

# **IMAGES OF SUDAN**



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**Case Studies in  
Propaganda  
and Misrepresentation**

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# Map of Sudan



## *Abbreviations*

AASG	American Anti-Slavery Group
ASNE	American Society of News Editors
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSI	Christian Solidarity International
CSW	Christian Solidarity Worldwide
ICG	International Crisis Group
MI6	British Intelligence Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIF	National Islamic Front
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NSCC	New Sudan Council of Churches
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
OPCW	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA-United	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSIM	South Sudan Independence Movement
SSLM	South Sudan Liberation Movement
SUNA	Sudan News Agency
UN	United Nations
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WFP	World Food Programme



## *Introduction*

Early in life I noticed that no event is correctly reported in a newspaper, but in Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie. I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed...and I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that had never happened. I saw, in fact, history being written not in terms of what happened but of what ought to have happened according to various 'party lines'.

George Orwell, **Homage to Catalonia**<sup>1</sup>

A civil war has been fought in Sudan, off and on, since 1955. This war has been between the Sudanese government and various rebel groups in southern Sudan. Since 1983 the war in the south has been fought against the Government of Sudan by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).<sup>2</sup> It is a conflict that has cost the country dearly in lost lives and millions of displaced civilians. It is also a conflict that has done considerable damage to the reputation and image of Sudan and the Sudanese people. In July 2002, the first steps of what may well result in a comprehensive ceasefire and political settlement in Sudan were made.<sup>3</sup> By early 2003 the Sudanese government and others appeared to be optimistic that peace was close.<sup>4</sup>

Given the move towards a peaceful settlement, it is even more important than before for the propaganda war surrounding the Sudanese conflict to be analysed. It is time now to cut away the ground of those constituencies still

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<sup>1</sup> George Orwell, **Homage to Catalonia**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1979, p.234.

<sup>2</sup> The SPLA is sometimes also referred to as the SPLM or SPLM/A, a reference to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, ostensibly the political component of the organisation. **The Economist** states that "the rebels have always, in theory, been a political movement as well as an army. In practice, the army was the movement" (**The Economist**, London, March 1998). This study refers to the organisation as the SPLA.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, "US Says Deal Between Sudan, Rebels is 'Significant Step' Towards Peace", News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 July 2002; "Sudan Opposition Welcomes Deal", News Article by Associated Press, 21 July 2002; "Sudan Truce Monitors Optimistic on Peace Prospects", News Article by Reuters, 23 July 2002.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, "Sudan's Civil War Almost Over, Says Mediator", News Article by Voice of America, 7 February 2003, "Sudan Says Latest Peace Efforts Encouraging", News Article by Reuters, 26 January 2003; "Khartoum Aims for Peace Deal by mid-2003: FM", News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 December 2002.

using propaganda imagery to seek to prolong one of Africa's longest-running civil wars.

The Sudanese people are a self-evidently proud and fiercely independent nation, one of the very few African nations that, during the *Mahdiyya*, held the political and military might of the British Empire at its zenith at bay for more than a decade.<sup>5</sup> Since independence in 1956, Sudan has been blighted by seemingly endless coalition and sectarian party politics, an ongoing civil war, economic stagnation, foreign destabilisation and various degrees of media distortion.

The Sudanese have always had a tendency towards independence of mind, theological, national and political. The Mahdi's regime, for example, has been described as "one of the first modern Islamicist revolts against corrupt, secular, colonial authorities".<sup>6</sup> The Republic of Sudan, and particularly the present government, has maintained this independence. This is one reason, for example, why somewhat transparent attempts to portray present-day Sudan as a terrorist state that is both a mirror and an instrument of Iran and Iran's model of Islamic fundamentalism, simply do not reflect reality. It is also this independence of mind which had initially led to difficulties with the United States in the post-Cold War international realignment. And Sudan has come in for considerable criticism for being the first Arab country to become a modern, democratic Islamist republic.

There are several parallels between Western attempts to demonise Sudan and the Sudanese in the 1880s, and subsequent attempts in the 1990s. Alan Moorehead, provides a description of the atmosphere in Europe and Britain following the death of General Gordon in 1885 and the consolidation of the Islamic state in Sudan in the late nineteenth century:

In Europe at this time, and especially in England, there was a general disposition to regard the Mahdist state as an implacable evil...Mahdism, of course, was a far less serious affair, and it hardly affected the general current of events outside the Sudan. Yet the hostility toward it in Europe ran very deep. It was not only a question of Victorian power and self-righteousness smarting from a sense of unavenged defeat: it was felt that the Christian faith itself was defied by these murderous fanatics in the Sudan...This was the

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<sup>5</sup> The *Mahdiyya* was the state which existed in Sudan from 1885, following the fall of Khartoum and the death of British General Charles Gordon, until 1898, firstly under Muhammed Ahmed, the "Mahdi", and then his successor Khalifa Abdullahi.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Moorehead, **Times Literary Supplement** (London), 2 August 1996.

atmosphere of war, when all things tend to become exaggerated and touched by propaganda...As in time of war communications failed, a heavy fog of censorship prevented the impartial facts from penetrating to either side, and ignorance was a wonderful breeding-ground for imagination.<sup>7</sup>

Sudan was the focus of one of the first systematic propaganda campaigns of the new media age. The independent *Mahdiyya* state in Sudan, responsible for the defeat of General Gordon and British power in Sudan in 1885, was projected as “fanatic” and made up of “wild hordes of dervishes”.<sup>8</sup>

Attempts in the 1990s to demonise Sudan therefore have a clear historical precedent. The first comment to be made is that the Victorian attitude described above by Moorehead would today be condemned as colonialist and racist. Yet there is a stark resonance of Moorehead’s description of the attitudes towards Sudan in the 1880s, of many of the contrived international attitudes towards Sudan in the 1990s. Now, just as then, regarding much of the international view, it can also be said that “ignorance was a wonderful breeding-ground for imagination”. It is a matter of record that the contemporary writings on Sudan of the British commentator Bernard Levin, for example, have quite starkly echoed the somewhat lurid writings of the 1880s, referring as he did to the present Sudanese government as “savages”. Both the civil war within Sudan, and the covert war of destabilisation waged by the Clinton Administration in the 1990s have seen what Moorehead described as a “heavy fog of censorship” descend once again where “all things tend to become exaggerated and touched by propaganda”.<sup>9</sup> Disinformation and misinformation have made it almost impossible to obtain a clear and accurate account of events and circumstances within Sudan, and indeed the region.

What is also clear, even if we in the West miss it, is that many Sudanese see a distinct sub-text in much of the contemporary criticism of Sudan. In her contribution to **Sudan: State and Society in Crisis**, Sudan scholar Professor Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban makes the point that: “The unquestioned assumption that Islam sanctioned slavery created an ideology that justified expanding British interests in Sudan, especially control of the Nile waters, and helped to engender the mood of a Christian crusade to emancipate the region during the

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<sup>7</sup> Moorehead, op. cit., p. 286.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of this demonisation, see M. Morsy, **North Africa 1800-1900**, Longman, London, 1984, pp. 247-66.

<sup>9</sup> Moorehead, op. cit., p. 286.

Mahdist uprisings and their aftermath”.<sup>10</sup> The colonial and racist overtones of the Victorians have been superseded by similar subtext, particularly regarding the allegations of slavery made by some anti-government propagandists, many of whom are latter-day Christian activists. These themes also extend to Western perceptions and *diktat* as to which parliamentary forms of political system and democracy are best for Sudan.

The accusations that have been systematically levelled against the government and people of Sudan during the 1990s are grave and deserve a far better investigation than they have hitherto received. This study argues that generally accepted views of Sudan initially held within Europe, and still within North America, have lacked balance and in several key instances are very questionable. These views include projections of Sudan as a fundamentalist Islamic regime, a state sponsor of terrorism, and one closely identified with systemic human rights abuses including institutionalised slavery. While it is true that many questionable things have happened within Sudan in the course of a decades-long civil war, the above depiction of Sudan jars with reality. It certainly runs contrary to a distinct change in attitude regarding Sudan within much of the international community, including the European Union, the Organisation of African Unity, the Arab League, the Non-Aligned Movement, the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other groupings and countries within the developing world.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, “Islamization in Sudan: A Critical Assessment”, in John O. Voll (Editor), **State and Society in Crisis**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991, p.74.

<sup>11</sup> Sudan has, for example, over the past several years emerged as a leader of the region and internationally. These developments culminated in Sudan’s presidency of the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) body, as well as the Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, as well as the chairmanship of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. See, “Sudan Seeks to Showcase its Islamic Credentials in OIC Meeting, Underline Image of Moderation”, News Article by Associated Press, 24 June 2002. Sudan’s relationship with the European Union has also improved dramatically: “EU, Sudan to Normalise Ties, Resume Development After Peace Accord”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 11 December 2002. See also “EU and Sudan Agree to Mend Rifts Through Dialogue”, **Middle East Times**, 19 November 1999; “EU Seeks to Renew Dialogue with Sudan Broken Off in 1996”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 10 November 1999 and “EU to Resume Financial Aid to Sudan After Decades-Long Break”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 30 January 2002. In July 2000, the countries of Africa also selected Sudan to represent the continent as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The fifty-three African nations of the Organisation of African Unity chose Sudan over Mauritius and Uganda to succeed Namibia as the African representative on the Security Council. Although ultimately unsuccessful as the result of intense American lobbying, the Egyptian Foreign Minister said that “there is an African and an Arab decision in Sudan’s favour concerning this issue.” In May 2001, the international community elected Sudan to sit on the 53-member United Nations Human Rights Commission, while at the same time voting the United

Distortion is often a feature of conflict, and especially civil war. Sudan has additionally been the focus for systematic propaganda by the United States government and some of her neighbours. This state-sponsored propaganda has added a further layer of cold-blooded, clinical misinformation and disinformation. The might of the most powerful government in the world has been focused upon one of the world's poorest – and Khartoum has simply been unable to adequately respond to the onslaught.

While it is clear that there is ground for legitimate concern about some events within Sudan, many issues have been greatly exaggerated, sometimes grotesquely so. State-sponsored propaganda aside, the issue is additionally one of balance – or more specifically the general lack of balance with regard to how Sudan is presented and analysed. Far too much of the projection of Sudan has been by observers, academic, media, diplomatic or religious, who have been either unable or unwilling to objectively assess the situation and events within the country. There has also been a vigorous, hostile, private-sector campaign focused on Sudan. This external propaganda war has undoubtedly prolonged the Sudanese civil war. Various political and religious constituencies within the United States, fuelled by deeply questionable images of Sudan, have clamoured for the United States government to escalate the Sudanese conflict at precisely the time when the prospect for peace is at its closest ever.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, these constituencies have also encouraged Sudanese rebels to prolong and intensify their war.

George Orwell provides us with the telling snap-shot cited above of propaganda and information warfare in the Spanish civil war in the 1930s. There are obvious similarities between the Sudan and Spain, and there are stark differences. One difference between Spain and Sudan is that contemporary means of propaganda have become infinitely more sophisticated. Another is that in Spain the conflict was waged between equally matched ideological camps, both adept at propaganda, whereas in Sudan the US has had a tremendous advantage. We should also bear in mind that the Spanish civil war was fought within Europe, in a country comparatively easy to get to. It was a country with accessible languages, and a conflict that was well-covered on both sides by journalists. It was nevertheless still a war subject to considerable

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States off. See, for example, "U.S. Loses Seat on U.N. Human Rights Commission, Sudan Joins Commission", News Article by Associated Press, 3 May 2001.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, "To Stop Sudan's Brutal Jihad, Support Sudan's Opposition", Backgrounder No. 1449, The Heritage Foundation, Washington-DC, 13 June 2001.

disinformation and misinformation. The Sudanese conflict in the 1990s was considerably more difficult to cover journalistically. War-zones were hard to get to and get into, and local languages were often inaccessible. It was also a conflict dominated by disinformation. Questionable Western news “coverage” has been central to projections of Sudan.

The similarities are also clear. There are London newspapers that have been retailing lies about Sudan and there have been no shortage of eager intellectuals, and activists, building emotional superstructures over events that have never happened or which have been grotesquely distorted. And there has been the deliberate, systematic use of state-sponsored propaganda, considerably sharpened as a science since the 1930s.

Propaganda war is a variant of armed conflict. To use the American Civil War cliché, it is often won by those who get to the battlefield the “fastest with the mostest”. And quite simply the Sudanese government has been overwhelmed in this unequal contest. As we shall see, anti-Sudanese propaganda has varied from claims about involvement with “weapons of mass destruction” to claims that the Muslim government was draining the blood of southern Sudanese Christian children in Khartoum, a variant on the age-old Jewish blood-libel.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the systematic and deeply questionable anti-Sudanese propaganda that has been circulated has come from the United States, both by way of “state-sponsored propaganda” and also by way of private-sector propaganda, which in turn was actively encouraged by the Clinton Administration. This now has a life of its own. Sudan has been a free-fire zone for propaganda for several years – and what appears in print often appears to be there forever. The examples outlined in this study merely scratch the surface of what has been a sustained and all too successful propaganda war.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, “Sudanese Children Sold as Slaves, say Christian Groups”, **The Times** (London), 16 March 1996. **The Observer** newspaper had also previously claimed that black southern children were being “used as a living blood bank for northern soldiers...every time there is a major battle, they are rounded up to donate their blood”. The source was anonymous, “Sudan Revives the Slave Trade”, **The Observer** (London), 9 April 1995, and repeated in Bhatia Shyam, “A War’s Human Booty”, **World Press Review**, August 1995. The Jewish blood-libel is anti-Semitic propaganda dating back to the Middle Ages alleging that Jews kidnap and sacrifice non-Jewish children for ritual purposes. See, for example, “Bloody and Hateful Propaganda”, **The Washington Times**, 15 March 2002.

## Chapter 1

# *Sudan and State-Sponsored Propaganda*

Propaganda. Noun. The systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, esp. in a tendentious way in order to encourage or instil a particular attitude or response. Also, the ideas, doctrine, etc., disseminated thus; the vehicle of such propagation.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of propaganda is to encourage people to think a particular way.<sup>15</sup> The American sociologist Michael Choukas, himself formerly a senior official in the Office of Strategic Services – the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency – further defined propaganda as “the controlled dissemination of deliberately distorted notions in an effort to induce action favorable to predetermined ends of special interest groups”.<sup>16</sup> State-sponsored propaganda has been a particular feature of conflict over the past century, as has been the closely associated phenomena of “atrocities” propaganda.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the first instance of the use of this sort of systematic propaganda to have emerged in modern times was the Bryce Report during the First World War. The distinguished British lawyer and diplomat Lord Bryce put his name to the report which claimed, for example, that “murder, lust and pillage prevailed over many parts of Belgium on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilised nations during the last three centuries”. It was published in 1915 by the British government and translated into thirty languages: it alleged, amongst other things, German involvement in mass rapes, bayoneting babies, and the cutting off of children’s hands and women’s breasts. While there is no doubt that German forces were party to unacceptable behaviour, it is now evident that there were many questions about the accuracy of the Bryce Report. A Belgian commission of enquiry in 1922 was unable to corroborate a single significant

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<sup>14</sup> **Oxford English Dictionary**, 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> For a general history of propaganda and conflict see, Jacques Ellul, **Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes**, Vintage Books, New York, 1973; Philip M. Taylor, **Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day**, Manchester University Press, Gloucestershire, 1995; and Oliver Thomson, **Easily Led: A History of Propaganda**, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1999; Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, **Propaganda: Political Reality and Identity 1300-2000**, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Choukas, **Propaganda Comes of Age**, Public Affairs Press, Washington-DC, 1965, p.5.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, J. M. Read, **Atrocity Propaganda 1914-19**, Yale University Press, 1941, and Arthur Ponsonby, **Falsehood in War**, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1928.

allegation made in the Bryce Report. It has subsequently been described as “largely a tissue of invention, unsubstantiated observations by unnamed witnesses, and second-hand eyewitness reports, depending far more on imagination than any other factor.”<sup>18</sup> The American historian H.C. Peterson called the Bryce Report “one of the worst atrocities of the war.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, there is no doubt that Sudanese combatants have also been party to unacceptable behaviour, such is invariably the case in war-time, but not to the extent or seriousness of the allegations against them. Sudan has had its fair share of Bryce Report-type publications, similarly based upon “unnamed witnesses and second-hand eyewitness reports”. These assertions, whether they be on “oil displacement”, “slavery” or “terrorism”, also seem to have depended more on imagination than reality. Nonetheless they have been widely circulated, especially in this media age, by the latter-day equivalents of Orwell’s overeager academics and unquestioning newspapers.

In the course of the 1990s, although not at war with Sudan, the Clinton Administration similarly chose to demonise Sudan and used every means at its disposal to bring down the Sudanese government.<sup>20</sup> And, in comparison with 1915, modern propagandists have a much wider and more impressive range of print, radio, television, and electronic media to use in their campaigns. Every propaganda device at its disposal was deployed by Washington to isolate Africa’s biggest country. Several of the sorts of claims made in the Bryce Report can be seen in the Clinton Administration’s attacks on Khartoum, including the use of “reports”, secondary accounts and unattributed claims.

Such outright American hostility jarred with previous attitudes towards Sudan. On independence in 1956, Sudan’s immediate post-independence foreign policy was friendly towards the West. The country subsequently experienced both civilian and military government, and in 1969 General Gafaar Nimeiri came to power in a *coup d’état*. Nimeiri abolished all existing political institutions and parties and assumed the role of president. Politically, Nimeiri’s regime initially veered towards the left until an attempted *coup* by the Sudanese communist party in July 1971. He then made overtures towards Washington.

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Buitenhuis, **The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda 1914-18 and After**, B.T. Batsford Ltd, London, 1989, p.27; Phillip Knightley, **The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo**, Prion Books, London, 2000, p.87-88.

<sup>19</sup> H.C. Peterson, **Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality**, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1939, p.58.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, “Wielding Aid, U.S. Targets Sudan to be Sent to Neighbors Who Are Backing Rebel Forces”, **The Washington Post**, 10 November 1996.

These were welcomed by the American government. In 1972, the Nimeiri regime ended the civil war in southern Sudan, which had been fought on and off since 1955, by agreeing that the south would enjoy autonomy. The American government restored diplomatic relations with Sudan and resumed economic aid. Sudan became one of the key allies of the United States both regionally and in the Middle East. In September 1983, Nimeiri introduced Islamic *sharia* law throughout Sudan. Sudan was the largest recipient of American Security Assistance Programme funding in sub-Saharan Africa throughout most of the 1980s, receiving almost eight hundred millions dollars in military, economic and development assistance.<sup>21</sup> This continued after Nimeiri's embracing of Islamic politics.

