

# Early CIA Involvement in Darfur Has Gone Unreported

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Global Research, January 24, 2007

[OpEdNews](#) 24 January 2007

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

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There has been a glaring omission in the U.S. media presentation of the Darfur tragedy. The compassion demonstrated, mostly in words, until recently, has not been accompanied by a recognition of U.S. complicity, or at least involvement, in the war which has led to the enormous suffering and loss of life that has been taking place in Darfur for many years.

In 1978 oil was discovered in Southern Sudan. Rebellious war began five years later and was led by John Garang, who had taken military training at infamous Fort Benning, Georgia. "The US government decided, in 1996, to send nearly \$20 million of military equipment through the 'front-line' states of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda to help the Sudanese opposition overthrow the Khartoum regime." [Federation of American Scientists fas.org]

Between 1983 and the peace agreement signed in January 2005, Sudan's civil war took nearly two million lives and left millions more displaced. Garang became a First Vice President of Sudan as part of the peace agreement in 2005. From 1983, "war and famine-related effects resulted in more than 4 million people displaced and, according to rebel estimates, more than 2 million deaths over a period of two decades." [CIA Fact Book -entry Sudan]

The BBC obituary of John Garang, who died in a plane crash shortly afterward, describes him as having "varied from Marxism to drawing support from Christian fundamentalists in the US." "There was always confusion on central issues such as whether the Sudan People's Liberation Army was fighting for independence for southern Sudan or merely more autonomy. Friends and foes alike found the SPLA's human rights record in southern Sudan and Mr Garang's style of governance disturbing." Gill Lusk - deputy editor of Africa Confidential and a Sudan specialist who interviewed the ex-guerrilla leader several times over the years was quoted by BBC, "John Garang did not tolerate dissent and anyone who disagreed with him was either imprisoned or killed."

CIA use of tough guys like Garang in Sudan, Savimbi in Angola, Mobutu in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), had been reported, even in mass media, though certainly not featured or criticized, but presently, this is of course buried away from public awareness and meant to be forgotten, as commercial media focuses on presenting the U.S. wars of today in a heroic light. It has traditionally been the chore of progressive, alternate and independent journalism to see that their deathly deeds supported by U.S. citizens tax dollars are not forgotten, ultimately not accepted and past Congresses and Presidents held responsible, even in retrospect, when not in real time.

Oil and business interests remain paramount and although Sudan is on the U.S.

Government's state sponsors of terrorism list, the United States alternately praises its cooperation in tracking suspect individuals or scolds about the Janjaweed in Darfur. National Public Radio on May 2, 2005 had Los Angeles Times writer Ken Silverstein talk about his article "highlighting strong ties between the U.S. and Sudanese intelligence services, despite the Bush administration's criticism of human-rights violation in the Sudan." Title was "Sudan, CIA Forge Close Ties, Despite Rights Abuses." Nicholas Kristof, of The New York Times, won a 2006 Pulitzer Prize for "his having alerted this nation and the world to these massive crimes against humanity. He made six dangerous trips to Darfur to report names and faces of victims of the genocide for which President Bush had long before indicted the government of Sudan to the world's indifference." [Reuters] But last November saw the opening of a new U.S. consulate in Juba the capital of the Southern region. (Maybe consider this an example of "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!" especially where oil is involved.)

The point is there is human suffering at mammoth level proportions. Humanitarian activists are trying to pry open the purse strings of an administration and congress willing to spend billions upon billions to get people killed and keep them in their place, namely, at our feet. Reminding Congress of what needs to be atoned for because of past policies of supporting war and human destruction could eventually make present policies of war intolerable. Americans are presently not exactly conscious stricken about dead and maimed Iraqis and Afghans, for commercial media always keeps of most of the human particulars of war crimes modestly out of sight, dramatizing much lesser losses and suffering of American military personal abroad.

Darfur made the headlines again because a governor of presidential timber was building up his foreign policy credentials. Meanwhile we are going to continue to see newsreels of our mass media depressing us with scenes of starving children, basically as testimony of how evil another Islamic nation's government is, so we can feel good - and want to purchase the products needing the advertising - which pays for the entertainment/news programs - which keep viewers in the dark about THEIR contribution to the suffering brought upon those people all the way over there in Africa.

Just try to put 4 and 2 million of anything into perspective. We are talking about an equivalent to the sets of eyes of half the population of Manhattan. Imagine one of us, whether a precious child, a handsome man, a beautiful woman, - to the tune of, (dirge of), one times four million, half of us dead. Sorry! It has no impact right? We realize that, remembering the words of Joseph Stalin (of all people), "One man's death is a tragedy, a thousand, is a statistic." There is absolutely no way we can whip up enough anguish to match a total of four million displaced and two million dead Sudanese, unless we could be of a mind and heart with Martin Luther King dealing with three million dead Vietnamese, also as in this case, over on the other side of the world, far from our living rooms - "So it is that those of us who are yet determined that "America will be" are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land." (MLK, 1967, "Beyond Vietnam")

This writer remembers reading newspapers articles about the U.S. backing the Southern Sudan rebellion way back then. If we had supported a side that wound up winning, we would be bragging about our having supported 'freedom fighters'. But we just threw a lot of money and outdated weapons at a John Garang in the Sudan, as we did with Jonas Savimbi in Angola, to the ultimate destruction of millions of people, and they LOST! Like we did in Vietnam, and half-way lost in Korea, and now are mid-way losing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Jesus! Calculating the chances of an investment in human life and money coming to a

fruition of sorts – that is certainly the job of any intelligence gathering agency! What we have had is an Agency using its gathered intelligence to do unintelligent things because, as our Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote more than a hundred and twenty-five years ago, “Things are in the saddle and ride herd over men” (trampling others under foot, we might add)

The European Union is under pressure from inside to assure that a United Nations force of 20,000 men will be sent to Darfur as required by Security Council resolution 1706, and to threaten sanctions in order to halt a war the U.S. was originally interested to see begun.

The U.N. Security Council will receive a list from the International Criminal Court of those Sudanese officials who could be charged with war crimes. The list is expected include some members of rebel organizations among Sudanese government officials and Janjaweed militias. There assuredly will be no names on the list of non-Sudanese officials of nations which were known to have involved themselves in this Sudanese civil war contrary to accepted provisions and obligations of U.N. membership. But we can know that the responsibility for war, slaughter, rape and theft in Sudan extends beyond the leaders of those murderously wielding guns and swords.

It will be good if outside influence will now be focused on peace, but citizens best be vigilant of their nation’s foreign policy intentions. The world has heard many protestations that oil is not a reason for war, but blood and oil has been known to mix.

*Jay Jenson is a New York based musician and writer whose articles on media have been published in the US, China, Italy and UK.*

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