricultural economist. And so, he spent some time in the States and was well-read and well-educated and well-spoken. He was a cunning strategist in the sense that he knew when to strike a deal and when to hold out; he was a good negotiator. He did have

his own internal pressures too. I mean, he had to deliver to his people and that meant that he had to bring an end to the war because I think most Southerners were sick of the war. But too, he had to do it in a face-saving, honorable way. He had pressures, internal pressures for independence. There was definitely and still is a pro-independence faction inside the SPLA so, if you really dissect the peace deal, when the grand bargain was laid out, it was that in six-and-a-half years from signing there would be a referendum to decide independence or not. And that referendum was always John's face-saving for his own internal independence pressures.

Q: Was there a split in the SPLA between the Christians and the animists?

A: Not particularly. None that I ever saw. And you know, it's not that defined. I mean, you're kind of a Christian on Tuesdays and Thursdays and an animist on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Q: When you were doing this, this was held pretty tightly?

A: Very tightly. We had a Sudan working group with maybe four or five guys.

Q: Were you able to get your own people on the ground into Sudan, North and South, your own people to talk to?

A: Yes, yes, oh absolutely.

Q: Was this a problem?

A: No. Initially, obviously, you would go to Khartoum from the North or from Europe and then up to Rumbek or wherever we would meet Garang, who was coming from Kenya. So it was logistically a little tricky, but no, it was not a problem. And once the ceasefire was in place, we actually could go North to South within the country.

Q: Were there a lot of NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), particularly in the South?

A: Yes, there were lots of NGOs, and the NGO community was a little bit split on what we were trying to do. Some of the crusaders also would have ammo belts being delivered to the SPLA in amongst the mealy meal and food supplies. It was pretty strange. There were many combination relief flights that had both food and weapons. So those more hard line elements were highly suspicious of what we were trying to do because they were crusaders and they wanted to see military victory. But I would say that the majority of the NGOs actually were on the ground there were thrilled at the prospect of peace. They truly wanted to see development and peace and, you know, they were sick of the war too. So it was a little bit mixed. Most of them were very, very happy to be helpful in any way they could.

Q: Had most of these groups of NGOs come out of either the United States or Europe?

A: Yes.

Q: Were the Europeans picking up what was happening? Was it becoming more and more known that negotiations were beginning?

A: Yes. It took about six or nine months for them to really figure out some of it. And then we were into the Swiss signing of the ceasefire, and then people really became attentive and attuned and hopeful. Once the ceasefire was announced, that really raised hopes. And that was good and bad. You know, in all peace negotiations, ceasefires are tricky. I mean, the initial ceasefire is a great upliftment of spirits and hope for everybody. Then you've got to be careful because, after four months of the ceasefire, when there's some violations and you're really not any further along in the peace process, you know, that's when all of a sudden you go back to war. And so we tried to manage the expectations of both principals, as well as those of people like NGOs, and say, "Look, this is a one- or two-year-long ceasefire. This ceasefire has got to hold for a couple of years because this is a very complicated peace process that's got a lot of moving parts, and it's going to take some time to get through it."

Q: What about the Swiss? I find it interesting because the Swiss have not played much a role outside that of being the protecting power when we leave a country. What was the motivation that you got from the Swiss?

A: It was interesting. There were some Swiss military people that had specific interest and knowledge about Sudan. And I'll never forget that there was one Swiss military guy who was very aggressive, in a good way, and he wanted to do this ceasefire. In a way, it was good for us as Americans to let someone else come in and play the role of deciding who's going to draw the ceasefire line. Although the confidence-building relations between Khartoum and Washington were getting better and better and we were trying to deepen that relationship and improve it, it still wasn't quite there yet. They weren't going to let us pull out a map and draw the ceasefire line. So at that time, early in the process, it was really good to have the Swiss, the neutral Swiss.

Q: Were the Dayton Accords and negotiations there sort of a reference point for you?

A: I never looked at them.

Q: I mean, they had gone through the map drawing, the cease firing and all that before. Was there a problem within the State Department that Sudan straddled the Near East and Africa?

