

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum: November 12, 2002
Coming in From the Cold: Are Sudan and Libya Leaving Terrorism Behind?

Notes from the comments of Ambassador Tim Carney

Ambassador Tim Carney started out by outlining interrelated questions that needed to be addressed in order to discuss Sudan's role as a state sponsor of terrorism: First, how to recognize a government that has given up on terrorism, and second, how to respond. The Ambassador explained that it is not always obvious when a government has changed its attitude towards terrorism, as it could represent a "piecemeal movement" where one faction of the government that is against terrorism is rivaled by another, which supports it. With Sudan in particular, it is difficult to understand a government that states a movement away from terrorism while pursuing an unjust civil war.

Sudan has a long history of terrorist support, which directly contributed to its current economic sanctions and place on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Sudan has acted as a training and "R&R" center for many terrorist groups dating back to the 1960's, and the 1989 Islamic Coup strengthened Sudanese government support to Islamic and terrorist operations. The failure of the Sudanese government to produce the suspects of the assassination attempt on Egyptian president Mubarak in 1995 resulted in sanctions placed on the country by the UN Security Council.

But there are signs that Sudan is turning away from terrorism. Long before the events of September 11, a high ranking Sudanese military intelligence official with a fairly speckled past, in the context of serious discussions on U.S. interests in seeing Osama bin Laden expelled from Sudan, likely added an unofficial offer to remit Bin Laden to Saudi Arabia; but because there were no indictments against Bin Laden at the time, the United States did not take up the offer. Sudan also allowed a U.S. government photographer to photograph militia-training sites in Sudan, and acted cooperatively in response to the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi by offering suspects up to the U.S. government. The Clinton administration sent a counter-terrorism task force to Sudan in 2000 with a six-point list to be fulfilled, and that team (with some personnel changes) remains in Sudan today. Even before September 11, 2001, it was clear that Sudan was cooperating with U.S. requests to address their issues revolving terrorism.

Ambassador Carney closed his speech by declaring that public debate is the first step in responding to the movements taken by the Sudanese government to comply with the issues of terrorism, and he encouraged the audience to begin that debate in the Q & A section of the forum.