Nimeiri was overthrown in 1985. After a one-year transitional period, elections were held in 1986 which resulted in a democratically-elected government headed by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. Three years of weak coalition governments followed, governments dominated by two Islamic sectarian parties, the Umma Party headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi, and the Democratic Unionist Party. Sudan went through a series of political, economic and military crises. In June 1989, a military *coup d'état* led by General Omer al-Bashir overthrew Sadiq al-Mahdi's administration. This was welcomed by the United States government.<sup>22</sup> Following the 1989 *coup*, the Sudanese government made attempts to gradually civilianise itself, and established a modern Islamic republic in Sudan. Michael Field, in **Inside the Arab World**, has stated that: "The only Arab country that has put into effect modern, republican, Islamist ideas has been Sudan."<sup>23</sup>

It may be that the independence of the Sudanese government, and the threat of a modern, democratic and republican Islamic model to some of America's absolutist and authoritarian allies in the Middle East, marked it out as a target for American displeasure throughout the Clinton Administration. Subsequent American hopes that the government of Sudan would fall, either through political or military pressure from within the country, have proved to be

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<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, **Arms for the Horn. U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia 1953-1991**, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1991, p.255. This was made up of \$296 million in American military assistance and \$506 million in economic support funds for the years 1980 through 1985: Raymond W. Copson, **Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace**, M.E. Sharpe, London, 1999, p.143

<sup>22</sup> See, for example the comments of the then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, in **Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent**, St Martin's Press, New York, 2000, p.65.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Field, **Inside the Arab World**, John Murray, London, 1994, p.257.

without foundation. The attempts by the Sudanese government to address those areas said to be of concern to the United States were ignored by the Clinton Administration.<sup>24</sup> The Clinton White House chose to seek to overthrow the present government in Sudan, using every means at their disposal short of outright war, including economic sanctions, international isolation, economic and military destabilisation, and encouraging regional intervention. It is inconceivable that the Clinton Administration would not have also waged an all-out propaganda war against Sudan – and that agencies of the American government would have sought to demonise and distort the image of Sudan whenever and wherever they could. It would be very naïve not to accept that this has happened.

This propaganda war has been both overt and covert. It is very difficult to document cause and effect. But the fact is that Sudan has been subject to a sophisticated propaganda war to which it was simply unable to respond adequately. Sudan was to the Clinton Administration what Nicaragua was to the Reagan White House. Key Clinton Administration officials such as former Africa director, John Prendergast, have drawn a clear comparison between American involvement in Sudan and Nicaragua.<sup>25</sup> Given this comparison it is useful to note the Reagan Administration's propaganda offensive against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The National Security Archive observed that: "To...wage the important fight for American and international public opinion, [the White House] created a sophisticated propaganda apparatus to reshape perceptions of the conflict in Central America. This campaign resembled the type of covert propaganda operations the CIA routinely engages in against foreign nations but is prohibited from undertaking at home...Moreover...U.S. military psychological specialists, skilled in 'persuasive communications,' were detailed to Washington...to 'prepare studies, papers, speeches and memoranda to support [public diplomacy] activities,' and look for "exploitable themes and trends'...The Office of Public Diplomacy peddled these 'themes' to journalists, editors, academics, conservative constituent groups, Congress and the general public through a variety of mechanisms...Public diplomacy tactics also

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, David Rose, "The Secret Bin Laden Files: The Al-Qaeda Intelligence the U.S. Ignored", *Vanity Fair* (New York), January 2002.

<sup>25</sup> See Prendergast's comment: "The parallels to Central America in the 1980s are stark. The US provided covert aid to the Contras (and official aid to the regimes in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) and because of domestic public pressure urged numerous reforms on the Contras (and the three Central American governments), especially in the area of human rights and institutional reform (though the pressures were undercut by an administration in Washington not serious about human rights)", in *Crisis Response: Humanitarian Band-Aids in Sudan and Somalia*, Pluto Press, London, 1997, p.77.

incorporated what internal documents called ‘White Propaganda Operations’ – sponsoring stories and opinion columns in the press while disguising any government connection – and promoting misinformation.’<sup>26</sup>

The Clinton Administration has replicated this formula. In fact, the only aspect of the Clinton Administration’s otherwise disastrous Sudan policy that could be said to have succeeded, at least temporarily, was the demonisation of Sudan.<sup>27</sup> There can be no doubt whatsoever that the Clinton Administration initiated similar projects affecting Sudan. Indeed, there is considerable evidence of such attempts at disinformation.

The Clinton Administration’s policy towards Sudan followed a set pattern. Judy Butler is an academic who has closely studied American foreign policy as it applied to other developing countries such as Nicaragua in Central America. In describing American foreign policy tactics she states that: “The chief means of delegitimization within the United States has been the propaganda war. This war has two major and complementary tactics: ‘control of the agenda’ ...and ‘perception management’.”<sup>28</sup> It is very clear that all these steps have been used by the Clinton Administration to isolate and destabilise Sudan. The Administration has from 1993 onwards sought to secure “control of the agenda” and to manage the way in which Sudan was perceived. Propaganda has been a distinct feature of the Sudanese conflict, just as it has featured in all conflicts in which the United States has become involved. American foreign policy has always included varying degrees and types of propaganda:

One of the United States’ primary assets in influencing and shaping world politics is its mastery of the use of propaganda. The art of propaganda resulted in great success during and after World War II. The United States...turned this practice into a leading variable in its foreign policy outlook...the US enhanced the borrowed art, added and deducted accordingly, to make it fit with the changing political environment. By far, the art of demonization is the United States’ most unique and most effective technique of them all.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution”, The National Security Archives’, at <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/niessayx.htm>

<sup>27</sup> For a critique of the Clinton Administration’s Sudan policy, see David Hoile, **Farce Majeure: The Clinton Administration’s Sudan Policy 1993-2000**, The European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Rosset and John Vandermeer (Editors), **Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution. The New Nicaragua Reader**, Grove Press Inc, New York, 1986, p.211-23.

<sup>29</sup> “American Foreign Policy and the Art of Demonisation”, Article published by Arabic.com, 10 April 2000, at [www.arabia.com/article/0,1690,News-17819,00.html](http://www.arabia.com/article/0,1690,News-17819,00.html)

In his foreword to a National Defense University study of political warfare, US Navy Vice-Admiral James A. Baldwin, commented: “Warfare is often defined as the employment of military means to advance political ends...Another, more subtle means – political warfare – uses images, speeches, slogans, propaganda, economic pressures...to influence the political will of an adversary.”<sup>30</sup>

The process of demonising Sudan was initially embarked upon by accusing Sudan of being an extremist Islamic state, and therefore, by definition, a state sponsor of regional and international terrorism, and human rights abuser. It was also stated that Sudan had been an ally of Saddam Hussein in Iraq during the Gulf War. And from 1995 onwards the Clinton Administration would make much of allegations of human rights abuse, religious intolerance, and “slavery” and “slave trading” in Sudan. It is ironic that the Administration set about demonising the Sudanese while at the same time a former American ambassador to Sudan believed that the Sudanese people “deserved their reputation as the nicest people in the eastern half of the African continent”.<sup>31</sup>

While whatever resonance this propaganda campaign may have had internationally has gradually dissipated, its impact domestically within the United States has been and continues to be dramatic. It is within the United States that it is at its most powerful and destructive and continues to have an influence within the American body politic out of all proportion to its veracity. The orchestrated propaganda onslaught, with its Islamophobic undertones, perpetuated by federally-funded bodies such as the so-called US Commission for International Religious Freedom, was embraced and acted upon by a wide cross section of political and church groups. From this has emerged a vibrant anti-Sudan industry, suckled by the Clinton Administration, which has in turn brought considerable, ultimately undue, pressure to bear upon the Bush Administration.

It has been easy to achieve a certain momentum. The American media became a natural focus for anti-Sudanese projections. There is a tendency to support one’s government. The 1999 American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) report on the press and media revealed that 78 percent of American adults agree with the assessment that there is bias in the news media, and that powerful

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<sup>30</sup> James A. Baldwin, Vice-Admiral, US Navy, in Foreword to Paul A. Smith’s **On Political Warfare**, National Defense University Press, Fort McNair, Washington-DC, 1990.

<sup>31</sup> Donald Petterson, **Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict and Catastrophe**, Westview Books, Boulder, Colorado, 1999, p.75.

people or organisations, such as politicians or government officials and others, can influence a newspaper to get stories into a paper. In an American Society of Newspaper Editors Journalism Credibility Project think tank session journalists agreed: “Journalists [have a] willingness to print the ‘official’ version of events...”<sup>32</sup>

American commentators have expressed concern at the media’s involvement in foreign policy issues. Ted Galen Carpenter, writing in his 1996 study **The Captive Press: Foreign Policy Crises and the First Amendment**, accepts James Madison’s concern that the greatest government abuse is to be found in the management of foreign affairs. He states that the news media have failed to question the “interventionist” tendency of American government leaders. Carpenter believes that “correspondents, editors, pundits, and publishers who work for major media outlets tend to see themselves as members of an opinion-making elite. They consider themselves on an intellectual and social par with high-level policymakers, an attitude that increases the prospect of their being co-opted by ambitious and determined policymakers”.<sup>33</sup>

There is also undoubtedly considerable peer group pressure. In a 1997 examination of American journalism, **Washington Post** media columnist Dick Harwood addressed the issue of bias in press reporting. He cited Leo Rosten’s landmark 1937 sociological study of Washington correspondents: “Objectivity in journalism is no more possible than objectivity in dreams. What the newspaper man tells, what he considers worth telling, and how he tells it are the end products of the social heritage; a functional relationship to his superiors – the editors and publishers; and a psychological construct of desire, calculation, and inhibition.”<sup>34</sup> Harwood also invoked the writings of Robert Reich, Christopher Lasch, Charles Murray and others who focused on the “cognitive elite”: “Journalists, as members of this cognitive elite, derive their world views, mindsets and biases, from their peers.”

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<sup>32</sup> Christine D. Urban, **Examining Our Credibility: Perspectives of the Public and the Press**, A Report for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington-DC, 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, **The Captive Press: Foreign Policy Crises and the First Amendment**, Cato Institute, Washington-DC, 1996, reviewed in **Foreign Policy**, No. 102, Spring 1996, Washington-DC, p.175.

<sup>34</sup> Cited by Harwood in **Summary of the New York Forum. Session II: Bias, Cynicism, Superficiality and Elitism**, Project for Excellence in Journalism, Committee of Concerned Journalists, Washington-DC, 1997.

**A Case Study of State Sponsored Propaganda:  
American Claims of Sudanese Sponsorship of International Terrorism**

Of all the claims it levelled at Khartoum, the Clinton Administration's placing of Sudan on its official list of state sponsors of international terrorism served most to damage the Sudan and perceptions of that country. Administration officials lost no opportunity of repeating claims that Sudan was a supporter of international terrorism. Virtually every press item on Sudan mentions, at least in passing, that Sudan is on this list or has otherwise been accused of involvement in terrorism. The Clinton Administration listed Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism in August 1993. Sudan joined Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria and Cuba on this list. *Whatever other states on the list may have done, Sudan was included in spite of the fact that there was not a single example of Sudanese involvement in any act of international terrorism.*<sup>35</sup> Sudan was listed without any evidence of its alleged support for terrorism. This much is a matter of record.<sup>36</sup> While Sudan may have been keeping bad company at the time, key American observers of events at the time have said that he did not believe Sudan warranted such a listing. Former United States President Jimmy Carter, long interested in Sudanese affairs, went out of his way to see what evidence there was for Sudan's listing. Carter was told there was no evidence:

In fact, when I later asked an assistant secretary of state he said they did not have any proof, but there were strong allegations.<sup>37</sup>

Donald Petterson, the United States ambassador to Sudan at the time of Sudan's listing, stated that he was "surprised" that Sudan was put on the terrorism list. Petterson said that while he was aware of "collusion" between "some elements of the Sudanese Government" and various radical organisations: "I did not think this evidence was sufficiently conclusive to put Sudan on the U.S.

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<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that the British government, the United States' closest ally in the war on terrorism, has publicly stated that it does not consider Sudan to be a state sponsor of terrorism. See, Written Parliamentary Answers, House of Lords **Official Report**, 4 November 2000, col. WA71.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the observations of **The Economist**: "Western diplomats admit that they cannot identify a single external act of terrorism – not even the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York...that can be traced back to Khartoum. Nor have they been able to furnish evidence of the training camps in which Iranians and Afghans are allegedly based. Even its partners say that America has not come up with any proof as to why Sudan should be treated as a terrorist pariah", "Rest Camp for Terrorists: Does Sudan Sponsor Terrorists?", **The Economist** (London), 17 September 1994.

<sup>37</sup> "Carter Delights Khartoum", **The Independent** (London), 17 September 1993.

government's list of state sponsors of terrorism.”<sup>38</sup> **The Financial Times'** Mark Huband noted in 2001: “When Sudan was placed on the U.S. government list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1992, no evidence was offered to support the decision. Nor has Sudan subsequently been found guilty of involvement in terrorist acts”.<sup>39</sup> It is also worth noting the extent to which inclusion on the list is dependent on policy considerations at any one moment in time. Iraq, for example, was first listed in 1979, was de-listed in 1982 when it went to war against Iran, something seen as being in the American interest, and was put back on after the Gulf war. Nothing had changed in the meantime – Saddam Hussein's government was in power throughout. Expediency had dictated Iraq's removal and then relisting.<sup>40</sup>

It would appear that Ambassador Petterson, the Clinton Administration's ambassador to Sudan, was not even briefed prior to the decision to list Sudan being taken. When he queried the decision, he was told by an assistant secretary of state that the “new evidence was conclusive”.<sup>41</sup> The assistant secretary of state briefing Ambassador Petterson would have been the same assistant secretary of state who told former President Carter a few days later that the Clinton Administration did not have any proof, but that there were “strong allegations”. Various newspapers and journals also recorded the simple lack of evidence for terrorist support before and after Sudan's listing. The London **Independent** newspaper of 9 June 1993, for example, stated: “So far, no major terrorist incident has been traced to the Islamic regime in Sudan. The Sudanese lack the logistical abilities to run terrorist networks...even if they wished.” The London **Guardian** newspaper of 19 August 1993 reported that: “Independent experts believe...that these reports [of terrorist training camps] have been exaggerated, and that Sudan is too short of money to make it an active sponsor of terrorism.”

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<sup>38</sup> Donald Petterson, **Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe**, Westview Press, Boulder, 1999, p.69.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Huband, **The Skull Beneath the Skin. Africa After the Cold War**, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 2001, p.275. Huband is an award-winning journalist specialising in the Middle East and Africa. He is the international economics editor at **The Financial Times**. He is also the author of **Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam**, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1998.

<sup>40</sup> The State Department's reports about international terrorism, upon which the listings are based, have also been questioned by American conservative security think-tanks such as the Center for Security Policy. See, for example: “Expert Blasts State Dept. Terror Report as ‘Frankly Fraudulent’”, News Article by **World Tribune**, 24 May 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Petterson, **Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict and Catastrophe**, op. cit.

Several years later the absence of any intelligence to support the Clinton Administration's continuing allegations of Sudanese involvement in terrorism continued to be obvious. In a 26 December 1996 **International Herald Tribune** article by veteran American investigative reporter Tim Weiner, it was clear that no evidence or proof had emerged: "The big issue for the United States is that Sudan has served as a safe house for stateless revolutionaries". Mr Weiner also interviewed key American officials "responsible for analyzing the Sudan". The answer to whether or not Sudan was involved in supporting terrorism, was "we just don't know". Sudan, nevertheless, continued to be listed as a state sponsor of terrorism. And, as a result of being listed, the American government was legally required, amongst other things, to oppose loans to the Sudan by the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

The Clinton Administration tenaciously clung to its propaganda claims about terrorism and Sudan. A striking example of this was Washington's partial closure of the American embassy in Khartoum in 1993, and its total closure in 1996. These actions were presented as pivotal examples of concern about Sudan's alleged support for international terrorism. The Clinton Administration claimed that American embassy staff and their families were in danger.<sup>42</sup> The Clinton Administration's spokesman, Nicholas Burns, stated at the time that:

Over the course of many, many conversations with the Sudanese Government, we simply could not be assured that the Sudanese Government was capable of protecting our Americans against the specific threats that concerned us...[T]he specific nature of these threats, the persistence of these threats, and our root belief at the end of all these conversations that this particular government could not protect them led us to take this extraordinary measure of withdrawing all of our diplomats.<sup>43</sup>

The Clinton Administration went so far as to have the American ambassador to Sudan, Donald Petterson, deliver what was referred to as a "non-message" or "talking points" to the Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir and to Dr Turabi. **The New York Times** journalist Judith Miller described it as such:

The message, officials in Washington said, was delivered in the fall of 1993, not long after Washington received specific intelligence information that

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<sup>42</sup> "Withdrawal of US Diplomats – Security Council Condemnation", **Keesings Archives**, Volume 42, 1996.

<sup>43</sup> Daily Press Briefing, US Department of State, 1 February 1996 available at [http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/daily\\_briefings/1996/9602/960201db.html](http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/daily_briefings/1996/9602/960201db.html)

Sudanese agents were planning an action, which, if carried out, would have harmed American officials. In response, Washington ordered the evacuation of all government dependants in the country, drew down the embassy personnel by half, and ordered Petterson to deliver the warning to Bashir and Turabi.<sup>44</sup>

The note stated that Washington was “aware of Sudan’s involvement in terrorist plots against us in other countries and in the United States.” Ambassador Petterson was instructed to “warn” Sudan “that if there is a Sudanese hand in instigating or conducting such an act in the United States or against American interests” the United States would react. This reaction “could result in the international isolation of Sudan, in the destruction of your economy, and in military measures that would make you pay a high price.”<sup>45</sup>

It is now admitted the “threats” and reports which led to the delivery of the unprecedented “non-message” and which were cited in justifying the above-mentioned decisions regarding the evacuation of embassy personnel were false. A **New York Times** investigation concluded:

In late 1995 the CIA realized that a foreign agent who had warned repeatedly of startling terrorist threats to U.S. diplomats, spies and their children in Khartoum was fabricating information. They withdrew his reports, but the climate of fear and mistrust created by the reports bolstered the case for withdrawing personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, officials said...The embassy remained closed, even though, as a senior intelligence official put it, “the threat wasn’t there” as of 1996.<sup>46</sup>

In his memoirs of his time in Sudan Ambassador Petterson, the United States envoy to Sudan from 1992-95, confirmed that the Clinton Administration’s claims about threats to the US embassy led to an evacuation of the spouses and children of embassy staff and a reduction of that American staff by one-third. Petterson stated, however, that “[w]e at the embassy had seen or heard nothing manifesting a clear and present danger from either terrorists or the Sudanese government. But the order was firm and irrevocable”.<sup>47</sup> Petterson also

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<sup>44</sup> Judith Miller, **God Has Ninety-Nine Names**, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, Note 43, p.501

<sup>45</sup> For a reference to the “Non-Message”, see David Rose, “The Secret Bin Laden Files: The Al-Qaeda Intelligence the U.S. Ignored”, **Vanity Fair** (New York), January 2002, p.52.

<sup>46</sup> “Decision to Strike Factory in Sudan Based on Surmise”, **The New York Times**, 21 September 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Donald Petterson, **Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe**, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1999, p.71.

documented that subsequently “new information” had been “acquired” which indicated “an increasingly precarious situation for Americans in Khartoum”. Ambassador Petterson also revealed that these allegations too were unfounded: “The months wore on, no credible threat to embassy Americans materialized, and eventually serious doubt was raised about the validity of the information that had led to the evacuation.”<sup>48</sup> Petterson’s successor as American envoy, Ambassador Tim Carney, also instructed to issue a similar “non-message” to the Sudanese government, subsequently confirmed that the Clinton Administration’s claims were without substance.<sup>49</sup>

It was also at about this time that the Clinton Administration believed that its national security advisor, Antony Lake, had been targeted for assassination by Sudanese terrorists. Lake was moved into Blair House, a federal mansion across the street from the White House and then to a second, secret, location. **The New York Times** subsequently reported that Lake “disappeared from view around the time the embassy’s personnel were withdrawn”. The supposed threat to Lake was as bogus as the CIA reports concerning the American embassy in Khartoum. As **The New York Times** observed, citing an American intelligence official: “the threat wasn’t there.”<sup>50</sup>

It is now clear, as confirmed by, amongst others, two American ambassadors and **The New York Times**, that both the 1993 partial evacuation and the full withdrawal of the embassy in 1996, Antony Lake’s farcical disappearance, and the “non-messages” delivered by Petterson and Carney, were the results either of deliberate propaganda projections or faulty intelligence reports based on claims subsequently revealed to have been fabricated. The American embassy in Khartoum was subsequently partly re-staffed in October 1997. Yet, as late as March 2000, four years after the above intelligence fiasco, the Clinton White House was still falsely stating: “In 1996, we removed full-time staff from the Embassy and relocated them to Nairobi for security reasons.”<sup>51</sup>

Any detailed examination of the Clinton Administration’s claims of Sudan’s alleged involvement in sponsoring international terrorism exposes the

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<sup>48</sup> Petterson, op.cit., p.91.