A: Well, you're right, geographically and culturally and all that, Sudan does kind of straddle both regions. The State Department considers it in Africa. The CIA always considers Sudan as in North Africa and the Middle East. So even within our own Government, it's treated differently. But, no, at State, the Africa and Near East Bureaus

worked closely together on what was happening, especially vis-à-vis Cairo, as the Egyptians kept trying to butt in.

Q: The Egyptians were seen almost as a spoiler?

A: They were. They actually were a spoiler. They tried to put counter proposals on the table for the Khartoum Government, saying, "Don't do that. The Americans put this proposal forward." And so a couple of times the Africa Bureau would have to tell the Near East Bureau, "You've got to tell the Egyptians to back off. They really are not helping the situation at all." And they did. And there were some very frank conversations that they had with Egyptian Foreign Ministers and Ambassador and others, and eventually Cairo did back off.

Q: I would think also that the Sudanese Government in Khartoum had never been that close to the Egyptians.

A: Yes, it's a complicated relationship. It's a love-hate situation. It's complicated and yes, there's always been suspicion. This Bashir crowd especially was always suspicious of Cairo.

Q: How would you characterize the Khartoum Government at this time?

A: Well, say in the first half of '01, the Khartoum Government was a government that had been a believer in Arab hegemony, if not Islamic hegemony. If they weren't practicing slavery right at that moment, they had in the recent past. There was a cultural superiority that they held out vis-à-vis the South. They were a pretty nasty and brutish crowd. So these were hardly towering Jeffersonian Democrats. I mean, these were a pretty rough and nasty crowd.

Q: Well could you sit down and talk frankly with them?

A: You certainly could. You absolutely could. They understand power.

Q: Yes. Well, did the oil companies play a role in this?

A: Our oil companies were, because of our sanction legislation, not allowed to be developing or pumping oil. I think the last U.S. company that actually had exploration underway was Occidental, and they sold their interests. There are some American companies that continue to hold parts of concessions, but OFAC (the Office of Foreign Assets Control) at Treasury, prohibited them from actually making capital calls and expending money to develop exploration. So they could theoretically hold a concessionary asset but they couldn't actually spend money to develop it. So all of the oil development was by three primary actors, the Chinese, Malaysians, and Indians.

Q: Did they pay any attention to anybody, or did they go about their business?

A: When things did show up in the UN, particularly on the human rights side where the Sudan Government was, I think, quite correctly criticized for grotesque human rights violations. The Chinese would often threaten to veto or require modifying language. So they would do that for their friends in the UN, but that would be about it.

Q: Did Libya play any role at this point?

A: Very little. They had in the past been suppliers to the Khartoum Government of money and I would guess weapons. I don't really remember that. But they were not full participants.

Q: Well this is a period when Qaddafi was beginning to play nice to the West, wasn't it?

A: He was, and I think he was a little bit split on what Sudan should do. There was some love-hate going on there between Khartoum and Tripoli, too. They were, you know, buddies one month, and not so keen on each other the next. So there was definitely some stuff going on there. We didn't have a full read on that.

Q: Did Saudi Arabia play any role?

A: Not much. Again, they gave financial support in various ways. You'd see it, and then it would kind of disappear, and then it would come back. Again, it wasn't official. We don't think that most of it was official Saudi Government support. It was a Prince here, or a private individual there, that would assist.

Q: Eritrea, Ethiopia, were they involved?

A: Yes, both Eritrea and Ethiopia were involved, but both on the periphery. Both having their own dispute between each other would often affect how they looked at Sudan. They saw Sudan simply as a lever or a pawn in their conflict with each other. So they would play it various ways. But nothing really became so problematic that we had to sit down and tell them to get out of the way.

Q: Were there representatives or quasi-representatives of the South going on the Bible circuit and going out and around in the United States?

A: There was some. I mean, Jimmy Carter and John Garang had a very good working relationship. When John Garang died, I think Jimmy Carter was quite saddened in the sense that he felt he lost a friend, as we all did. So, there was some of that. And then the SPLA would send representatives over to make sure that their Congressional support was holding tight and that the Evangelicals were still with us. But Jimmy Carter played a terrifically helpful role. We were having some really tough times with some of the Congressional elements that were highly critical of our efforts. We reached out to President Carter and told him we needed his advice and help. I asked, "How do we deal with this domestic element of an international foreign policy issue?" And he was very

helpful. He made some phone calls to some Southern Evangelicals, and it was very helpful.

Q: In other words, he asked them to back off a bit.

A: Yes, and they did.

Q: And of course he would have those ties to that particular group?

A: Yes, and he had the knowledge of Sudan because he had worked on the North-South conflict too. He had the knowledge and understanding of what we were trying to do. And he said, "God bless. Go for it. Yes, I will get them to back off." So President Carter was a terrific help.

Q: As the negotiations became more or better known, how did you find the media? Were they interested in this?

A: Remember, a lot of this negotiation happened right in the aftermath of 9/11. There was very little press interest.

Q: Which was a blessing?

A: It was quite a blessing, yes.

Q: Well, the negotiations got going around what, May?

A: June, July.

Q: And then we're moving up to September 11, 2001 and Osama bin Laden's attack.

A: Yes.

Q: And Sudan had already hosted Osama bin Laden. That was the reason for the missile attack on it. How did this play? I mean, you're sitting in your office and all of a sudden 9/11 happens. Did you think, "There goes the negotiation?"

A: Yes, you can't help but think that. It was a double-edged sword. It really caused some internal pulling back. We said, "Wow; we've really got to be careful in dealing with the folks in Khartoum because of the bin Laden connection." That was kind of the knee jerk, the initial reaction. Once we got past that and tried to figure out what that relationship was, most of the intelligence services and analysts quickly came to the conclusion that that relationship was basically over. Although there wasn't a whole lot of threat for Sudan to become a harbor for bin Laden, we felt we had better watch them because of what they did in the past. Then we saw the positive edge of the sword, in the sense that Khartoum saw what our reaction was. And our reaction was swift and successful in Afghanistan, at least, so that reinforced the old Tomahawk-cruise-missile-

on-the-aspirin-factory approach. So that was the positive part of the sword. I think it captured everyone's attention and got everyone to focus. There were clearly some on the SPLA side, including some of their friends on the Hill, who said, "See? The only solution here is military victory. Let's take these bastards out." So again, we had to calm that whole thing down and get some emotions under control. But you know, 9/11 definitely had an impact.

Q: You mentioned the Northern Government's human rights violations. What were they up to? It gets to be difficult to deal with a country that is badly implicated in human rights problems.

A: Very much so. What we as the U.S. Government did was to hire a kind of independent investigative commission to come up with what exactly had been the past actions. So that was helpful, and they did a terrific job.

Q: Did you see Islam changing in the North? Was it getting more powerful, or how was it going?

A: The radical Islam of Sudan has always been a dynamic unto itself. Turabi, who is an Islamic philosopher/mullah/politician, was in jail, out of jail, under house arrest. Turabi was head of a political party and often agitating for the Islamic brotherhood-radical side of things. Bashir clearly was uncomfortable with that and threw Turabi in jail. In fact, from the '01 to '04 period, I believe Turabi was either in jail or under house arrest the entire time. So the more radical Islamic folks were not only not in the Government, they were in prison.

Q: In the pre-negotiation period, how did things proceed towards agreement? How did this process proceed towards negotiations?

A: It was a shuttle. A lot of it happened in Nairobi. Those very initial meetings were either one-on-ones or two-on-twos between a U.S. official and John Garang, or a U.S. official and the Foreign Minister of Sudan. Then it kind of gave way to Vice President Taha driving the peace process. As people at those meetings got a little more confidence and a little more friendly, they were saying, "You do this for me and I'll do that for you." And then we said, "Well, why don't you do this for them, i.e., the North, you do something for the South and the South, you do something for the North?" And once we got a little bit of confidence-building there, then we actually put them in a room together.

Q: When did you bring in the UK, and Norway, and the Swiss?

A: They came in once the ceasefire was signed and established. We did a weekly or monthly effort at pulling everybody in. Colin Powell said, "Bring these guys in. You're going to eventually need them." I was only too glad to do that and start a multilateral approach. If there are not too many chefs in the kitchen, it can work well. And the Norwegians got very aggressive at times. They really, really, really wanted to play.