<sup>49</sup> See, Tim Carney and Mansoor Ijaz, “Intelligence Failure? Let’s Go Back to Sudan”, **The Washington Post**, 29 June 2002.

<sup>50</sup> “Decision to Strike Factory in Sudan Based on Surmise”, **The New York Times**, 21 September 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Extract on Sudan from the Daily Press Briefing, the United States Department of State, 3 March 2000, 12:35 PM.

shallowness of such allegations.<sup>52</sup> Clinton Administration claims about Sudanese involvement in terrorism were fundamentally undermined by the fact that in 1998 it was admitted that at least one hundred CIA reports on Sudan and terrorism were scrapped as unreliable or having been fabricated.<sup>53</sup> Presumably, these reports had been at the heart of Sudan's listing. The gap between American claims about Sudan and terrorism, and reality, was also clearly demonstrated by Washington's inept attack on the al-Shifa factory, an attack acknowledged to have been the result of yet more disastrous American intelligence failures.<sup>54</sup>

The Clinton Administration's claims about Sudan were further discredited by articles published in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. Both the American magazine **Vanity Fair** and a September 2001 article in **The Observer** newspaper in Britain reported that Sudan had attempted to actively cooperate with the United States with regard to al-Qaeda and Osama bin-Laden for several years and had been repeatedly rebuffed by Washington before eventually being acted upon in part by Washington in 2000.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in November 2001, **The Washington Post** also publicly revealed that Sudan offered to hand Osama bin-Laden over to the American government in 1996, just as Khartoum had extradited "Carlos the Jackal" to France in 1994. Amazingly, the offer was declined.<sup>56</sup> In the wake of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, President Clinton subsequently stated on record that his refusal to accept the Sudanese offer was "the biggest mistake" of his presidency.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See, **Unproven, Unsustainable and Contradictory: United States Government Allegations of Sudanese Involvement in International Terrorism**, The British-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 1999, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org)

<sup>53</sup> See, "Decision to Strike Factory in Sudan Based Partly on Surmise", **The Washington Post**, 21 September 1998; and "Sudan Attack Blamed on US Blunders", **The Times** (London), 22 September 1998.

<sup>54</sup> See, "More Doubts Rise Over Claims for U.S. Attack", **The Wall Street Journal** (New York), August 28, 1998; "Sudan to Allow U.N. to Investigate Any Alleged Chemical-Arm Site", **The Wall Street Journal** (New York), October 16, 1998; "U.S. Should Admit Its Mistake in Sudan Bombing", **The Wall Street Journal** (New York), May 20, 1999.

<sup>55</sup> See, David Rose, "The Secret Bin Laden Files: The Al-Qaeda Intelligence the U.S. Ignored", **Vanity Fair** (New York), January 2002, p.50, "US Rejected Sudanese Files on al-Qaeda: Clinton Administration Refused Offer to Share Terror Network Intelligence", **The Financial Times** (London), 30 November 2001, and "Resentful West Spurned Sudan's Key Terror Files", **The Observer** (London), 30 September 2001.

<sup>56</sup> "Sudan Offered Up bin Laden in '96", **The Washington Post**, 3 October 2001.

<sup>57</sup> "US Missed Three Chances to Seize Bin Laden", **The Sunday Times** (London), 6 January 2002. See, also, "Clinton Blew Chance to Arrest bin Laden", News Article by NewsMax.com, 3 October 2001. Clinton subsequently also admitted that he had turned down the Sudanese offer in a speech to

After several years of declining repeated Sudanese invitations for American intelligence and counter-terrorist personnel to come to Sudan and investigate whatever they wanted to, joint CIA, FBI and State Department counter-terrorism and intelligence teams have been in Sudan continuously, at Khartoum's request, since early 2000, almost eighteen months before the attacks on 11 September 2001.<sup>58</sup> **The Observer** confirmed that in May 2001 these teams had given Sudan "a clean bill of health" with regard to allegations of terrorism. In August 2001 Bush Administration officials further confirmed that the Sudanese-American cooperation on counter-terrorism had been positive.<sup>59</sup> This American-Sudanese intelligence cooperation was said to have "covered everything".<sup>60</sup> In fact, based on these extensive investigations, the United States had agreed to the lifting of the limited United Nations sanctions on Sudan.<sup>61</sup> In December 2001, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner confirmed that Sudan had been co-operating with the United States for some time before the World Trade Center attacks, and that

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the Long Island Association on 15 February 2002. For the full transcript of his comments see "Accusing Media: What Did President Bush Know About 9/11?", News Article by NewsMax.com, 19 September 2002. It was also covered within the United States by Fox News Channel's "Hannity & Colmes", "The O'Reilly Factor", WOR Radio's "The Bob Grant Show" and WABC Radio's "Batchelor & Alexander Show".

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, "US Sees Good Progress in Terrorism Talks with Sudan", News Article by Reuters on 25 September 2001.

<sup>59</sup> "Powell Mulls U.N. Action on Sudan After Report African Government is Moving in Right Direction on Terrorism", News Article by Associated Press, 22 August 2001 and "Sudan Provides Intelligence to U.S.", News Article by Reuters, 29 September 2001.

<sup>60</sup> "Foreign Minister says Sudan has been Cooperating with the United States in the Fight against Terrorism for More Than a Year", News Article by Associated Press, 25 September 2001.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, "US Allows UN Council to End Sanctions Against Sudan", News Article by Reuters, 28 September 2001; "US Ready to End U.N. Sanctions on Sudan Friday", News Article by Reuters, 28 September 2001; "US Allows UN Council to End Sanctions Against Sudan", News Article by Reuters, 28 September 2001. The UN sanctions were imposed, in large part, because Sudan was unable to extradite Mustafa Hamza, one of the gunmen involved in a 1995 assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak during a summit in Ethiopia. Because Sudan was unable to extradite Hamza, an Egyptian national living in Afghanistan, for an act carried out in Ethiopia, UN sanctions were imposed from 1996 until 2001. The sanctions came into effect on the assumption that Hamza was in Sudan and in spite of the fact that Hamza had been located and interviewed by the international media in Afghanistan (in **Al-Hayat** newspaper on 21 April 1996, for example). It is worth noting that Hamza stated that the Egyptian group, *Al Gamaa al Islamiya*, was responsible for the murder attempt. He stated that most of the gunmen involved came from Pakistan, travelling on passports issued by an Arab country, and that one or two men had entered Ethiopia from Sudan, having received visas from the Ethiopian embassy in Khartoum. **Al-Hayat** reported that Hamza stated that there were "deep differences between the ruling Islamic Front in the Sudan and his Group (Gamaa Islamiya). He accused the Sudanese Government [of following a] distorted and deviated application of Islam". Simply put, the Sudanese model of Islam was too liberal for him.

this cooperation had reached new levels since 11 September: “We appreciate Khartoum’s relationship with us.”<sup>62</sup> The Clinton Administration’s projections were exposed for the propaganda they had been.

There was a further, negative consequence of the Clinton White House’s “terrorism” propaganda. On the basis of Washington’s claims of Sudanese “involvement” in terrorism, on 3 November 1997, President Clinton signed executive order 13067, under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1703 *et seq*) and the National Emergencies Act (50 USC 1641 c), which imposed comprehensive trade and economic sanctions against Sudan, declaring “that the policies of Sudan constitute an extraordinary and unusual threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”.<sup>63</sup> It was stated by the Administration that these sanctions were introduced as “direct consequence of the Sudanese regime’s sponsorship of international terrorism”.<sup>64</sup>

The sanctions order has been renewed every year since 1997. These sanctions also made illegal the involvement of any American person in contracts relating to Sudan. This deprived the Sudanese government of any professional American representation within the United States. Sudan was unable to retain any public relations or public affairs consultants or lobbyists within the United States. Furthermore, following the Clinton Administration’s cruise missile attack on a medicine factory in Khartoum the Sudanese government withdrew its embassy from Washington in protest. This left an open goal to any anti-Sudanese propaganda: accusation after accusation was piled on regarding Sudan.

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<sup>62</sup> “U.S. Official Accuses Somalia of Harboring Terrorists”, News Article by Xinhua, 12 December 2001.

<sup>63</sup> “The U.S. Imposes New Sanctions on Sudan”, Thomson Financial Publishing, [www.tfp.com/news/USSudan.htm](http://www.tfp.com/news/USSudan.htm), 4 November 1997. On 1 July 1998, the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued the Sudanese Sanctions Regulations (63 Fed. Reg. 35809, July 1, 1998). These regulations blocked all property and interests in property of the Sudanese Government, its agencies, instrumentalities and controlled entities, including the Bank of Sudan, that were in the United States. They also prohibited: (1) the importation into the United States of any goods or services of Sudanese origin, with the exception of informational material; (2) the exportation or reexportation of goods, technology, or services to Sudan or the Government of Sudan apart from informational materials or donations of humanitarian aid; (3) the involvement of any American person in the export or reexportation of goods and services to or from Sudan; (4) the involvement of any American person in contracts relating to Sudan; (5) the grant or extension of credits or loans by any American person to the Sudanese Government; and (6) transactions relating to the transportation of cargo.

<sup>64</sup> See, text of White House statement on 4 November 1997 at [www.usis.org.il/publish/press/archive/1997/november/wh31105.htm](http://www.usis.org.il/publish/press/archive/1997/november/wh31105.htm)

**A Case Study of State Sponsored Propaganda:  
The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom**

One of the vehicles which was used by the Clinton Administration in its anti-Sudanese campaign has been the federally-funded US Commission on International Religious Freedom. This body was brought into being by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, passed by the United States Congress. The Act requires an annual report on religious freedom. The Commission published its first report at the end of 1999. It perhaps comes as no surprise that Sudan featured among the five countries cited as “countries of particular concern”. The others were China, Iran, Iraq, and Myanmar.<sup>65</sup> Sudan, a country with cathedrals and hundreds of churches, and a significant, active Christian population, north and south, was listed while countries in which it is illegal for Christians to even wear a crucifix were not. The Commission has gone out of its way to focus on Sudan.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, at the March 2000 United Nations Commission on Human Rights meeting in Geneva, Rabbi David Saperstein, the chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, and Ambassador Robert Seiple, US Ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, devoted almost all their time on Sudan during their discussions with non-governmental organisations and the press.<sup>67</sup>

What is self-evident is that while successful as a propaganda projection, especially within the Washington Beltway, the image of Sudan presented by the Commission, that of an intolerant Islamic regime, systematically suppressing Christians, is simply not borne out by reality.<sup>68</sup> Sudanese Christians occupy key posts throughout Sudanese political life. They include the Sudanese vice-president, cabinet members, ambassadors, legislators and civil servants. There are hundreds of churches all through Sudan, north and south, and, as the Commission itself has stated, Christians can worship freely in these churches. There are also hundreds of church schools and centres. Despite its projections

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<sup>65</sup> “U.S. Adds Religious Freedom to Old Sanctions”, News Article by Reuters, 23 December 1999.

<sup>66</sup> For a critique of this body, see, for example, **Partisan and Hypocritical: The United States Commission for International Religious Freedom and Sudan**, The European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, April 2000. It is also worth noting that the Sudanese government has on several occasions invited the US State Department’s Committee on Religious Freedom, the Commission’s forerunner, to visit Sudan to assess at first hand the religious situation in Sudan. They never visited.

<sup>67</sup> “Transcript: Amb. Seiple/Rabbi Saperstein on Religious Freedom”, The Office of International Information Programs, US Department of State, 31 March 2000, Web site: [usinfo.state.gov](http://usinfo.state.gov)

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, **Religion in Sudan**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, June 2002; and **Perceptions and Reality: Christianity Within Sudan**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, June 2002 both available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org)

of Sudan, even the Commission on International Religious Freedom confirmed that the largely non-Muslim southern Sudan was exempt from *sharia* law.<sup>69</sup> The Commission also stated that several Christian groups have received permission to build new churches and that the government permits non-Muslims to worship in existing places of worship. The Commission also documented that only one person was known to be imprisoned “on formal religious grounds”.<sup>70</sup>

The Commission’s claims should perhaps be contrasted with the more objective observations of others. The British Government, for example, responding to a question in parliament about religion in Sudan, stated in 2001:

Sharia law is by and large not imposed on mainly Christian areas such as south Sudan, although there are federal laws which infringe on religious freedom (eg Islamic banking system). The situation is worse for Christians in predominantly Muslim areas, such as around Khartoum, where they face implementation of Islamic punishments.<sup>71</sup>

In November 2001, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan, commented:

Finally, although all counterparts I meet concurred with the view that there is no religious persecution as such, Churches do face some difficulties, and are often harassed with lengthy and cumbersome procedures, particularly hampering their freedom of movement within and outside the country.”<sup>72</sup>

In a March 2002 article in **Foreign Affairs**, Randolph Martin, Senior Director of Operations at the International Rescue Committee, an observer who has travelled extensively within Sudan, commented that “Arab northern Sudan is

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<sup>69</sup> A significant example of Khartoum’s effort to accommodate the interests of Sudan’s non-Muslim southerners was the 1991 exemption of the largely non-Muslim southern Sudan from *sharia* law. Even the Clinton Administration has had to admit that *sharia* law was not applied in the south. The American State Department’s **Sudan Country Report on Human Rights Practices**, for example, has stated: “Sudan’s 1991 Criminal Act, based on Shari’a law, (prescribes) specific “hudud” punishments. The Government officially exempts the 10 Southern States, whose population is mostly non-Muslim, from parts of the 1991 Criminal Act. But the Act permits the possible future application of Shari’a law in the south, if the local state assemblies so decide.” (See, **Sudan Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1995**, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, Washington-DC, February 1996.)

<sup>70</sup> **U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Sudan**, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Washington-DC, 9 September 1999.

<sup>71</sup> House of Commons **Hansard** Written Answers, 18 October 2001.

<sup>72</sup> **The Speech of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan delivered to the Third Committee of the General Assembly**, 8 November 2001, New York.

not an Islamic fundamentalist culture. Travelling through the region, a Westerner does not sense the kind of deep antipathy and xenophobia found in states such as Iran, in Taliban's Afghanistan, or Pakistan."<sup>73</sup> **New York Times** journalist James McKinley Jr has also reported "Khartoum's churches on Sunday are filled to overflowing with Christians, worshipping freely, and those congregations are growing. One measure of the strength of Christianity here is that in recent years Catholic priests have been performing more than 7,000 baptisms of new-borns every Easter, church officials said...In dozens of interviews, Christians acknowledged they do not face overt oppression. By and large they are free to go where they please and to worship at the existing churches."<sup>74</sup> McKinley also quoted a Catholic priest as saying "It is difficult to say there is direct persecution". It has to be said that such images do not quite fit in with the Commission's projections of Sudan as "the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief"<sup>75</sup> or claims by the National Association of Evangelicals and Freedom House of "genocidal persecution" of Christians in Sudan.<sup>76</sup> The Center for Religious Freedom, a division of Freedom House, has also claimed of Sudan that "No place on earth is religious persecution more brutal".<sup>77</sup> It is difficult to make the jump from the Special Rapporteur's "no religious persecution as such" to the world's worst religious, most brutal, genocidal, persecutor.

Professor Tim Niblock is one of the foremost British authorities on Islam and Sudan. He has pointed out two areas in which Sudan's model differs from mainstream Islamist thought. One is the Sudanese Islamists' "explicit acceptance of liberal democracy as the appropriate form of political organisation for Sudan. The advocacy of liberal democracy by the N.I.F. went well beyond the stress which Islamist movements customarily place on the need for shura (consultation)." Secondly, the Sudanese model with regard to women is "qualitatively different from that proposed in most Islamist programmes. The emphasis is on women 'escaping from social oppression' and 'playing a full part in building the new society', rather than on their primary duty lying within

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<sup>73</sup> "Sudan's Perfect War", **Foreign Affairs**, New York, March-April 2002.

<sup>74</sup> "Christians Face Difficulties in Arab Khartoum", **The New York Times**, 5 April 1998.

<sup>75</sup> See, "Your Pain is Our Pain?' Not in Sudan", **Ethics and Religion**, Column No. 1054, 10 November 2001.

<sup>76</sup> See, "Key Christian Leaders to Convene for Action Against Genocidal Persecution: Sudan & North Korea", Press Release by Center for Religious Freedom, Washington-DC, 29 April 2001, and "Christian Leaders Ask U.S. to Sanction Sudan, North Korea", **The Washington Times**, 2 May 2002.

<sup>77</sup> "Center for Religious Freedom Fact Sheet: Sudan", Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House, Washington-DC,

the family”.<sup>78</sup> Even **The New York Times**, a source not noted for its affinity to Islamic models of government, said of Dr Hasan Turabi, the architect of much of the Sudanese model of Islam: “He voices a tolerant version of political Islam – far less conservative than Saudi Arabia’s, far less militant than Iran’s”.<sup>79</sup>

The simple fact is that Sudan is a deeply religious country. Interestingly, in her critical study of Sudan in **God Has Ninety-Nine Names**, Judith Miller documents that:

Since Sudan’s independence, in fact, Islam had played a major role in Sudan’s ostensibly secular politics. As early as 1957 leaders of the Umma and Union Parties had demanded – with Muslim Brotherhood endorsement – that Sudan be declared an ‘Islamic parliamentary republic,’ with sharia established as the ‘main source of legislation.’”<sup>80</sup>

In an interview with the Umma Party president, and former prime minister Sadiq al-Mahdi, whose government was overthrown by the present administration – and whose government did not abolish or alter the *sharia* law introduced by Nimeiri – Miller records him observing of the NIF: “Their Islam is only rhetoric. They haven’t dared cut off a single hand for theft!”<sup>81</sup>

### **Women in Sudan**

Part of the attempts to invoke images of religious intolerance in Sudan has also focused on the position of women in the country.<sup>82</sup> It is a matter of record, however, that Sudan has had one of the most active women’s movements in the African and Arab world. Even sources hostile to the Sudanese government

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<sup>78</sup> Professor Tim Niblock, “Islamist Movements and Sudan’s Political Coherence”, in Herve Bleuchot, Christian Delmet and Derek Hopwood, (Editors), **Sudan: History, Identity, Ideologies**, Ithaca Press, Reading, 1991, p.265.

<sup>79</sup> **New York Times** Service, republished in **International Herald Tribune**, 26 December 1996.