Q: Well you'd think the Norwegians were, in a way at this point, probably coming from their success in Oslo between the Israelis and the PLO.

A: Yes, I think that was part of it, and I think they genuinely thought they had a unique perspective on Sudan. They also had some leverage with the South because some of their NGOs were aiding the South. I mean, they had some chits in the game.

Q: Did we go to the Norwegians or did they come to us, or how did that happen?

A: I can't remember. I'd have to go back and look at my notes. I can't remember exactly how it came about.

Q: Were the Brits basically on board, waiting as a shadow negotiator all the time?

A: Yes, they were wonderful.

Q: They were expecting to be part of the team?

A: Absolutely. And we always was glad to have them in. Alan Goulty was the kind of Sudan Special Envoy for them and he was very fine. And Valerie Amos, who later became the head of the House of Lords, was the Deputy Minister for Africa. She was terrific and we really worked well together.

Q: Were we keeping them informed early on?

A: Yes. My first quiet meeting with Taha, I think, was actually in London. I think I probably went from the meeting to Whitehall and debriefed the Brits on how it went.

Q: The ceasefire came before the real negotiations?

A: Well no. The pre-negotiations' success was the ceasefire. The pre-negotiations really got them to the ceasefire. Then, once we got the ceasefire, we really started digging into the five or six key sectors that we needed to look at for us to go into essentially what turned out to be a Government of National Unity.

Q: Well, usually when you are getting close to a ceasefire negotiation, the firing increases. In other words, people are trying to, you know, grab that last hill.

A: Yes, you're exactly right. And the Nuba Mountains fighting was probably the most intense. I don't think a lot of the commanders in the field knew that there were ceasefire negotiations going on. I think, more on the North side, they probably had a better logistical and communication system. But I think some of those Southern commanders were surprised all of a sudden that there was cease and desist order. So we did it. It was pretty quick. But nonetheless, you're right. I mean, the last couple weeks there were some pretty intense firefights.

Q: Was the Northern army, you know, like the Mujahadeen…

A: Yes, and the Janjaweed that are down in Darfur.

Q: Yes, an Arab group that's really very capable of military activity. But how do we evaluate how the fighters were in the South and where were they coming from?

A: Mostly Dinka, but some Nuer. They were farmers, kids.

Q: Was this one of these places where kids the age of 12 or so were being dragged in?

A: It probably wasn't that young, but probably plenty of 15 and 16 year olds. And they were recruited from the farms and the families that inhabited all the South. They were not a rigorously-disciplined military fighting machine, but there was discipline. They did move in units and there was a commanding control of sorts. In some respects, they were more of an army at times than the North, because the North often used the air militia that were the slave raiders and the Janjaweed that were a little bit less in direct control, On the other hand, the Sudanese army had garrison positions in Juba and had serious command and control too. So they kind of had a blend. But the South had probably a better battle order than we would have expected.

Q: When you got to the ceasefire, had sort of a line already been pretty well established through military action, or were there some really serious points of contention as regards the ceasefire?

A: The Nuba Mountains was a contentious area, and that didn't settle down. It took three or four or five weeks for that to settle down.

Q: In a mountain area, what was there to be concerned about?

A: There was the population mix. They weren't Southerners. They weren't Northerners. They were kind of in the middle. There were a lot of Nuer. They had been in the brunt of the fighting, in an unclear environment. But, within a month, it too became relatively quiet for a long war.

Q: You drew a ceasefire and then what happened?

A: Well, then it was asking, "What are the big issues? How's this going to work?" And the ultimate tough question was, "If it doesn't work, how do I get out?" The South was asking, "How do I get out without having to go back to war?" We kept saying, "This is not going to be a situation where we're all going to do this for a few months. We're not going to let war start up again." And the South said, "Okay, we hear you. How are you going to make that stick?" And that's when we came up with the notion of the Government of National Unity, which was in fact a trial period of six-and-a-half years. Now, just to come up with that six-and-a-half years timeframe took four months. The North wanted the timeframe to be as quick as possible, two years, although then they

changed their position because they both had different strategies. Ultimately John Garang, I felt, ended up sharing some of the same objectives that the North did, saying, "Let's give this thing six-and-a-half years. Let's pump money and effort in and try to demonstrate to all the people of the country, including the South, that it's more advantageous to be together than to be separate. And it will take six-and-a-half years to do that.

Q: Why six-and-a-half years?

A: We were literally down to one side saying six years and one side saying seven, so we said, "You know what? It's going to be six-and-a-half."

Q: What were the major obstacles as you were all sitting down?

A: The independence escape clause was huge. Sharia law was a real problem and, again, it goes back to the cultural thing. Cultural more than religious, but symbolic even more than cultural. If you live under some other man's law, you're not really a free man. And so we had to parse that problem. Ultimately the way it was resolved was to say that Sharia belongs to those that believe in Sharia, and it doesn't belong to those that don't.

Q: Well was there the equivalent to a common law?

A: Yes.

Q: The other one, sort of the British tradition?

A: Yes, that was what the underlying assumption was. But ultimately the litmus test was that, if you're an Islamic believer in Sharia, then you will abide by the Sharia law. If you're a non-Sharia believer, then it's common law.

Q: You mentioned at one point that the Norwegians got quite aggressive on something. On what sort of issues would they be aggressive?

A: They wanted to be involved in the meetings and the photo ops. There was one minister that was particularly very keen on being seen as delivering.

Q: Were there any major breakdowns, periods where everybody left in a huff?

A: There were a lot of mini breakdowns, but there was never a time when publicly John Garang stood up and said, "That's it. We're not going to do any more negotiations." Nor was there ever a time when Khartoum stood up and said, "We're done. We're finished." Never. We never had that public blow up. We had a lot of private blow ups saying, "You know, these bastards are trying to screw me and yah yah yah." There were a lot of private miniature breakdowns, but nothing public.

Q: Did you feel that there was tension within the delegations?

A: Definitely. And some of it was personal, although John Garang's people pretty much let John be the boss. But Foreign Minister Ishmael from Khartoum got basically superseded by Vice President Taha. I think this was partially because Taha saw that this was going in the right direction and he wanted credit, and partially because he probably didn't totally trust the Foreign Minister and wanted to do it himself.

Q: What do you consider to be the most significant thing about this process? Was it working according to more or less the plan you had laid out?

A: It did until the end. And I actually left government before the peace deal got signed. That last year, there was just picayune stuff. I was out of it at this point, so I can't really speak to it, but talking to those who were involved, I know that they just couldn't get it across the goal line. Then Colin Powell stepped in and they finally got it through.

Q: While you were in the government, what was the role of Colin Powell and all?

A: Powell was terrifically supportive of the Africa Bureau's effort. He went out of his way to protect us.

Q: This is particularly from the attacks from-

A: From the domestic attacks.

Q: Domestic and the religious.

A: Correct. He was our protector.

Q: Yes. Did the President play any particular role in this?

A: He did. And the President was interested, and got involved. Once the thing was rolling and we had some good momentum, then he appointed Jack Danforth as a Special Envoy. Jack would kind of parachute in, and Jack was helpful, and we would get Jack to do a meeting every five or six months and push things along.

Q: Was he a Senator still at that time or not?

A: He was not. He was living in St. Louis. And so, he would fly out. He did two or three trips to Sudan and did some good work and pushed some stuff hard. And so, he was useful. President Bush was very sensitive and aware of the Evangelical political angle on this thing.

Q: In many ways, they were almost a thorn in your side, were they not?

A: Yes, they were. They made it difficult just on a kind of domestic political basis.

Q: Did you find yourself testifying much in Congress on this?

A: Yes, quite a bit. But again, in the aftermath of 9/11 there was so much going on on the Hill that this was pushed back. I think we were well into '02 or '03 before we really had a series of hearings on Sudan. By that time, the barn door was open, the horses were out, and we were galloping.

Q: And you were under the radar.

A: We had gone a long way.

Q: Did you feel that both sides, North and South, were watching American domestic politics and how that was going?