<sup>80</sup> Judith Miller, **God has Ninety-Nine Names**, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996, pp. 151-52.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p.157.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, “systematic discrimination”, “The Forgotten Frontline - Sudan”, **Frontline Fellowship News**, Edition 5, 1994; “In Sudan, women are marginalized and relegated to the background. We face gender discrimination and prejudice”, “Women in Sudan: Slavery and Slave Trade Under the National Islamic Front (NIF) Regime”, The American Anti-Slavery Group, Boston, April 2000; Southern rebels have even tried to portray Sudan as the “Taliban of Africa” (see, “Sudan Rebel Leader Questions Deal With ‘Taliban of Africa’ Government”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 13 March 2002; “Government of Sudan is ‘Taliban of Africa’, Says John Garang, Leader of Opposition Forces”, News Article by Africa Newscast, 16 March 2002), perhaps unaware of the very restrictive position on women under the Taliban (see, for example, “Kabul Women Under Virtual House Arrest”, **The Washington Post**, 7 October 1996).

admit that women's rights are entrenched in Sudan: "In comparison with women in many other African and Middle Eastern countries...Sudanese women have become relatively well-represented in public life."<sup>83</sup>

Professor Fluehr-Lobban, a particular authority on women in Sudan, has observed:

When I began working in the Sudan in 1970 I was struck by the sharp contrast between the passive and controlled Muslim woman I had expected from my readings about Arab and Islamic society, and the reality which I encountered in my relationships with Sudanese women. These women presented a strong exterior with a certain toughness of mind and spirit combined, like most Sudanese, with dignity and generosity...In the public arena the movement and activity of women in the urban areas is much less circumscribed than in the past or in more conservative Muslim societies. In the rural areas the confinement of women has rarely been the norm...Veiling and confinement are features of urban bourgeois life in the Arab world and the former is not a cultural tradition in Sudan.<sup>84</sup>

Professor Fluehr-Lobban has also charted the economic emancipation of Sudanese women: "Women are moving into many areas of society from which they were by tradition excluded – in factory work, government bureaucracy, the professional fields – and this slow transformation has met little resistance."<sup>85</sup>

Sudan's 1998 Constitution clearly states that all Sudanese are equal before the law without discrimination as to sex or race. This is entrenched in Article 21 of the constitution. All labour legislation is based on complete equality between men and women. The 1998 Constitution reiterated and reinforced earlier equal employment opportunities clauses in the 1973 Constitution. These provisions were reinforced in the 1997 Public Service Act, which provided for equal wages for equal employment; open competition based on competence, qualifications and experience; equal pension rights and equality regarding leave and holidays with due consideration for women being allowed extra special

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<sup>83</sup> "Women in Sudan", **Sudan Update**, available at [www.sudanupdate.org](http://www.sudanupdate.org). **Sudan Update** is edited by Peter Verney, an established political opponent of the Sudanese government. See, also, for an examination of the earlier years, Carolyn Fleurh-Lobban, "Women and Social Liberation. The Sudan Experience", Arab-American University Graduates Information Papers No. 12, March 1974 and Carolyn Fleurh-Lobban, "Women in the Political Arena in the Sudan." Paper presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Middle East Studies Association Meeting, Milwaukee, Wis., 8-10 November 1973,

<sup>84</sup> Carolyn Fleurh-Lobban, "Challenging Some Myths: Women in Shari'a Law in the Sudan", **Expedition**, Spring 1983, pp. 33-34.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

leaves. In November 2000, the President decreed that women would receive two years paid maternity leave. While most women work within the agricultural sector, a large percentage also work as professionals, serving as ambassadors, university professors, doctors, lawyers, engineers, senior army officers, journalists and teachers.<sup>86</sup> There are, for example, women major-generals in the police. The British government has noted that “[w]omen are numerous in the administration and the army”<sup>87</sup> In 1996, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa published a book entitled **Africa’s Roll of Distinguished Daughters**. Of the fifty distinguished African women listed, ten were Sudanese. These included academics, lawyers, journalists and psychologists.<sup>88</sup>

Politically, women are well-represented. Sudanese women became involved in nationalist politics from the mid-1940s onwards. Women secured the right to vote in 1953. In Sudan women have an unfettered right to elect and be elected in presidential, federal, state and local elections. To offset innate conservatism and to ensure female participation in political life, there is a quota system guaranteeing a minimum number of female seats and participation in federal and state legislatures. A quarter of all federal parliamentary seats are reserved for women. Women are also ensured a minimum of ten percent of seats in all other state legislatures, and other elected local bodies. Women have chaired select committees within the federal National Assembly. There have been women ministers in Sudanese governments since the early 1970s. There have been several women ministers in the present government, holding portfolios such as health, social welfare, public service and manpower and cabinet affairs. Ihsan Abdallah al-Ghabshawi was appointed Minister of Health in 1996. Another prominent woman minister was Agnes Lukudi, who served as the minister of public service and manpower. A southern Sudanese Catholic, she had also served as Governor of Bahr al-Jabal State from 1994-98. In 2000, the Sudanese President appointed a cabinet-level Advisor on Women’s Affairs. There is also an Advisor for Women’s Affairs within the Southern States Coordinating Council. There have been, and are presently, women ministers within various of the state governments. There is a women’s policy unit within the ministry of social planning, drawing up national policies and plans for women’s development. There are related women’s development units in many

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<sup>86</sup> In April 1999, President al-Bashir appointed Zeinab Muhammad Mahmoud Abd al-Karim as Sudan’s first woman ambassador.

<sup>87</sup> “Section: Women and Children: C.19”, **Sudan Assessment** (Version 4), Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, London, September 1999.

<sup>88</sup> “Ten Sudanese Daughters Honoured”, **Sudanow**, Khartoum, August 1996.

ministries, corporations, institutions and institutes of higher education. The Sudanese Women's General Union is an officially recognised women's organisation.<sup>89</sup>

Women's health has always been a focus in Sudan. The first school for midwives in Africa was opened in the Sudan in 1921. Maternal and child health and reproductive health programmes have been priority areas for the government. The Sudanese government states that its programmes reach more than 80 percent of all Sudanese women.

Professor Fluehr-Lobban has also noted the unique position Sudanese women have attained in the legal field – once again in contrast to many other Islamic and Arab countries:

In 1970 the Sudan...took a bold step when the Grand Qadi (similar to a Chief Justice) of the Islamic courts, Sheikh Mohammed el-Gizouli, appointed the first woman justice in a Shari'a legal system. Since that time three other women justices have been appointed by the Honorable Sheikh el-Gizouli, the only ones, to my knowledge, in the contemporary Islamic world.<sup>90</sup>

The only Arab countries that have subsequently followed Sudan's lead are Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia.

Farida Ibrahim was appointed a judge in 1972: "I was nominated to the criminal court north of Khartoum where I examined and delivered verdicts, a first in the Arab world. Arab women must be allowed to prove their competence in this area and dispel the illusions in Arab society that both a woman's indulgent nature and the sharia (Islamic law) prevent her becoming a judge...In general, women are well-considered in Sudan, which may be one reason why no defendant or accused has ever demanded my removal throughout my entire career, either in the city or in the rural zones." She has also stated that the coming to power of the present government "in no way affected the position of women judges". There were more women judges than ever before.<sup>91</sup> Farida Ibrahim was later appointed to the post of Chief Justice of Khartoum State, the most influential state in the federal Sudan.

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<sup>89</sup> "Human Rights: Sudan Women Take Their Place in Driver's Seat", News Article by Inter-Press Service, 24 November 1997.

<sup>90</sup> Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban, "Challenging Some Myths: Women in Shari'a Law in the Sudan", *Expedition*, Spring 1983, pp.32-33.

<sup>91</sup> "Sudanese Women Fight Arab Taboos Against Female Judges", News Article by Agence France Presse, 29 May 1998.

Sudanese Supreme Court judge Sania Hamza is a prominent, senior, member of the Sudanese judiciary: “Our first woman judge was appointed in 1963. We have a lot of women judges – 67 out of 800 – compared with other Arab countries or even European ones and at the very top, the Supreme Court, we have five.”<sup>92</sup> Judge Hamza also notes: “Women have equal rights, both de facto and de jure. We drive our cars, we have equal chances and now most white-collar work is done by women.”<sup>93</sup> Judge Hamza has admitted that there is still some conservatism in Sudan with regard to women in senior positions: “But I can say that the reluctance to accept a woman as a judge is not limited to Sudan or even to Islamic or developing countries of the world. The Sudan is in fact very advanced in this respect.”<sup>94</sup>

Educationally, the present Sudanese government has clearly sought to enhance equality and access. There are now more women than men at university. They presently make up 62 percent of students in higher education, compared with 47.2 percent in 1995. This drive has also been reflected in secondary education. Between 1993-98, the enrolment of girls in secondary schools increased by 75 percent. Formal women’s education in Sudan dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1907, Sheik Babiker established Sudan’s first private school, a school for girls. The Babiker family’s involvement in women’s education resulted in the establishment of Ahfad University for women, all the while working to provide quality education for women and seeking equality for women in all facets of Sudanese society.<sup>95</sup> Ahfad University has over 4,600 students. Tens of thousands of Sudanese women study at many of Sudan’s other universities. More women enrolled in Sudanese universities in the first five years of the 1990s than the total number of women who had entered universities since independence in 1956.

The fact is that within the Arab and Islamic world Sudan has led the way with regard to women’s social, political and economic rights.

Sudan may be far from perfect but it has not warranted the particular attention given to it by the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom, attention focused upon it by people who have never visited Sudan,

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<sup>92</sup> “In Sudan, ‘Women Have Equal Rights’”, **The Times** (London), 27 February 2002.

<sup>93</sup> “In Sudan, ‘Women Have Equal Rights’”, **The Times** (London), 27 February 2002.

<sup>94</sup> “Sudanese Women in Leading Posts”, **Sudanow** (Khartoum), April 1992.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Lilian Sanderson, “University Education for Sudanese Women in African Perspectives”, Sudan Society, No. 3, (1975), pp. 21-30; **Girls Education in the Sudan**, Educational Planning Unit Documentary Series No. 7, Ministry of Education, Khartoum, 1970.

despite several invitations, and who are consciously or unconsciously reliant upon partisan sources for their “information”. It is sadly clear that the Commission has allowed itself to be used for all too obvious propaganda purposes in its “focus” on Sudan. In so doing it has undermined its own credibility, as well as that of the United States Congress and government, with regard to the issue of religious freedom. It should also be noted that the propagandist nature of the Commission has already led to conflict with those who seek to pursue the issue of religious freedom with more honesty.<sup>96</sup>

#### **A Case Study of State Sponsored Propaganda: Allegations of Manipulation of Humanitarian Assistance by Sudan**

The Clinton Administration has repeatedly claimed that the Sudanese government has deliberately interfered with humanitarian assistance to those parts of Sudan affected by the civil war. A noted anti-Sudan activist, Eric Reeves – an English teacher at Smith College in Massachusetts – has claimed, for example, that “[m]ost consequential for the civilians of the south is the evident determination of the Government of Sudan...to bring an end to humanitarian aid to the south”.<sup>97</sup> While these claims have also been taken up by the anti-Sudan campaign<sup>98</sup>, and make for easy propaganda, they simply do not reflect reality.

Humanitarian relief to the war affected parts of Sudan is provided by Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). Operation Lifeline Sudan began in 1989 under the auspices of the United Nations, and with the approval and cooperation of the government of Sudan. Operational Lifeline Sudan is a consortium of aid

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<sup>96</sup> See, for example, “‘Potentially Damaging Confusion’ Plagues US Policy on Religious Freedom”, News Article by Conservative News Service, 16 May 2002.

<sup>97</sup> Eric Reeves, “Analysis of the Current Military Situation in Sudan”, Posted on the Internet, 8 August 2000.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, “the manipulation of OLS by the Sudanese government”, Testimony of Kate Almqvist, World Vision Relief and Development, Subcommittee on Crime, Committee on the Judiciary, US House of Representatives, Washington-DC, 10 June 1997: “the Khartoum Government’s blatant manipulation of a humanitarian relief program”, “Sudan’s Unpunished Atrocities”, **The New York Times**, 8 December 1998; “the Government of Sudan’s manipulation of relief supplies” and “orchestrated starvation tactic”, **Sudan Peace Act**, Report, US House of Representatives, Washington-DC, 8 June 2001; “the Government of Sudan continues to orchestrate famine as a weapon of mass genocide”, “Sudan: Revival Amidst Unspeakable Horror”, The Institute on Religion and Democracy”, Washington-DC, 5 June 2002: “manipulation of humanitarian aid”, “Resolution on Sudan”, Church World Service, National Council of Churches, Washington-DC, 17 October 2001 and 25 February 2002;

agencies bringing together the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund and 35 other non-governmental organisations. It seeks to bring food and humanitarian aid to those communities in southern Sudan most affected by the fighting and drought, communities within both government and rebel-held areas of the south. Operation Lifeline Sudan was unprecedented in as much as it was the first time that a government had agreed to the delivery of assistance by outside agencies to rebel-controlled parts of its own country. As **The Guardian** observed: "Most of the people affected live in areas controlled by anti-government rebels and...they were reached by flights from Kenya. Governments involved in civil wars usually refuse to authorise cross-border feeding."<sup>99</sup> The **Journal of Humanitarian Assistance** confirmed: "It was the first time a government agreed on a violation of its own national sovereignty by accepting that humanitarian organizations aid rebel-held areas. Further, the negotiators decided that non-government areas would be supplied from Lokichoggio, Kenya, consequently establishing the first legitimate cross-border operation for the delivery of humanitarian assistance."<sup>100</sup>

The OLS model seeks to bring food and humanitarian aid to those communities in southern Sudan most affected by the fighting and drought, communities within both government and rebel-held areas of the south. The Sudanese model has subsequently been used in several other areas of civil conflict, including other parts of Africa. Flying in the face of claims that Khartoum has sought to starve southern Sudan, that it has somehow sought to "orchestrate famine as a weapon of mass genocide", the international community has confirmed that the number of Khartoum-approved Operation Lifeline Sudan feeding sites in southern Sudan served by air grew within five years from ten in 1992 to over 200 sites by the end of 1997.<sup>101</sup> Each and every one of these sites has been agreed upon by the Sudanese government: there was no imperative upon Khartoum to have increased the number from the initial ten. There has also been a similar rapid growth in the number of non-governmental organisations operating within the OLS framework. There had only been 6 or 7 NGOs working in the southern sector in 1992.<sup>102</sup> Operation Lifeline Sudan now brings together the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund and almost 40 other non-governmental organisations.

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<sup>99</sup> "Millions Still in Need in Sudan", **The Guardian** (London), 25 April 1998.

<sup>100</sup> Severine Autesserre, "United States 'Humanitarian Diplomacy' in South Sudan", **Journal of Humanitarian Assistance**, 18 March 2002.

<sup>101</sup> "Chapter 4: Overview of the Humanitarian Response", **Evaluation of Danish Humanitarian Assistance to Sudan 1992-98**, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

Propagandistic attempts to portray Sudan as obstructing the delivery of food aid are therefore somewhat dented by the fact that the number of food delivery sites (almost all of which are to rebel-controlled areas) has clearly increased twenty-fold in the past several years. It is additionally worth noting that these increases in food delivery sites were also agreed by the Khartoum authorities despite it being widely known that the SPLA were diverting very sizeable amounts of this aid for its own uses.<sup>103</sup>

In July 1998, for example, the Roman Catholic Bishop of the starvation-affected diocese of Rumbek, Monsignor Caesar Mazzolari, stated that the SPLA were stealing 65 percent of the food aid going into rebel-held areas of southern Sudan. Agence France Presse also reported that: "Much of the relief food going to more than a million famine victims in rebel-held areas of southern Sudan is ending up in the hands of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), relief workers said."<sup>104</sup>

Claims about Sudanese non-cooperation with humanitarian relief are also undermined by the fact that unanimous United Nations resolutions have acknowledged "with appreciation" the cooperation of the Sudanese government with agreements and arrangements facilitating "relief operations".<sup>105</sup>

### **Allegations of Government-made famine**

Activists such as Reeves have further claimed that "The Khartoum regime...has systematically used humanitarian food aid as a weapon of war"<sup>106</sup> and that "[s]tarvation is Khartoum's 'weapon of mass destruction'".<sup>107</sup> He states "at the

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<sup>103</sup> Unlike in northern Sudan or those parts of southern Sudan administered by the Sudanese government, where aid is given to various international and domestic non-governmental organisations for distribution, in southern Sudan such food aid is handed over directly to the SPLA.

<sup>104</sup> "Aid for Sudan Ending Up With SPLA: Relief Workers", News Article by Agence France Presse, 21 July 1998.

<sup>105</sup> "Emergency Assistance to the Sudan", UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/1 O, 17 December 1998.

<sup>106</sup> Eric Reeves, "As in South Africa, It's Time to Let Our Wallets Do the Talking. Sudan: Canadian Oil Firm is an Economic Ally of a Brutal Regime. Divest From It", **The Los Angeles Times**, 30 August 1999.

<sup>107</sup> Eric Reeves, "More Harsh Words for Talisman Energy's Business Partner, The Government of Sudan", 11 August 2000, in **Freedom Now News Update for August 14, 2000**, New York, posted at 06:08:46 -0700 (PDT).

height of last summer's war-driven famine, the UN has estimated that 2.6 million...human beings, mainly children, were at risk of starvation."<sup>108</sup>

Despite inferring that the 1998 famine was created by the Government, Reeves does not mention (or perhaps is ignorant of) the fundamental causes of the famine. The SPLA, for example, played a pivotal role in the famine. In late January 1998, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, a SPLA commander who had previously supported the Sudanese government's internal peace process, led a rebel attack on the city of Wau in southern Sudan. This attack, and the fighting that followed it, led to a drastic deterioration in the security and food distribution situation in that region. Rebel responsibility in large part for the famine situation was reported on by CNN in early April 1998 under headlines such as "aid agencies blame Sudanese rebel who switched sides":

Observers say much of the recent chaos has resulted from the actions of one man, Kerubino Kwanying Bol, a founding member of the rebel movement...He aided rebel forces in sieges of three government-held towns, which sent people fleeing into the countryside.<sup>109</sup>

**Newsweek** magazine of 18 May 1998 also reported that: "Aid workers blame much of the south's recent anguish on one man: the mercurial Dinka warlord Kerubino Kuanyin Bol". It is also clear that the aid agencies themselves misjudged the situation. This was documented in 1998 by the BBC's Africa correspondent George Alagiah during a visit to southern Sudan:

In the early part of that year there had been growing evidence of a shortage of food in this sparsely populated region. There is always hunger in southern Sudan and some of the major aid agencies – Oxfam, Médecins sans Frontières and Save the Children (UK) – were inclined to the view that 1998 was no worse than any other year. In short they refused to regard it as an emergency or countenance any sort of extra relief operation over and above what they were already doing. When I visited the town of Tonj the locals themselves said things were worse than usual. That was good enough for me. In my dispatch I argued that to quibble about whether what was happening constituted a famine seemed irrelevant when people were dying. One or two aid agency staff told me that they agreed with my assessment but were prevented from saying so on camera. They had been ordered to tow the agency line. The agencies went so far as to convene a meeting in Nairobi...at

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<sup>108</sup> Eric Reeves, "Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan", **The Catholic New Times** (Toronto), 31 October 1999.

<sup>109</sup> "1 million people face famine in Sudan, Ethiopia", News Article by CNN, 10 April 1998, Web posted at 6:04 p.m. EDT (22:04 GMT).

which my report was discussed. Several options were discussed, including one that entailed an attempt to control my movements in southern Sudan...As it turned out, a couple of weeks later the agencies did indeed accept the severity of the crisis.<sup>110</sup>

Additionally, in March 2000, the SPLA rebel movement began to expel international non-governmental organisations which had refused to sign an aid Memorandum drawn up by the SPLA. The SPLA Memorandum made unacceptable demands of aid agencies including SPLA control over the distribution of humanitarian assistance; a requirement to work “in accordance with SPLA objectives” rather than solely humanitarian aims. Eleven international humanitarian aid agencies felt themselves unable to remain active in southern Sudan under the conditions demanded of them by the SPLA. These NGOs handled 75 percent of the humanitarian aid entering southern Sudan.<sup>111</sup> The withdrawal of these NGOs directly affected \$40 million worth of aid programs.<sup>112</sup> The expelled aid agencies stated that one million southern Sudanese were at risk as a result of the SPLA’s decision to expel the NGOs.<sup>113</sup> The United Nations explained that the SPLA’s expulsion of the NGOs:

This has created a void in the OLS consortium’s ability to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to the people of southern Sudan, already made vulnerable by decades of war and deprivation. Emergency response, health, nutrition, household food security, and water and sanitation programmes will be hardest hit.<sup>114</sup>

All this and more has been ignored by the anti-Sudan propaganda lobby.

### **Case Study in Propaganda:**

#### **Allegations of Deliberate Bombing of Civilians in the Sudanese Conflict**

The issue of Sudanese air force bombing of targets within the ongoing war in southern Sudan has, in recent years, been focused upon by several

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<sup>110</sup> George Alagiah, *A Passage to Africa*, Time Warner Paperbacks, London 2001, pp. 95-96. Alagiah is one of the BBC’s leading foreign correspondents, and was the BBC’s Africa Correspondent from 1994-1998. He has won numerous awards for his work.

<sup>111</sup> “Rights Group Urges More Talks on Sudan Relief”, News Article by Associated Press, 8 March 2000.

<sup>112</sup> “Seven Aid Agencies Urge Renewed Negotiations for Relief to Southern Sudan”, News Article by Associated Press, 1 March 2000.

<sup>113</sup> “Expelled Aid Agencies Say Million at Risk in Sudan”, News Article by Reuters, 1 March 2000.

<sup>114</sup> “OLS Evacuates NGO Staff from Southern Sudan”, U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva, 1 March 2000.

governments, non-governmental organisations and the media. While there are legitimate concerns about any bombing which may affect civilians, the issue itself has become the subject of a considerable propaganda campaign which has distorted perceptions of the conflict. The subject has also become marred by hypocrisy and double standards. Aerial bombardment has been a feature of many wars since the beginning of the last century. It is certainly an option that has been used with considerable vigour by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) during the 1990s and into the new millennium. Indeed, it has become their weapon of choice. That aerial bombing has been used by the Sudanese armed forces in the course of the civil war in their country is a matter of record. The Sudanese government appears to have chosen to engage in bombing just as the Americans and NATO forces chose to do so in the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Kosovo and, most recently, Afghanistan. And just as in those conflicts it would appear that civilians have died or been injured in the course of aerial bombardments.

Lest there be any doubt about the position taken in this publication, any civilian deaths or injury or the destruction or partial destruction of any civilian infrastructure in the course of any war is unacceptable. Any deliberate targeting of civilians constitutes a grave abuse of human rights and a war crime. What this section seeks to do is examine the claims made about Sudanese bombing against the background of the use of bombing in the other conflicts mentioned, and attempt, as much as possible, to cut away the propaganda that has obscured this issue.

At the onset of the war against the Taliban regime, and al-Qaeda, in Afghanistan, American Secretary of Defence Donald H. Rumsfeld publicly stated: “No nation in human history has done more to avoid civilian casualties than the United States has in this conflict”.<sup>115</sup> He has also stated: “I don’t think there has ever been a bombing campaign in the history of the world done with more care and precision”.<sup>116</sup> In the course of several months of American bombing within Afghanistan, however, the United States air force bombed several hospitals, old age peoples’ homes, mosques, residential areas within several towns, villages, United Nations offices, Red Cross installations, wedding parties and several civilian buses, killing several thousand civilians.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> “Pentagon Defends Strikes as Civilian Toll Rises”, **The Los Angeles Times**, 30 October 2001.

<sup>116</sup> “Pakistanis Tone Down Call to Halt Airstrikes: Rumsfeld is Cautioned About Muslim Reaction”, **The Washington Post**, 5 November 2001.

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, “Bombings That Hit Wrong Targets in Afghanistan”, News Article by Reuters, 23 October 2001.

American academic Marc Herold has estimated that somewhere between 3,125 and 3,620 Afghan civilians were killed by American bombing between 7 October 2001 and 31 July 2002.<sup>118</sup> In February 2002, **The Boston Globe** estimated that the total number of deaths “is estimated at 1,000 or more.” **The Los Angeles Times** also estimated that civilian deaths were well over 1,000.<sup>119</sup> Pro-American Northern Alliance officials have themselves stated that American warplanes bombed several villages within anti-Taliban areas over the weekend of 1-2 December, killing perhaps as many as 300 civilians – as well as several senior anti-Taliban commanders.<sup>120</sup> In early December, a 2,000 pound “smart” bomb killed 3 American special forces soldiers, injured nineteen others and dozens of anti-Taliban soldiers. The same bomb also slightly wounded Hamid Karzai, the American-approved Afghan leader subsequently selected as Afghanistan’s president.<sup>121</sup> It was alleged by the Taliban regime that as of 1 November some 1,500 civilians had died as a result of American bombing.<sup>122</sup> In any instance American bombing has caused considerable concern to human rights organisations.<sup>123</sup> In the course of NATO’s bombing campaign in Kosovo, NATO was accused of killing hundreds of civilians in bombing attacks on residential areas, villages, passenger trains, bridges, hospitals, civilian buses and refugee convoys.<sup>124</sup> It should perhaps also be borne in mind that during the Kosovo air war only 2 percent of the unguided, “dumb” bombs used by the British air force could be confirmed as having hit their targets. There was only a 72 percent hit rate with its “smart” bombs.<sup>125</sup>

The figures speak for themselves. Despite Secretary Rumsfeld’s statement that he did not think that “there has ever been a bombing campaign in the history of the world done with more care and precision”, several thousand Afghan

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<sup>118</sup> Marc Herold, “Counting the Dead: Attempts to Hide the Number of Afghan Civilians Killed by US Bombs are an Affront to Justice”, **The Guardian** (London), 8 August 2002. Herold is an associate professor at the University of New Hampshire. His studies of the human cost of the Afghan bombing campaign can be found at <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold>. His other writings on the subject can be found at [www.cursor.org](http://www.cursor.org)

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> “US Bombs Hit the Wrong Target for Second Time in Two Days”, **The Independent** (London), 3 December 2001.

<sup>121</sup> “New Afghan Leader Escapes ‘Friendly Fire’”, **The Times** (London), 6 December 2001.

<sup>122</sup> “1,500 Killed in US Raids”, **The Times** (London), 1 November 2001.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, “Afghanistan: U.S. Bombs Kill Twenty-three Civilians. Rights Group Urges Immediate Investigation”, Human Rights Watch, 26 October 2001 and “Afghanistan: New Civilian Deaths Due to U.S. Bombing”, Human Rights Watch, 30 October 2001

<sup>124</sup> “Harsh Allegations: NATO Denies it Committed War Crimes in Kosovo Conflict”, News Article by ABC News.com, 7 June 2000.

<sup>125</sup> “Kosovo ‘Dumb Bombs’ Missing in Action”, **The Times** (London), 15 August 2000.

civilians were killed in several months of bombing. By comparison, casualties as the result of several years of air force activity in southern Sudan have been markedly lower. The United States Committee for Refugees, for example, a group noted for its anti-Khartoum slant, claimed that just over one hundred civilians may have died in bombings in the course of 2000.<sup>126</sup> Bombing-related civilian casualties in southern Sudan have been less before and since that study.

The Sudanese air force has similarly been accused of bombing hospitals and civilians in southern Sudan. The United States, NATO and the Sudanese authorities have all stated that any civilian casualties in the course of their respective conflicts have been accidental.

The simple fact is that mistakes are made in war. This point was made by Defence Secretary Rumsfeld: “War is ugly. It causes misery and suffering and death, and we see that every day...needless to say...innocent bystanders can be caught in crossfire. On the other hand, there are instances where in fact there are unintended effects of this conflict, and ordinance ends up where it should not. And we all know that, and that’s true of every conflict.”<sup>127</sup> The Sudanese war has been no exception. If we are to accept NATO and the United States at their word that civilians had not been deliberately targeted in Yugoslavia, Kosovo or Afghanistan, and that any civilian deaths or injuries in the course of bombing in those conflicts were accidental, then there is also every reason to accept Sudanese assurances that the same applies to any loss of civilian life or injuries sustained by aerial bombardment in southern Sudan. There are nonetheless those who have insisted that civilians have been deliberately targeted - claims often made as part of propaganda campaigns.

### **Unreliability of Sources**

The first issue that must be examined is the reliability of those who are alleging that civilians have been deliberately targeted in the course of the respective bombing campaigns. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld claimed that in the case of Afghanistan the Taliban regime was simply lying about civilian casualties: “They have actively gone out and lied about the civilian casualties and taken the press to places where they would see things that they contended

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<sup>126</sup> See, for example, “Sudan Bombing Chronology 2000”, US Committee for Refugees, Washington-DC, available on their website and at [www.refugees.org/world/articles/sudanbombing\\_2000.cfm](http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/sudanbombing_2000.cfm)

<sup>127</sup> “Pentagon Defends Strikes as Civilian Toll Rises”, **The Los Angeles Times**, 30 October 2001.

were something other than what they really were.”<sup>128</sup> Rumsfeld has also said: “We have seen repeatedly things that are not true put out by the Taliban. We have seen...the lies they have been putting forward, carried across the globe on television and in the press.”<sup>129</sup>

In the case of Sudan there have been equal concerns about the credibility of those alleging deliberate Sudanese bombing of civilians. These claims have come from similarly partisan sources. The bulk of these claims have been made by the SPLA and Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), a non-governmental organisation closely identified with the SPLA, and other NGOs. And, like the Taliban, they have also disseminated these allegations across the globe on television and in the press. Just as the American government urged caution about Taliban claims, similar caution should be exercised with regard to SPLA claims. Dr Peter Nyaba, an SPLA national executive member, has spoken candidly of what he describes as the SPLA’s “sub-culture of lies, misinformation, cheap propaganda and exhibitionism...about 90% disinformation...mainly news about the fighting which were always efficaciously exaggerated.”<sup>130</sup> How many claims of deliberate civilian bombing on the part of the government fall into the “cheap propaganda” described above? Similarly, claims made by Norwegian People’s Aid are questionable. The Norwegian government has investigated NPA’s involvement in Sudan. Its report stated that: “NPA’s intervention is that of a solidarity group. It has taken a clear side in the war.”<sup>131</sup> It is also evident that Norwegian People’s Aid has served as propagandists for the SPLA. The Norwegian government report stated that: “The publicity, which NPA has been able to supply in favour of the Movement, has...been significant. NPA briefed journalists and guided them in the field.”

And, in an echo of Taliban claims about American use of chemical weapons, Norwegian People’s Aid claimed in July 1999 that Sudanese government forces had definitely used chemical weapons in southern Sudan.<sup>132</sup> As we shall see

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<sup>128</sup> “US Military Strikes Assailed – Civilians Killed By Cluster Bombs”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 26 October 2001.

<sup>129</sup> “Lies, Damned Lies and War Propaganda”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 2001.

<sup>130</sup> Peter Nyaba, *The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider’s View*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1997, pp.55, 66.

<sup>131</sup> *Evaluation of Norwegian Humanitarian Assistance to the Sudan*, A report submitted to the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, COWI, Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo, November 1997, p.27.

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, “Confirmed Chemical Bombing in Southern Sudan”, Norwegian People’s Aid, Oslo, 2 August 1999.

later on in this study extensive tests by the United Nations and authorities in Britain and Finland conducted on test samples in the areas cited by Norwegian People's Aid "indicated no evidence of exposure to chemicals".<sup>133</sup> The British government conducted extensive tests on similar samples and concluded that "there is no evidence to substantiate the allegations that chemical weapons were used in these incidents in the Sudan."<sup>134</sup> The results of the tests run by the Finnish Institute for Verification of Chemical Weapons also "revealed no relevant chemicals."<sup>135</sup> Just as with Taliban accusations of American use of chemical weapons, one has to query what possible tactical advantage the Sudanese would have been gained by any such use of chemical weapons, especially given that Sudan has recently emerged out of international isolation.

### **The Use of Civilians as Human shields**

The American Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has stated that "let there be no doubt: Responsibility for every single casualty in this war, be they innocent Afghans or innocent Americans, rests at the feet of [the] Taliban and Al Qaeda. [They] are the ones that are hiding in mosques and using Afghan civilians as 'human shields' by placing their armor and artillery in close proximity to civilians, schools, hospitals and the like. When the Taliban issue accusations of civilian casualties, they indict themselves."<sup>136</sup> It is noteworthy that CNN guidelines have also suggested that CNN journalists should lay responsibility for civilian casualties at the Taliban's door, not the American government's.<sup>137</sup>

The Sudanese government has claimed that Sudanese rebels have used civilians as human shields. The SPLA's tactic of using civilian installations, premises and areas for military purposes has long been noted. In 1999, for example, the unanimous resolution passed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights urged "in particular the Sudan People's Liberation Army, to abstain

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<sup>133</sup> United Nations communication to the Sudanese Ministry of External Relations, UN Resident Coordinator in Sudan, 17 October 1999.

<sup>134</sup> Letter to Baroness Cox Regarding the testing of Sudan samples at the Chemical and Biological Defence Agency, from Baroness Symons, Minister of State for Defence Procurement, (Reference D/MIN(DP)/ECS/13/3/3), London, 5 June 2000.

<sup>135</sup> See, "Analysis of Samples from Sudan", Helsinki 20 June 2000 as published in **The ASA Newsletter**, Issue No. 79, 2000, Applied Science and Analysis Inc, available at [http://www.asanltr.com/newsletter/00-4/sudan\\_verifin.htm](http://www.asanltr.com/newsletter/00-4/sudan_verifin.htm)

<sup>136</sup> "Pentagon Defends Strikes as Civilian Toll Rises", **The Los Angeles Times**, 30 October 2001.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, "Action Alert: CNN Says Focus on Civilian Casualties Would Be "Perverse", Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, Washington-DC, 1 November 2001.

from using civilian premises for military purposes”.<sup>138</sup> In 2000 the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan condemned the SPLA’s use of “civilian installations for military purposes”.<sup>139</sup> The Sudanese government has repeatedly called upon the international community to pressurise the SPLA to stop using civilians for cover. In September 2000, for example, the Sudanese Foreign Minister Dr Mustapha Osman Ismail asked the United Nations to “bring pressure to bear on the rebel movement so as to stop using civilian installations such as hospitals and schools as human shields”.<sup>140</sup> Gerhard Baum, the Special Rapporteur, in November 2001, reiterated this concern: “SPLM/A military installations are often amidst civilian infrastructures, which affects the rate of civilian casualties during government bombing incidents.”<sup>141</sup> In October 2001, the Joint Parliamentary Assembly of the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States also placed on record that it was “deeply concerned by the use of civilian premises for military purposes”.<sup>142</sup>

It is perhaps worth comparing comments made by the Sudanese government and NATO on the subject of human shields. With reference to NATO’s air war in Yugoslavia, in 1999 the Voice of America stated that NATO spokesman Jamie Shea “insists the Yugoslav authorities have been using human shield...He says President Slobodan Milosevic has no scruples about using civilians this way. But he says NATO will never intentionally target civilians...However, he insists the use of human shields is not going to stop NATO from continuing its air campaign.”<sup>143</sup> In 2001, the Sudanese foreign minister stated that air strikes by government forces “are not targeting civilians but the government will not allow the rebel movement to use civilians as human shields”. He said that: “The use of air power will continue against the rebels wherever they are and we will take care to avoid civilians.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> “Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan”, Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1999/15, Geneva, 23 April 1999, E/CN.4/Res/1999/15

<sup>139</sup> “Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan”, Commission on Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly, Fifty-Sixth Session, New York, 19 April 2000.

<sup>140</sup> “Sudan: UN Asked to Pressure Rebels”, U.N. Integrated Regional Information Network, Nairobi, 20 September 2000.

<sup>141</sup> Gerhard Baum, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan. Statement made to the Third Committee, United Nations General Assembly, New York, 8 November 2001, E/CN.4/2000/36

<sup>142</sup> “Resolution on the Situation in the Sudan”, ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 29 October - 1 November 2001.

<sup>143</sup> “NATO/Kosovo”, News Article by Voice of America, 16 May 1999.

<sup>144</sup> “Sudan Vows Not to be Deterred by ‘Human Shields’ in War on Rebels”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 3 January 2001.

### **Sophisticated Weaponry**

There can be little doubt that the United States and NATO forces have had access to the most sophisticated weaponry available. It was reported, for example, that the United States air force was using a variety of “smart” weapons, including guided cruise missiles and bombs that rely on an array of satellites to strike targets. These also included “Joint Direct Attack Munitions” (JDAM), a technology which upgrades 1,000 pound and 2,000 pound bombs into “accurate, adverse weather ‘smart’ munitions” according to a US Air Force fact sheet.<sup>145</sup> **The Times** of London newspaper reported that: “The relatively new JDAM weapon, linked to a satellite, should provide the most accurate form of bombing and its deployment...helped to underwrite political statements in Washington that the airstrikes had been meticulously planned to try to avoid civilian casualties.” Despite this sophistication, it was also **The Times** newspaper that reported that it was a JDAM bomb that hit a residential area of Kabul killing several civilians.<sup>146</sup> In comparison, the Sudanese air force is working with very old equipment. The bombs it uses are pushed out of the back of ageing Soviet-era Antonov transport aircraft.<sup>147</sup>

### **Sophisticated Intelligence Sources**

The United States government is served by thirteen separate intelligence agencies. Their budget amounts to almost thirty billion dollars a year: 85 percent of this budget is dedicated to military intelligence. The primary mission of these intelligence agencies is “to collect, evaluate, and disseminate foreign intelligence to assist the President and senior US Government policymakers in making decisions relating to the national security”.<sup>148</sup> Amongst the many resources at the disposal of these intelligence agencies are satellites that can see everything imaginable and that can monitor every electronic communication on the face of the earth. In the Yugoslav, Kosovo and Afghanistan air campaigns, these intelligence resources were augmented by the equally impressive intelligence capabilities of NATO and NATO’s constituent members. In comparison, the intelligence resources available to the Sudanese air force pale into insignificance. In spite of the resources available to them both the United States and NATO repeatedly hit civilian targets.

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<sup>145</sup> “U.S. Using High-Tech Weaponry”, **The Dallas Morning Post**, 9 October 2001.

<sup>146</sup> “Smart Bombs can be Stupid”, **The Times** (London), 25 October 2001.

<sup>147</sup> See, for example, “Despite a Ban on Air Raids, Civilians Keep a Watchful Eye”, **The Philadelphia Inquirer**, 3 May 2000.