A: Yes.

Q: Did PR firms hire some lawyers here to look after their interests?

A: Yes, definitely. And they both did, and they both would make regular trips, especially the South, to check in on those Congressional supporters and those constituencies that were their friends and supporters. Yes, they were good at staying in touch. Now, I would say they misread some of the situation, but they made an effort at it and they made an effort to influence the domestic situation. As little as it was in terms of public awareness, those people that did care cared intensely. And both sides used that passion and that emotion fairly effectively.

Q: Did the Black Caucus in Congress get into this at all?

A: They did, and it was a very curious alliance between mostly Republican Evangelical, very conservative folk, and the Black Caucus. Those are not natural allies.

Q: The Black Caucus would tend to be coming from the cities. and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

A: Yes.

Q: Did this help, hinder or just …?

A: Again, it was a double-edged sword. It helped in the sense that we could demonstrate to the folks in Khartoum that nothing could be taken for granted. We could say that, "The American Government, because of these pressures from the likes of the Black Caucus and the Evangelical Right, could turn on you tomorrow. So the deal I've got in front of you is the best thing you're going to get. You'd better get on with it." So the down side, of course, was that we were constantly being nitpicked and poked at with questions like, "What are you doing? What are your motivations?" So if you can take the heat, you can then use it effectively in the negotiating process.

Q: What was our role with the National Security Council and Condoleezza Rice?

A: Condi got involved only really when the President felt the pressure from the Right and then she would express that concern that the Evangelicals were not happy with what we were doing, or were happy, or whatever. That would be her input. Very political.

Q: Were there an exchange of prisoners? Was this an issue?

A: I don't think there were There could have been. It was not a major issue.

Q: When did you leave the Government?

A: October of '03. The Comprehensive Agreement got signed a year later.

Q: By the time you left, you were pretty close to the goal line?

A: I thought we were. In fact, I wouldn't have left if I thought there was still a year left of negotiations. I thought we were done.

Q: Yes. But was it just posturing or what?

A: There were actually a few more things on economic-sharing, and how to divvy up the oil proceeds. There were also a couple little things more on the capital, which I thought was relatively minor stuff. But it was also a time for both sides to socialize and familiarize their people and their constituents with the Agreement, and it just took both sides longer than thought to get through their own little internal politics.

Q: Looking at it today and from what you are gathering, how does the CPA seem to have played out so far?

A: Pretty well. Now, Darfur has made it somewhat of a sub-issue. So, you know, history is funny. Not much attention was being paid during it, and not much attention paid after it. I'd say, in overly simplistic terms, 9/11 caused people to look at much more important issues. And the horrors of Darfur overshadow the success of the North-South Agreement. So in a way, it's kind of a lost peace process.

Q: Looking at Darfur today, which has been described as genocide, did you see any reflection of that in the North-South conflict?

A: There had been. You know, if you look back in the '70s and '80s, there was genocide then or, let's say, very similar tactics that the North attempted to use on the South. The South resisted and built the SPLA in order to resist, and very effectively found suppliers and assistance around the continent and around the world. We've seen this movie before.

Q: As you left, were the American oil companies beginning to get restive?

A: No, you know it's interesting. One of the things that we held out for was a better relationship with Khartoum. We told them, "If you sign this Peace Agreement, your relationship with Washington is going to get better. We will have full diplomatic relations, and we will start reviewing our economic sanctions against you/" So, they signed the Agreement, and we have done exactly none of those. We've not held up our end of the bargain. We certainly haven't upgraded relations to full ambassador and we have not, to my knowledge, seriously reviewed lifting any economic sanctions. Now, part of that is because of Darfur. Darfur intervened in the meantime, so we moved the goalposts, and I would say we probably moved the goalposts for a good reason. I mean, Darfur was genocide. But, you know, if you're strictly looking at it from Khartoum's perspective, they did what we pressed them to do and the reward was not there.

Q: At the time, did you feel that the South could be a viable place for development?

A: Oh definitely. It's a gorgeous place. I mean, significant rainfall, excellent agricultural potential. It could be a real economic powerhouse.

Q: This has been great.