<sup>148</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions”, Central Intelligence Agency Official Website at [http://www.ocdi.gov/cia/public\\_affairs/faq.html](http://www.ocdi.gov/cia/public_affairs/faq.html)

## The Spectre of Propaganda

There is no doubt that any bombing of civilians or civilian areas makes for powerful propaganda. All the conflicts touched upon in this note have been no exception to this. The air campaign in southern Sudan has been a particular target for those seeking to demonise the Khartoum government. Interestingly, it has been the American government that has been at the forefront of this propaganda campaign, responding enthusiastically and unquestioningly to claims of civilian bombing as made by the SPLA or Norwegian People's Aid.

Comments made in October 2001 by the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Andrew Natsios are typical of this propaganda. In the course of a key-note speech Natsios went out of his way to criticise Sudanese air force bombings in the course of the war in southern Sudan. He specifically referred to an incident involving the World Food Programme in southern Sudan where an area approved for food deliveries was bombed by the air force. Natsios claimed that this "could hardly have been an accident."<sup>149</sup> Yet, on 16 October, four days after Mr Natsios delivered his lecture on the ethics of bombing, and his articulation of somewhat arbitrary judgements about Sudanese intentions, the American air force bombed very clearly marked Red Cross warehouses in Kabul, Afghanistan. The American air force returned on 26 October and bombed the same clearly-marked Red Cross compound, buildings containing food and blankets for 55,000 disabled and vulnerable people. The International Committee of the Red Cross condemned the American bombings as a "violation of international humanitarian law".<sup>150</sup>

**The Washington Post** also reported that the American air force bombed less than 500 feet of a World Food Programme facility in northern Kabul, wounding one aid worker.<sup>151</sup> The missiles struck as trucks were being loaded with humanitarian aid. Using Mr Natsios' own facile logic, these incidents could hardly have been an accident, or were they?

What conclusions can be drawn about propaganda and bombing? While Defence Secretary Rumsfeld has repeatedly declared how incredibly careful the American air force has been in its aerial bombing within Afghanistan, "no nation in human history has done more to avoid civilian casualties than the United States has in this conflict", the simple fact is that the American

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<sup>149</sup> Andrew Natsios, "A Reinvigorated Commitment to the People of Sudan", US Holocaust Museum, Washington-DC, 12 October 2001

<sup>150</sup> "Red Cross Warehouse Hit Again", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 27 October 2001.

<sup>151</sup> "Bombs, Lawlessness Threaten Aid Efforts", **The Washington Post**, 17 October 2001.

government has killed thousands of innocent civilians, in several cases whole villages, in its bombing. Given that American bombs have also killed several American servicemen, injured dozens more and also managed to kill and injure a lot more of its own Afghan allies, one can perhaps give Washington the benefit of the doubt with regard to their ultimate intentions. This despite the most sophisticated weaponry known to Man, missile systems guided by a thirty billion dollar intelligence machine, and a desperate desire to avoid such casualties. It might be pointed out that in comparison the Sudanese air force are using antiquated aircraft and comparatively inaccurate bomb delivery systems – certainly when placed alongside the state-of-the-art laser-guided, “smart” bombs used by the most sophisticated air force in the world. And it is also clear that for its own political and international reasons, the Sudanese government is just as concerned as the United States is to avoid civilian casualties. It would appear, however, from Washington’s attitude towards Sudan that only the American air force can bomb civilians by accident.

#### **End the War and the Bombing Will End**

It is perfectly understandable that the European Union and others criticise instances within Sudan where bombing has resulted in the death or injury of civilians. While these criticisms are valid these critics should also be putting even more pressure upon those parties who seek to continue the war – bombing and bombing-related casualties being but one of the many horrific consequences of the war itself. These groups should also note the fact that it has been the government of Sudan that has on numerous, well-documented occasions offered unconditional comprehensive cease-fires, and that it has been the rebels who have pointedly refused them. It has also not escaped the attention of most of the international community that on the occasions that the Sudanese government, conscious of international concerns about bombing, has declared a cessation of aerial bombardment within southern Sudan, the rebels have responded with new and vigorous military offensives: these offensives have themselves provoked a continuation of bombing in counter-response. Not to acknowledge these circumstances, and merely to focus exclusively upon the government of Sudan – the approach taken by the United States government – is deeply cynical where not simply disingenuous. The United States position is all the more questionable given that there is every reason to believe that the United States has itself been prolonging the Sudanese conflict by militarily and otherwise assisting the SPLA rebel movement.

On 24 May 2001, for example, as a response to international concerns, the Sudanese government stated that it would unilaterally cease air strikes against

military targets in southern Sudan.<sup>152</sup> The Sudanese government also said that it called “upon the other parties for an immediate response for boosting the peace process in the country and appeals to the international community to back up the call for a comprehensive ceasefire.”<sup>153</sup> Immediately following this declaration and call for peace, the Bush Administration granted millions of dollars worth of assistance to Sudanese rebels.<sup>154</sup> Shortly after the announcement of this American encouragement, the SPLA launched a concerted offensive in the Bahr al-Ghazal region of southern Sudan. The offensive continued during pivotal peace talks in Nairobi in early June, with the rebels ignoring further calls for a peaceful solution to the conflict.<sup>155</sup>

This SPLA offensive, aimed at capturing several towns within Bahr al-Ghazal, resulted in massive displacement of southern Sudanese civilians. The Sudanese Catholic Information Office reported that most humanitarian activities within the region had been halted by the offensive: “locations from Tonj northwards remain no go areas forcing both church and humanitarian agencies to suspend their flights to the region.”<sup>156</sup> On 13 June Bishop Mazzolari of Rumbek reported that just under 60,000 civilians had been displaced by the offensive, and that these civilians were in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>157</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Sudanese government reacted to the offensive and mobilised forces to check SPLA attacks.<sup>158</sup> Ten days into the offensive, in order “to defend itself in the face of continued aggression” by the SPLA, Khartoum announced the resumption of military air strikes within southern Sudan.<sup>159</sup> It must be noted that having been responsible directly or indirectly for

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<sup>152</sup> See, for example, “Sudan Declares End to Air Raids on Rebels in South”, News Article by Reuters, 24 May 2001, and “Sudanese Government Declares Halt to Air Raids in South”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 24 May 2001.

<sup>153</sup> “Sudanese Government Declares Halt to Air Raids”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 24 May 2001.

<sup>154</sup> “Sudanese Rebels to Receive Dls 3 Million in Assistance”, News Article by Associated Presse, 25 May 2001.

<sup>155</sup> See, for example, “Khartoum Urges Rebels to ‘Stop Fighting and Talk’”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 5 June 2001 and “Sudan’s Government Calls on International Community to Push for Cease-Fire”, News Article by Associated Presse, 5 June 2001.

<sup>156</sup> “Civilians Flee Town Under Siege”, News Article by Sudanese Catholic Information Office, Nairobi, 8 June 2001.

<sup>157</sup> “Fighting in Sudan’s Bahr el Ghazal Leaves 57,000 Displaced: Bishop”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 13 June 2001.

<sup>158</sup> See, for example, “Sudan’s Beshir Steps Up Mobilisation Against Rebel Offensive”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 7 June 2001, and “Sudan Mobilizes as Rebel Forces Advance”, News Article by Middle East Newslines, Cairo, 8 June 2001.

<sup>159</sup> See “URGENT Khartoum Announces Resumption of Air Strikes in South”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 11 June 2001.

encouraging the offensive in question in Bahr al-Ghazal, the Bush Administration then expressed outrage when Khartoum was forced to resume the use of air strikes against rebel forces in the region.<sup>160</sup> The European Union for its part was much more balanced, expressing its concern at the renewed military activity by the SPLA “particularly in Bahr al-Ghazal in Southern Sudan” and by Khartoum’s resumption of bombing in response to the offensive.<sup>161</sup>

It is worth noting that in his August 2000 response to American criticism with regard to aerial bombing, Dr Mustafa Osman Ismail stated that the US “openly sides with the rebel movement and offers it political and military assistance”. Regarding the accusations of bombing civilian targets he has stated: “The American administration repeats allegations by the rebel movement without bothering to verify them”. Bombing civilian targets “is not part of the government policy”, he added, accusing the SPLA of using humanitarian relief sites as “shields of protection”. He stated: “It is legitimate to target the military bases of the rebel movement...[relief sites] have become venues of planning for attacking and occupying more [government held] towns”.<sup>162</sup>

It is also worth noting that as part of a programme to incorporate international humanitarian law into the training of Sudanese armed forces, in 2000 forty Sudanese Air Force officers attended a law of war course in Khartoum organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation in Sudan. After this course, the Sudanese Air Force commander affirmed his commitment to ensure that all air force personnel respect the law.<sup>163</sup>

Significantly, in its first report, the 22-man international commission created under a March 2002 agreement to investigate allegations of attacks on civilians in combat zones in Sudan, found that a government bombing raid carried out on 21 September 2002 was not premeditated. The commission stated that “They did not intend to attack and kill.”<sup>164</sup> Twelve civilians were killed in the incident. The investigators concluded that two Sudanese warplanes had been attacking

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<sup>160</sup> “U.S. Concerned at Reports of Air Raids in Sudan”, News Article by Reuters, 8 June 2001.

<sup>161</sup> “Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Sudanese Peace Process”, Brussels, 12 June 2001.

<sup>162</sup> “Khartoum Accuses Washington of Fanning War in Sudan”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 27 August 2000.

<sup>163</sup> “First Law of War Course for Sudanese Air Force Officers”, International Committee of the Red Cross News No. 13, 5 April 2001

<sup>164</sup> “U.S.-led Team Says Sept. 21 Bombing in Southern Sudan was Unintentional”, News Article by Associated Press, 15 December 2002.

an SPLA artillery emplacement. The investigators stated that the SPLA had deployed artillery and other weaponry near a local church, in violation of March 2002 agreements aimed at preventing civilian deaths. It is noteworthy that at the time the SPLA claimed the attack was deliberate, describing it as part of “the blanket aerial bombardment of civil infrastructure”. The SPLA also claimed that “these attacks are absolutely unjustified” and that they were aimed at further complicating the peace process.<sup>165</sup> The American government had also initially condemned the government outright for the incident.<sup>166</sup>

### **Private Sector Propaganda**

In addition to whatever state-sponsored propaganda there has been with regard to Sudan, there has also been considerable “private sector” misinformation, emanating from non-governmental organisations, pressure groups and individuals, especially within the United States. This activity has had a number of motivations, political, ideological, religious and fund-raising. It has brought secular, left-wing organisations that loath conservatism and religious values into the same camp as deeply religious and conservative groupings who are fundamentally or opportunistically anti-Islamic.

A keynote 1999 American Society of Newspaper Editors report found that seventy-nine percent of the American public believed that “it’s pretty easy for special interest groups to manipulate the press”: 55 percent of journalists also believed this to be the case. In an ASNE Journalism Credibility Project think tank session one copy editor stated that he was “amazed and gravely concerned that a paper as large as ours and in one of the top ten cities in the country is so...concerned with offending the movers and shakers in the community.” Other journalists agreed, saying: “[Newspapers have] a tendency to give credibility to certain spokesmen, even if they’re certifiably mad.”<sup>167</sup> There has also been recognition of the growing importance of religious viewpoints and religious organisations, and that the media has had to devote “increased attention and resources” to “religious” issues.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> “Sudan Rebels Say Government Blanket Bombing South”, News Article by Reuters, 23 September 2002.

<sup>166</sup> See, for example, “US Condemns Sudanese Bombings of Civilians in South”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 26 September 2002.

<sup>167</sup> Christine D. Urban, **Examining Our Credibility: Perspectives of the Public and the Press**, A Report for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999.

<sup>168</sup> See, for example, Alicia C. Shepard, “The Media Get Religion”, **American Journalism Review**, December 1995.

It has clearly been easy for these groups to get their claims into print. John Stauber, the founder of the Center for Media and Democracy, and director of “PR Watch”, observed:

Much of what you see on national and local TV news is actually video news releases prepared by public-relations firms and given free to TV stations and networks. News directors air these PR puff pieces disguised as news stories because it’s a free way to fill air time and allows them to lay off reporters. Of course, it’s not just television that’s the problem. Academics who study public relations report that half or more of what appears in newspapers and magazines is lifted verbatim from press releases generated by public-relations firms.<sup>169</sup>

This is precisely what has happened, for example, with regard to the “slave redemption” activities organised by the American Anti-Slavery Group in Boston.

Anti-Sudanese groups have been able to exploit both domestic and international circumstances. In addition, therefore, to being able to work newspapers within their own communities back in the United States, and elsewhere, anti-Sudanese groups have also been able to attract “foreign” coverage, often by offering American journalists easy logistical access to a sensationalistic story – something that could be described as “package-tour” journalism. Sudan specialist, Alex de Waal, former director of African Rights and currently director of Justice Africa, has commented on a tendency of journalists to reflect the claims of non-governmental organisations:

[F]oreign correspondents often team up with international humanitarian agencies: the journalists focus on the work of the international agencies, while the latter provide logistics, accommodation and analysis. This often means that the ‘story’ is the work of a foreign relief agency, told from their point of view. In extreme cases, ‘news’ and ‘international NGO commercials’ become almost the same thing. A claim by a relief agency...is often a news story in itself.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> “War on Truth: The Secret Battle for the American Mind. An Interview with John Stauber”, **The Sun**, March 1999, available at [www.whale.to/m/stauber.html](http://www.whale.to/m/stauber.html)

<sup>170</sup> Alex de Waal (Editor), **Who Fights? Who Cares? War and Humanitarian Action in Africa**, Justice Africa and InterAfrica Group, Africa World Press, Trenton, New Jersey, 2000, p.189. De Waal is a director of the human rights group, Justice Africa. He was formerly a co-director of African Rights, and has worked for the Inter-Africa Group. He has written several books on Africa. He is an acknowledged, albeit anti-government, expert on Sudan.

In the case of Sudan many of the international NGOs, such as World Vision and Christian Aid, are Christian in outlook, or have other distinct agendas. Sudan has clearly been used as a mobilising issue amongst many organisations and churches in the United States and Canada. Many of these have raised money from wealthy North American communities on the basis of questionable claims made about the Sudanese situation. Even anti-Sudanese activists such as Peter Hammond have admitted that “many are abusing the issues in Sudan...in corrupt and disgraceful fund raising scams.” He has spoken of the “slick marketing scams, generally based in the USA, that are seeking to exploit Sudan for profit”.<sup>171</sup> As we shall see below, private-sector propaganda, for example, has been closely linked to the fraudulent “slave redemption” scams revealed in February 2002’s investigative reports in **The Washington Post** and **The Irish Times**. Christian Solidarity International (CSI) alone claims to have “redeemed” sixty thousand “slaves”.<sup>172</sup> At a claimed \$50 per head, this would mean some several million dollars in cash. It is possible that tens of millions of dollars has been raised by churches, non-governmental organisations and individuals on the basis of “slave redemption” projects. Some groups have stated that Sudan-related fund-raising may even have reached one billion dollars.<sup>173</sup> There has been little or no financial accountability and many of the groups involved are tax-exempt. To raise such money it was necessary to project Sudan and the Sudanese government in a particularly unpleasant light. Groups such as CSI have flown dozens of journalists into Sudan, providing logistics, accommodation, analysis and, of course, “translation” services. Many of these journalists have unquestioningly echoed claims now seen as having been deeply questionable where not simply false. These claims were then used to raise funds.

Private-sector propaganda on Sudan has been vigorous and sustained. One example was the December 1999 Petition to President Clinton from 200 religious leaders claimed “genocidal policies” in Sudan and urged action.<sup>174</sup> Amongst the groups represented in the letter were the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Institute on Religion and Democracy, Freedom House, American Enterprise Institute, A. Philip Randolph Institute, New Directions International, Family Research Council, Jubilee Campaign, American Anti-Slavery Group, Coalition Against Slavery in Mauritania and Sudan, Friends of Sudan

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<sup>171</sup> Peter Hammond, Frontline Fellowship, Letter to “We Hold These Truths”, We Hold These Truths, available at [www.whtt.org](http://www.whtt.org) 26 June 2001.

<sup>172</sup> “The Slave Trade and Mass Redemptions Hoax in Sudan”, ‘60 Minutes’, 16 May 2002.

<sup>173</sup> See, “Where Did Your Donation Go?”, We Hold These Truths, available at [www.whtt.org](http://www.whtt.org)

<sup>174</sup> See, “Letter to President Clinton from 200 Religious Leaders”, 8 December 1999.

Coalition, Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights, Freedom Quest International and religiously the National Association of Evangelicals, Catholic Information Center, Catholic Campaign for America, Salvation Army, Presbyterian Church, **The Presbyterian Layman**, Presbyterian Action for Faith, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, International Christian Concern, Safe Harbor International Relief, The American Coptic Association, Center for Religious Freedom, American Jewish Committee, Interfaith Alliance for Christian Human Rights, Sharing of Ministries Abroad, Forward in Faith – North America, Companion for World Mission, Church of the Apostles, World Relief Corporation, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Northwest Baptist Convention, Alabama Baptist Convention, West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission – Southern Baptist Convention, Foundation for Christian Theology, Jewish Life Network, National Religious Broadcasters, Prayer for the Persecuted, Independent Women’s Forum, Commission on Global Ministry, and the Faith and Reason Institute. There is more than ample evidence within the anti-Sudan campaign of the sorts of people described by Orwell as “eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that never happened”, wittingly or unwittingly grotesquely distorting the image of Sudan within the United States and elsewhere.

It should also be noted that the Christian broadcasting network within the United States is a particularly extensive one. As far back as the 1970s, new Christian radio stations were appearing at the rate of one per week. Thousands of other American radio stations currently offer some religious programming. There are scores of independent Christian television stations broadcasting religious material full time, and cable systems carry hundreds of additional all-religious channels, reaching millions of viewers and subscribers.<sup>175</sup>

In May 2002, 100 Christian denominational heads and other religious leaders, coming together as the National Association of Evangelicals and Freedom House, called on the Bush Administration to act against “genocidal persecution” in Sudan.<sup>176</sup> These groups and individuals represented in the 1999 and 2002 petitions were just some of those active on the Sudan issue.

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<sup>175</sup> Stanley D. Brunn and Thomas R. Leinbach (Editors), **Collapsing Space and Time: Geographic Aspects of Communication and Information**, Harper Collins Academic, London, 1991, p.356.

<sup>176</sup> See, “Key Christian Leaders to Convene for Action Against Genocidal Persecution: Sudan & North Korea”, Press Release by Center for Religious Freedom, Washington-DC, 29 April 2001, and “Christian Leaders Ask U.S. to Sanction Sudan, North Korea”, **The Washington Times**, 2 May 2002.

Numerous other organisations, academic, think-tanks and otherwise, have produced well-funded anti-Sudanese materials and organised many conferences and campaigns. Much of this activity repeated already discredited and skewed claims about Sudan.<sup>177</sup> Several big Christian denominations involved have, for example, wittingly or unwittingly seriously misrepresented the size of the Christian minority within southern Sudan. These include the Catholic Church<sup>178</sup>, the Lutheran Church<sup>179</sup>, and the Baptist General Conference<sup>180</sup>, all the way through to Christian groups such as International Christian Concern<sup>181</sup>, African Christian Faith in Action<sup>182</sup>, Voice of the Martyrs<sup>183</sup>, and publications such as **Religion Today**.<sup>184</sup> It is also clear that America's evangelicals are bringing considerable pressure to bear upon American foreign policy.<sup>185</sup>

It is clear that much of the hostility to Sudan that exists within the politically-influential conservative and fundamentalist Christian constituencies in the United States is pivoted around Islamophobia. This Islamophobia has itself undoubtedly been fuelled by the propaganda war waged against Sudan throughout the 1990s by the Clinton Administration. Insights into the Islamophobia running through these constituencies emerged in 2002. A few examples are educative. In a nationally-syndicated radio interview with Cal Thomas, John Ashcroft, the Attorney-General of the United States, asserted that "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him."<sup>186</sup> In a 13 February 2002 editorial comment on Ashcroft's statement, the **St Louis Post-Dispatch** stated: "If Ashcroft believes – on a deeply personal, and usually safely hidden, level – that all Muslims practice this kind of radicalism that al Qaeda and the September 11 hijackers embrace, he could not

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<sup>177</sup> See, for example, claims made by the Center for Religious Freedom, a division of the influential Freedom House organisation, claiming that southern Sudan was "predominantly Christian" ("Center for Religious Freedom Fact Sheet: Sudan").

<sup>178</sup> See, "Sudan Gov't Bombs Catholic Mission", News Article by Catholic News Mission, 18 September 2000, "mainly Christian south".

<sup>179</sup> See, "Lutheran Church in Sudan Sponsors Peace Talks", The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 18 December 2001, "predominately Christian south".

<sup>180</sup> See, "Sudan EE Workshop Bombed - Church Perseveres", BGC Hotline, 12 January 2001, Baptist General Conference, "largely Christian south".

<sup>181</sup> "Sudan: Conflicts and Contrasts", News Article by International Christian Concern, 11 October 2000, "mainly Christian south".

<sup>182</sup> African Christian Faith in Action', [www.liaafrica.org](http://www.liaafrica.org). "Christians make up...over 80% of Southern Sudan."

<sup>183</sup> "Sudan", Voice of the Martyrs, [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com), "mostly Christian south".

<sup>184</sup> See, for example, "Sudan's Church Grows Despite War & Famine", **Religion Today**, 19 February 1999, which claimed that "about 75% of the population in the south is Christian."

<sup>185</sup> See, Nicholas D. Kristof, "Following God Abroad", **The New York Times**, 21 May 2002.

<sup>186</sup> "Ashcroft's Rhetorical Jihad on Islam", **The Washington Times**, 11 March 2002.

only unfairly target hosts of innocent people, he could also steer the hunt for terrorists in thousands of wrong directions. Although this may not have been Mr Thomas' intent, he has provided the nation a glimpse of Ashcroft that gives us pause."

Rev Jerry Vines, a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination, condemned the prophet Mohammed as a "demon-possessed pedophile".<sup>187</sup> Speaking on the eve of the Southern Baptists' annual meeting, Vines also stated that people promoting "religious pluralism" were responsible for many of America's problems. Vines asserted: "I tell you Allah is not Jehovah, either. Jehovah's not going to turn you into a terrorist." The newly-elected president of the Southern Baptists, the Rev Jack Graham, defended Vines's speech as "accurate". The Southern Baptist Convention is a coalition of 42,000 churches with 16 million members. It became increasingly fundamentalist in the 1980s, so much so that former President Jimmy Carter cut his ties with the organisation.<sup>188</sup> Vines' comments were supported by leading evangelical Christians, including the Rev Jerry Falwell. Falwell has himself made particularly offensive comments about Islam, and the Islamic Prophet Mohammed, stating, for example, in an interview on the CBS program "60 Minutes", "I think Muhammad was a terrorist".<sup>189</sup>

In February 2002, another leading television evangelist, Rev Pat Robertson, publicly stated on the Christian Broadcasting Network's influential "700 Club" that he disagreed with President Bush's statements that the United States is not waging war on Islam: "I have taken issue with our esteemed president in regard to his stand in saying Islam is a peaceful religion. It's just not. And the Koran makes it very clear, if you see an infidel, you kill him."<sup>190</sup>

In November 2001, Rev Franklin Graham, the heir to the vast ministry of his father, the Rev Billy Graham, claimed that Islam "is a very evil and wicked religion".<sup>191</sup> In a subsequent attempt to offset these views, Franklin wrote that it is his "responsibility to speak out against the terrible deeds that are committed as a result of Islamic teaching". He also claimed that "The Koran provides

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<sup>187</sup> "Anti-Muslim Remarks Stir Tempest", **The Washington Post**, 20 June 2002.

<sup>188</sup> "The Top 10 Religion Stories of 2000", **The Calgary Herald**, 30 December 2000.

<sup>189</sup> "Jerry Falwell Calls Islam's Prophet a 'Terrorist' in Television Interview", News Article by Associated Press, 3 October 2002.

<sup>190</sup> Bill Press, "Ministers Preach War on Islam", News Article by Tribune Media Services, 28 February 2002., available at [www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/02/28/column.billpress](http://www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/02/28/column.billpress)

<sup>191</sup> "Some Evangelicals Take Issue with Islam", **The Boston Globe**, 29 November 2001.

ample evidence that Islam encourages violence in order to win converts and to reach the ultimate goal of an Islamic world". He cited Sudan as an example of the "violence" in question, alleging that "two million Christians and animists" have been killed "and thousands more enslaved" by the Sudanese government in "recent years".<sup>192</sup> Graham is the chairman of the evangelical Christian organisation "Samaritan's Purse", an organisation with a \$150 million budget. His organisation is active in rebel-controlled parts of southern Sudan. Graham has asserted that northern Sudan has "declared a jihad".<sup>193</sup> He has also previously claimed that there is "religious persecution equal to that of the Holocaust" in Sudan, and that "the government has overseen the annihilation of more than 1.9 million southern Sudanese".<sup>194</sup>

Another son of a prominent father involved in conservative circles is Brad Phillips. The son of Howard Phillips, Phillips is the director of the Persecution Project, which was founded in 1997 "for the express purpose of collecting and disseminating information about the worldwide incidence of Christian persecution, with a particular focus on Africa".<sup>195</sup> The Persecution Project produced for television broadcast and video distribution a 51-minute documentary program entitled "Sudan: The Hidden Holocaust", claiming that it was the "first professional-quality comprehensive documentary to be released on the triumph of the faithful in the midst of horrific persecution in Sudan. The Project has also published articles in **The Washington Times**, **The American Spectator** and **Insight** magazine. Their website also states that Phillips is a "frequent guest" on conservative and Christian talk radio programs aired around the United States. Phillips has said that the donor of the seed money for the project told him that Sudan is a country "where Christians are being told to confess the Muslim religion or don't eat. Confess Islam or be thrown into jail, or be sold into slavery, or be crucified."<sup>196</sup> Phillips also claims that the "biggest threat to religious liberty in the world and in Africa is radical Islam" and speaks of "legalized slavery" in Sudan.<sup>197</sup> The Persecution Project has also published "field reports" entitled "Eyewitness to Genocide" and "Oil-Filled Genocide".

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<sup>192</sup> Franklin Graham, "My View of Islam", **The Wall Street Journal**, 9 December 2001.

<sup>193</sup> "US Evangelists Focus on Sudan to Declare a Holy War of Words", **The Financial Times**, 11 April 2001.

<sup>194</sup> See Franklin Graham's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 12 July 2000.

<sup>195</sup> "About Persecution Project", The Persecution Project, available at [www.persecutionproject.org](http://www.persecutionproject.org)

<sup>196</sup> "Brad Phillips Answers the Calling in Africa", **Insight on the News**, Washington-DC, 6 September 1999.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

Leading conservative figures Paul Weyrich and William Lind, in their booklet **Why Islam is a Threat to America and the West**, asserted that “Islam is, quite simply, a religion of war.”<sup>198</sup> A **National Review** columnist, Ann Coulter, wrote with regard to Muslims “we should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.”<sup>199</sup> Chuck Colson, a former Watergate conspirator turned “born-again Christian” and influential conservative Christian leader, asserted in columns and radio spots widely syndicated in the Christian conservative community that “Belligerence towards people of other faiths and cultures is, arguably, inherent to Islam”.<sup>200</sup>

In October 2002, in an editorial entitled “Defaming Islam”, **The Washington Post** criticised “some key leaders of the religious right in America” for “their noxious mix of religious bigotry and anti-Muslim demagoguery”.<sup>201</sup> The newspaper specifically cited Islamophobic comments made by Franklin Graham, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell. These comments were a “gross distortion” and “perverse teachings”.

Ashcroft, Graham, Colson and others have also all been active in the anti-Sudan lobby within the United States. All have previously echoed the sorts of assertions made by Franklin Graham about Khartoum’s responsibility for “jihad”, “slavery”, “religious persecution” of “Holocaust” proportions and the deaths of two million southern Sudanese. All of these claims, as subsequently examined in this publication, are facile propagandistic claims very far removed from the reality of events in Sudan. Nevertheless, they are eagerly repeated and probably sincerely believed by many Christians and conservatives in America. This is clearly of concern even to those who are opposed to the Sudanese government. A news service closely associated with the Sudanese Catholic Church reported on concerns by “analysts, mainstream Church officials, and aid workers” in Sudan that the Christian Right in the United States risks escalating the war in Sudan, jeopardising relief operations and possibly precipitate a humanitarian crisis.<sup>202</sup>

Not all the blame for accepting propaganda claims about Sudan should be laid at the feet of American groups. They in turn have been misled. Many of the

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<sup>198</sup> “Bigotry in Islam and Here”, **The New York Times**, 9 July 2002.

<sup>199</sup> “Bigotry in Islam and Here”, **The New York Times**, 9 July 2002.

<sup>200</sup> “Some Evangelicals Take Issue with Islam”, **The Boston Globe**, 29 November 2001.

<sup>201</sup> “Defaming Islam”, Editorial, **The Washington Post**, 6 October 2002.

<sup>202</sup> See “Sudan: Christian Right Might Inflamm War, Observers Fear”, AfricaNews, Nairobi, May 2001.

American Christian organisations adopting seriously flawed positions on Sudan have accepted at face value claims made by the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC). The NSCC is made up of Catholic and Episcopal churches within those areas of southern Sudan controlled by the SPLA. The SPLA announced the formation of the NSCC in January 1990. While several external observers have placed considerable weight on positions taken by the NSCC the extent of its independence from the SPLA in southern Sudan has been questionable from its very inception. It is a matter of record, for example, that it was the SPLA who announced who the leaders of the NSCC were to be. On 17 January 1990 SPLA Radio announced that Bishop Paride Taban and Bishop Nathaniel Garang were to head the organisation.<sup>203</sup> The standard history of Christianity in Sudan observes that the way in which this announcement was made was “much to the annoyance of the two bishops who had not been consulted.”<sup>204</sup> The relationship between the SPLA and NSCC has also been noted by the respected human rights organisation, African Rights: “The NSCC could not have been created without the support of John Garang.” African Rights further quoted “a leading churchman” as stating that: “The Movement was behind the formation of the NSCC.”<sup>205</sup> John Garang himself stated that he saw the NSCC as the “spiritual wing of the Movement that must be fully involved as part and parcel of the SPLM/A”.<sup>206</sup> And, it must be noted that in example after example, the NSCC has clearly chosen to side with the rebel forces in the Sudanese conflict, and to follow SPLA positions.

Despite the fact that it is clearly compromised, the New Sudan Council of Churches is presented to, and accepted by, many outsiders as an independent body in southern Sudan. An all too typical example was the presentation by World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, of Rev Haruun Runn, and the NSCC program director, Emmanuel Lowila, as Sudanese church leaders who were to “provide perspective on critical Sudan issues at consultation for U.S. Church Leaders”, and that Runn and Lowila would share “their hopes and goals” and would help “their American counterparts work through their questions and concerns” about

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<sup>203</sup> Rev William Anderson, Dr Roland Werner, Rev Andrew Wheeler, **Day of Devastation, Day of Contentment: The History of the Sudanese Church Across 2000 Years**, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 2000, p.533.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> **Great Expectations: The Civil Roles of the Churches in Southern Sudan**, Discussion Paper No.6, African Rights, London, April 1995, p.29.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

Sudan.<sup>207</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that so many American and Canadian perspectives on Sudan have been flawed when partisan groups such as the NSCC provide a skewed and demonstrably “selective” reading of events within Sudan.

On 15 March 2000, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Sudan, Gerhart Baum, met with bishops representing the New Sudan Council of Churches in Nairobi. Mr Baum sought accurate information on SPLA human rights abuses from the New Sudan Council of Churches. NSCC leaders pointedly refused to comment, leading an obviously exasperated Baum to enquire rhetorically of his ecclesiastical audience: “So the SPLA are angels?”<sup>208</sup> While very vocal in criticising the Sudanese government regarding human rights, the New Sudan Council of Churches has been conspicuously muted with regard to the gross, systematic violations of human rights and civil liberties by the SPLA throughout southern Sudan. The inability or disinclination of the New Sudan Council of Churches to speak out on the appalling human rights violations amongst their very own parishioners can only but detract from their objectivity and reliability as commentators and witnesses on Sudanese affairs. The New Sudan Council of Churches’ inability or reluctance to abandon even discredited propaganda imagery is clear. In the wake of the devastating exposé of the fraud underpinning “slave redemption” in Sudan, and the SPLA’s central role in the corruption, the New Sudan Council of Churches once again defended the SPLA, with spokesman Telar Deng dismissing the newspaper investigations as “mere newspaper gossip”.<sup>209</sup>

It is obvious that the relationship between the New Sudan Council of Churches and the SPLA is very questionable. Given its political affinity with the SPLA, and a marked reluctance to criticise the SPLA to any meaningful extent, for international observers to unreservedly accept NSCC perspectives on human rights, political developments and peace in Sudan can only but serve to further distort an already muddled picture. At best the NSCC serves as an apologist for the SPLA, and at worst as a propagandist.

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<sup>207</sup> “Sudan Church Leaders to Provide Perspective on Critical Sudan Issues at Consultation for U.S. Church Leaders”, Press Release, World Relief, 11 March, 1999, available at [www.wr.org/news/1999/mar11.html](http://www.wr.org/news/1999/mar11.html)

<sup>208</sup> Bishop Macram Max Gassis, “Open Letter to Catholic Bishops”, Nairobi, 17 April 2001, available at [www.petersvoice.com/openletter.htm](http://www.petersvoice.com/openletter.htm)

<sup>209</sup> “Church Leaders Support Christian Solidarity International’s (CSI) Slave Redemption Program”, News Release by Christian Wire Services News Services, 28 February 2002.

There has also been a symbiosis between American state-sponsored propaganda and anti-Sudanese propaganda within the private sector. There can be no doubt that American government policy has made deliberate use of propaganda projections concerning Sudan, that is to say that Sudan is an Islamically-fundamentalist, terrorist state actively engaged in slave trading etc, which was in turn taken up by well-organised, politically powerful religious right and other conservative constituencies within the United States. These constituencies then in turn mobilised very effectively around the issue of Sudan and state-sponsored propaganda in effect came full circle when these groups then brought their own, considerable, pressure to bear upon their legislators in the United States. Sudan has emerged as a *cause celebre* within these political and religious circles.

#### **A Case Study in Private-Sector Propaganda: The Sudanese Oil Industry and “Civilian Displacement”**

A prime example of one of Orwell’s “eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that never happened” referred to above in the context of Sudan has been Eric Reeves. Since 1999, he has been active in seeking to disrupt the Sudanese oil project, focusing particularly upon Western involvement in that industry. A specific target of his has been the only Western company involved, Talisman Energy of Canada: Reeves sought to force the company to leave Sudan. In the course of “building emotional superstructures over events that never happened”, Dr Reeves has written dozens of articles making serious allegations about events within Sudan, and especially the Sudanese oil industry. On examination many of these claims appear to be nothing more than the disinformation so often associated with war, and particularly civil war. This clearly reflects badly on Dr Reeves’ credibility.<sup>210</sup> His long distance commentaries, and the demands he makes within them, are in stark contrast to the reality of events and attitudes within Sudan and the region.

His main allegation, for example, that the Sudanese government has displaced the population within the oil fields, “orchestrating a ferocious scorched-earth policy in the area of the oil fields and pipelines”<sup>211</sup> and that “[h]uge swaths of

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<sup>210</sup> For a detailed critique of Reeves’ claims, see, **The Return of the “Ugly American”: Eric Reeves and Sudan**, The European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, November 2000, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org)

<sup>211</sup> “Investors Fuel Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan”, **The Catholic New Times** (Toronto), 31 October 1999.

land around the oil fields and pipelines are presently cleared of all human life and sustenance”<sup>212</sup> has been comprehensively refuted by a detailed analysis of satellite pictures taken over a number of years of the very areas of Sudan about which Dr Reeves makes his assertions. Presumably at least in part in response to these sorts of claims, Talisman Energy commissioned a leading British satellite imagery analysis company, Kalagate Imagery Bureau, to study a series of satellite photographs taken of oil concession areas in Sudan. The images analysed by the Kalagate Imagery Bureau included military and civilian satellite images collected over several years. Ground resolution in the images varied between about three feet and 10 feet, that is to say, very detailed indeed.<sup>213</sup> The images were analysed by Geoffrey Oxlee, the former head of the United Kingdom Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre and Britain’s leading expert in the field.<sup>214</sup> Mr Oxlee stated: “there is no evidence of appreciable human migration from any of the seven sites examined.”<sup>215</sup> On the contrary, he further stated that analysis revealed that “once the sites were developed, then people did come into the area, and in fact it looked as if people developed around the oil sites rather than going away from it.”<sup>216</sup> He further stated that he is prepared to stand by his conclusions in court, if needed. It is inconceivable that massive “scorched earth” displacement on the scale repeatedly claimed by Reeves would not have been immediately noticeable in the satellite pictures studied. Responding to Dr Reeves’ somewhat lame suggestions that the images may have been tampered with, Mr Oxlee stated that the satellite photographs examined “are genuine pictures. Having looked at hundreds of thousands of satellite pictures, there’s no way these pictures have been doctored. Absolutely none. We check these things out.”<sup>217</sup>

Several measured, scholarly criticisms of Dr Reeves’ approach, methodology and especially the sources he has relied upon for his claims have been

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<sup>212</sup> Eric Reeves, “Silence on Sudan”, **The Chicago Tribune**, 29 July 1999.

<sup>213</sup> “Talisman Fights Back on Sudan Displacement Claims Releases Aerial Images”, **The Financial Post** (Toronto), 19 April 2001.

<sup>214</sup> It should be noted that Mr Oxlee retired from the Royal Air Force with the rank of Group Captain (in American terms a full Colonel). He has 45 years experience as an analyst and is the author of **Aerospace Reconnaissance**, (published by Brassey’s in 1997). Mr Oxlee is a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society and the Institute of Expert Witnesses. He lectured at the United Kingdom School of Photographic Interpretation for six years.

<sup>215</sup> “Talisman Energy Says Study Disproves Sudan Allegations”, **Dow Jones Newswire**, 18 April 2001.

<sup>216</sup> “Talisman Fights Back on Sudan Displacement Claims Releases Aerial Images”, **The Financial Post** (Toronto), 19 April 2001.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

published and republished.<sup>218</sup> Dr Reeves' sources for his claims in large part explain the inaccuracy of his assertions. In addition to relying on SPLA claims, he has also on several occasions cited South African Derek Hammond as one of his sources on events in Sudan.<sup>219</sup> Hammond heads the South African-based 'Faith-in-Action' organisation, and can only but be described as a Christian fundamentalist Islamophobe. At one stage his website overtly championed the "Christian" fight against "the evil of Islam", referring to the "anti-Christian religion of Islam."<sup>220</sup> And, more recently, in one of his publications Dr Reeves posted material published by a British magazine calling itself **Searchlight**. He chose to refer to **Searchlight** as a "British investigative publication". A British Magistrate in a court of law preferred to describe **Searchlight** as "scurrilous and disreputable" and denounced its attempts to incite "racial violence", "disorder and public violence".<sup>221</sup>

Reeves has also cited what he described as the "authoritative" study by John Ryle and Georgette Gagnon which similarly claims that "Talisman has failed at constructive engagement in Sudan and proved unable to exert a positive influence in the government through its partnership with Khartoum in oil development."<sup>222</sup> These claims by white, middle-class, anti-Sudan activists, part of the lucrative anti-Sudan industry, written from their comfortable offices and homes in North America and Europe are contradicted by reputable Sudanese opposition figures. In June 2001, for example, **The Washington Post** reported in an article entitled "Activists in Sudan Fear Loss of Western Oil Firms' Influence" that human rights activists within Sudan "emphasize that as long as the companies involved are Western, their concerns about corporate citizenship

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<sup>218</sup> See, for example, **Eric Reeves' "Reporting Credibility" on Sudan Devastated by Reuters Report**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 16 February 2001; **Eric Reeves, The World Food Programme and Displacement**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 23 February 2001; **Allegations of Oil Development Displacement Assessed Against Independent Sources**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, March 2001; **Eric Reeves' Credibility on Sudan Further Damaged by British Satellite Picture Analysis of Sudanese Oil Fields**, Media Monitors Network, May 2001; **Eric Reeves Against Africa**, Media Monitors Network, May 2001; **Eric Reeves, Sudan, Displacement and Double Standards**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 15 June 2001

<sup>219</sup> Eric Reeves, "An Up-Dated Report on the Government of Sudan Attack on the Elementary School in Upper Kaoda", 25 February 2000.

<sup>220</sup> "African Christian Faith in Action", [www.liaafrica.org](http://www.liaafrica.org). Hammond's exaggerations are obvious: he also claimed that "Christians make up...over 80% of Southern Sudan." (This figure should be compared with the figures of 10-15 percent carried in official American government studies, Economist Intelligence Unit briefings or Human Rights Watch material).

<sup>221</sup> **The Birmingham Evening Mail**, England, 31 December 1976.

<sup>222</sup> John Ryle and Georgette Gagnon, "Report of an Investigation in Oil Development, Conflict and Displacement in Western Upper Nile, Sudan", Ottawa, October 2001.

provide valuable leverage to...many critics. Talisman Energy, the Canadian firm...has quietly pressed human rights concerns on a Sudanese government over which the West has little other influence, the opposition figures say.” The paper quoted Sudan’s most prominent opposition activist Ghazi Suleiman: “If Talisman were to pull out of Sudan, this doesn’t mean the oil business will come to an end. Talisman will be replaced by some company”. Suleiman said that any replacement company will be less interested than Talisman in the Sudanese people. **The Washington Post** also reported that Suleiman credited Talisman’s presence with some of the freedoms now enjoyed by opposition parties in Sudan. **The Economist** has described Suleiman as “the country’s leading human-rights lawyer and an outspoken critic of the regime”<sup>223</sup> Another voice on this issue has been that of Alfred Taban, himself from southern Sudan. Taban, the publisher of **The Khartoum Monitor**, Sudan’s only independent English language newspaper, stated that Talisman has acknowledged some of the difficulties the oil project has brought with it: “The way forward is not to take away companies that admit some of this is going on and have been working to try to end some of that abuse.”<sup>224</sup> It should be noted that both Suleiman and Taban have been detained by the Sudanese government on several occasions, and are much closer to the reality of events within Sudan than people such as Reeves, Ryle and Gagnon could ever be.

That the Sudanese oil industry has been subject to considerable disinformation is clear. One further example of this has been attempts to link the oil project to Osama bin Laden. The Canadian **National Post** newspaper, for example, published an article, based on claims by un-named “Washington-based analyst”, stating that bin Laden had “helped finance the oil pipeline” in Sudan.<sup>225</sup> Five days later, on 19 September, **The National Post** retracted the story as having been “untrue” and regretted any “embarrassment” cause.

The culmination of the anti-Sudan project started by the Clinton Administration and fuelled by a variety of private organisations was that on 13 June 2001, the United States House of Representatives passed “An Act to facilitate relief efforts and a comprehensive solution to the war in Sudan”, also referred to as the “Sudan Peace Act”. This Act was formally signed into law by President Bush in October 2002. A more explicit example of confused, distorted and

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<sup>223</sup> **The Economist**, 29 August 1998.

<sup>224</sup> “Activists in Sudan Fear Loss of Western Oil Firms’ Influence”, **The Washington Post**, 24 June 2001.

<sup>225</sup> “Bin Laden’s Greatest Asset is Ability to Handle Money: Donations Laundered Through Legitimate Businesses”, **The National Post** (Toronto), 14 September 2001.

poorly-informed legislation would be hard to find.<sup>226</sup> It is an Act that provides one side to the conflict with millions of dollars worth of logistical assistance. It is also an act which decries the abuse of human rights within Sudan but provides millions of dollars to those accused of appalling human rights abuses in Sudan. The Act initially also sought to impose financial market sanctions within the United States on companies economically involved in Sudan. This American attitude is all the more regrettable since the Sudanese government has repeatedly invited constructive United States involvement within Sudan.<sup>227</sup>

While they publicly lament the numbers of deaths during this conflict, American congressmen, and the constituencies that have pressurised them, are themselves directly responsible for the deaths through war, starvation or disease of thousands of Sudanese. Their policies, and that of their government, have sustained the conflict. Former United States President Carter, one of the most respected and objective commentators on events within Sudan, has observed:

The people in Sudan want to resolve the conflict. The biggest obstacle is US government policy. The US is committed to overthrowing the government in Khartoum. Any sort of peace effort is aborted, basically by policies of the United States...Instead of working for peace in Sudan, the US government has basically promoted a continuation of the war.<sup>228</sup>

Far from working for peace, American legislators have stood by while the United States militarily and economically destabilised the largest country in Africa. They helped shape American Sudan policy from 1993 onwards – precisely the period referred to by Carter. The “Sudan Peace Act” exacerbated an already critical situation. While professing to wish to see an end to war in

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<sup>226</sup> For a detailed critique of the “Sudan Peace Act”, see **The ‘Sudan Peace Act’: Perpetuating Africa’s Longest War**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, June 2001, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org)

<sup>227</sup> See, for example, amongst many overtures: “Interview - Sudan Wants to Bury Hatchet with US”, News Article by Reuters, 20 May 1999; “Sudan Wants Dialogue With US, Bashir Tells Envoy”, News Article by Reuters, 7 March 2000; “Sudan Wants Better Ties with US’s Bush”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 2 February 2001 and “Sudan Welcomes U.S. Peace Involvement but Urges Neutrality”, News Article by Associated Press, 28 May 2001.

<sup>228</sup> “Carter, Others Say US Has Faltered in Africa”, **The Boston Globe**, 8 December 1999. For more details of American support to the SPLA see “Ex-President Opposes Policy of Aiding Khartoum’s Foes”, **The Washington Times**, 25 September 1997; “Sudan’s American-aided Guerrillas”, **The Economist**, 25 January 1997; “Sudan Accuses US of Supplying Rebels with Mines”, News Article by Xinhua, 21 January 1999; “US Flies in Howitzers to Subdue Sudan”, **Africa Analysis**, No 290, 6 February 1998; “Albright Meets Sudan Rebels, Pledges US Support”, News Article by Reuters, 10 December 1997; “U.S. Said to Promise Aid to Sudanese Rebel Areas”, News Article by Reuters on 2 June 1998.

Sudan, the “Sudan Peace Act” actually authorised the release of \$10 million dollars in assistance to what they called the National Democratic Alliance. This followed an earlier payment of three million dollars.<sup>229</sup> All this funding was channelled to the SPLA rebels. As the head of the Sudan project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington-DC, pointed out at the time: “This package feeds false hopes and expectation on the part of the southerners and sustains excessive paranoia in Khartoum.”<sup>230</sup>

What then is the nature of the organisation so enthusiastically embraced by the United States Congress? Simply put, the “Sudan Peace Act” linked the United States to a group with an appalling human rights record. A previous attempt by the American government in late 1999 to provide assistance to the SPLA had resulted in considerable concern domestically. In November 1999, for example, eight reputable US-based humanitarian organisations working in Sudan, groups such as CARE, World Vision, Church World Service and Save the Children, no friends of the Sudanese government, publicly stated that the SPLA has: “engaged for years in the most serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, beatings, arbitrary detention, slavery, etc.”<sup>231</sup> In December 1999, Human Rights Watch stated that: “The SPLA has a history of gross abuses of human rights and has not made any effort to establish accountability. Its abuses today remain serious”.<sup>232</sup>

**The New York Times**, another outspoken critic of the Khartoum government, was also unambiguously critical of any assistance to the SPLA:

[C]hanneling assistance to southern rebels would ally Washington with a brutal and predatory guerrilla army. One of the tragedies of Sudan’s war is that John Garang’s S.P.L.A. has squandered a sympathetic cause. Though its members claim to be “Christians resisting Islamization, they have behaved like an occupying army, killing, raping and pillaging.”<sup>233</sup>

It is ironic that the “Sudan Peace Act” also contains a section dealing with “the investigation of war criminals” given that the same Act provides the SPLA, an

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<sup>229</sup> “Sudanese Rebels to Receive Dlr 3 Million in Assistance”, News Article by Associated Press, 25 May 2001.

<sup>230</sup> “U.S. Slates \$3 Million for Sudan’s Opposition”, **The Washington Post**, 25 May 2001.

<sup>231</sup> “Humanitarian Organizations Oppose Plan Providing Food to Sudanese Rebels”, Press Release by InterAction, the American Council for Voluntary International Action, Washington-DC, 30 November, 1999.

<sup>232</sup> “Rights Group Warns US Against Feeding Sudan Rebels”, News Article by Reuters, 14 December 1999.

<sup>233</sup> “Misguided Relief to Sudan”, Editorial, **The New York Times**, 6 December 1999.

group accused of involvement in war crimes, with millions of dollars worth of American tax-payers money. **The New York Times**, for example, has stated that SPLA leader John Garang is one of Sudan's "pre-eminent war criminals".<sup>234</sup>

For all the immediate implications of such clear American assistance, of even deeper concern is the fact that such aid served to encourage the SPLA, already patently without any clear political objective, to continue with what is an unwinnable war. The war has always been about the political status of southern Sudan. While the SPLA appear to be confused, the Khartoum authorities' approach would appear to be clear. If the SPLA are fighting for autonomy or even separation this has already been offered by the government. In 1997, having already introduced a federal system and exempted southern Sudan from *sharia* law, the Sudanese Government, in the Khartoum Peace Agreement, also offered, amongst other things, the holding of a free and fair, internationally-supervised, referendum in which the people of southern Sudan could, for the first time ever, choose whether to remain as a part of Sudan or to become independent. This offer has also been written into the 1998 Constitution, and repeated on several occasions<sup>235</sup>, most recently during the June 2001 peace talks in Nairobi.<sup>236</sup> It is an offer that has also been acknowledged by the SPLA.<sup>237</sup>

The Sudanese government has repeatedly offered a comprehensive ceasefire.<sup>238</sup> Throughout 2002 and 2001 the Sudanese government called for a peaceful

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<sup>234</sup> "Misguided Relief to Sudan", Editorial, **The New York Times**, 6 December 1999.

<sup>235</sup> See, "Sudan offers South secession", News Article by BBC, 22 February 1999; "Southern secession better than more war: Sudan's president", News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 February 1999 and 'Sudan Says Happy for South to secede', News Article by Reuters, 7 May 1998.

<sup>236</sup> "Khartoum Urges Rebels to 'Stop Fighting and Talk'", News Article by Agence France Presse, 5 June 2001

<sup>237</sup> See, "Referendum agreed at Sudan Peace Talks", News Article by BBC World, 7 May 1998 and "SPLA Plays Down Deal on Referendum in southern Sudan", News Article by BBC World, 7 May 1998.

<sup>238</sup> See, "Sudanese Government declares Ceasefire", News Article by BBC World, 5 August 1999; "Sudanese Government Declares Comprehensive Cease-fire", News Article by Associated Press, 5 August 1999; "Sudan Government to Observe Ceasefire Despite SPLA Rejection", News Article by Agence France Presse, 7 August 1999; "EU Welcomes Cease-Fire in Sudan", News Article by Xinhua, 20 August 1999; "Annan welcomes Ceasefire", News Article by UN Integrated Regional Information Network, 11 August 1999; "Annan hails Sudan Cease-fire Allowing Aid to Flow", News Article by Reuters, 6 August 1999; "Annan calls on Sudan's SPLM leader to Sign Ceasefire", News Article by Agence France Presse, 7 August 1999; "Sudanese Rebels Reject Peace Plan", News Article by BBC World, 30 August 1999; "Sudanese Rebels Reject Government Cease-Fire", News Article by Reuters, 5 August 1999.

resolution of the conflict on several occasions. In April and in mid-May 2000, Khartoum once more declared its readiness to enter into “an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire” and to restart negotiations for the achievement of a comprehensive peace: it called upon the SPLA to do the same.<sup>239</sup> Khartoum appears to have sought out every possible peace forum.<sup>240</sup> The Sudanese government has also repeatedly requested international assistance in securing a peaceful end to the conflict.<sup>241</sup> It was difficult to see how much further towards a comprehensive solution the Sudanese government could go. The SPLA’s inability to articulate what they were fighting for was echoed in its approach to the peace process. In erratic shifts in position, the SPLA had both accepted and then refused regional attempts at peace-making, sometimes within the space of 48 hours.<sup>242</sup> Its commitment to a peaceful solution has long been questioned. John Garang, for example, commenting on the November 1997 round of peace talks in Nairobi, stated that “We intended not to reach an agreement with the [Sudanese government]. This is what we did and we succeeded in it because we did not reach an agreement.” The “Sudan Peace Act” clearly encouraged the SPLA to once again ignore calls for a negotiated settlement of the conflict and to continue with what can only be described as a no-win war.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Dr Mustafa Osman Ismail accused the Clinton Administration of pursuing a policy that prolonged the Sudanese war: “Your [i.e. the US] policy will not lead to peace. It will lead to the continuation of war, the suffering of the people, the loss of lives in the south... This war, this problem, will not be settled by fighting. It has to be settled by political means.

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<sup>239</sup> See, for example, “Sudan Warns of Regional Conflict if Talks Fail”, News Article by Reuters, 20 June 2002; “Sudan’s Government in Favour of Ceasefire in 18-year Civil War”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 April 2001 and “Government ‘Ready for a Ceasefire’”, News Article by United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network, 15 May 2001.

<sup>240</sup> “Sudan Backs Combination of Arab and African Peace Drives”, News Article by Agence France Presse on 24 October 1999 at 13:51:08

<sup>241</sup> See, for example, “Sudan calls for Western Pressure on southern Rebels to Accept Ceasefire”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 26 April 2000; “US Catholic Clerics Urged to Pressurise Garang into Accepting Cease-Fire”, News Article by Sudan News Agency, 27 March 2001; “Britain Can Pressurize Rebels to Realize Cease-Fire, Sudanese Diplomat”, News Article by SUNA, 26 February 2001; “Sudanese Government Welcomes Carter’s Initiative to End the War in southern Sudan”, News Article by ArabicNews.com, 26 April 2001.

<sup>242</sup> See, “Sudanese Rebels Reject Peace Plan”, News Article by BBC News Online Network on 30 August 1999; “Sudanese Rebels Snub Libyan-Egyptian Mediation Effort”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 30 August 1999; and “Sudanese Rebel Leader Supports Peace Plan: Egypt”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 31 August 1999 and “Sudanese Rebels Say They Can’t Commit to Egyptian-Libyan Peace Drive”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 14 May 2001; “Sudanese Rebels Reject Reconciliation Accord”, News Article by Associated Press, 29 November 1999.

The government of Sudan is ready for that”<sup>243</sup> The US Congress’ provocative acts took place at a time when there had been significant positive political changes within Sudan itself. The former prime minister, Sadiq al-Mahdi, himself ousted in 1989 by the present government, and a pivotal rebel leader, was quoted by an April 2001 American fact-finding mission as saying that: “the United States has been an obstacle to peace in Sudan and also to unity among the opposition. The United States’ policy has been a problem. He said that Sudan is like a pregnant woman that is about to deliver and needs a midwife to help the delivery. They all believe that the United States could act as a midwife. They all accept this. But, the United States, instead of helping deliver the baby, killed it...” The former prime minister has also declared that: “There are now circumstances and developments which could favour an agreement on a comprehensive political solution.”<sup>244</sup>

In 2002, following pressure from the new Bush Administration, and in the wake of visits to Sudan by President Bush’s Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, Senator John Danforth, the Government of Sudan and the SPLA began meetings in Kenya within the auspices of IGAD which have proved to be the most hopeful yet in reaching a negotiated settlement to the Sudanese conflict.

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<sup>243</sup> “Interview – Sudan Says US Harming Peace Prospects”, New Article by Reuters, 25 October 1999.

<sup>244</sup> “Developments in Sudan Favour National Reconciliation: Mahdi”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 25 December 1999.

## Chapter 2

### *Journalism, Sudan and Misrepresentation*

“There’s no use trying,” said Alice: “one can’t believe impossible things. I dare say you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen...“Why sometimes, I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)

Sudan provides observers with example after example of remarkably poor journalism. Western, and particularly English-language, media coverage of Sudan has been significant as it seeks to inform those who watch or read or listen to its product. It also has a clear capacity to influence public opinion within the United States and United Kingdom with regard to Sudan, opinion which in some cases can itself influence government policy towards that country. Despite this responsibility, in many instances Sudan has been poorly served by international journalism. This is at least in part because until comparatively recently Sudan was not seen as an important issue for serious reporting. No international newspapers keep correspondents in Sudan itself: there are in some cases local stringers. News agency reports by Reuters and Agence France Presse, also provided by local stringers, tend to dominate what coverage there is. At least some of the misinterpretation, or misrepresentation of Sudanese issues has been the result of poor, sensationalistic and sometimes politically partisan reporting by elements of the international media. This type of reporting has a distinct responsibility for some of the problems Sudan now faces.

In his study of modern journalism, **People’s Witness: The Journalist in Modern Politics**, Professor Fred Inglis observes that “fiction and journalism lie close together.”<sup>245</sup> In his review of Inglis’ book Sir Max Hastings, a distinguished British journalist and editor, states that it is reasonable for Inglis to state that the relationship between modern journalists and the truth is more of a “dalliance than a stable relationship with facts”.<sup>246</sup> Hastings also observes that “a reporter does not face a choice between publishing truth and falsehood, but

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<sup>245</sup> Fred Inglis, *People’s Witness: The Journalist in Modern Politics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002

<sup>246</sup> Max Hastings, “A Tabloid Professor”, *The Sunday Telegraph* Review (London), 5 May 2002, p.13.

is lucky to be able to establish a few small fragments of reality”.<sup>247</sup> This is all the more difficult in conflict situations and on a continent several thousands miles away.

Alex de Waal has also pointed out the capacity of the media to misrepresent issues in Africa:

[T]he international media also distorts its presentation of conflict in Africa. This is particularly the case for television. Journalists are under pressure to shorten, simplify and dramatise, and in the case of TV, to get dramatic pictures. They will fall back upon shorthand terms that their readers and viewers will understand...which distort the realities. Political analysis is sacrificed for immediacy and the ‘human angle’.<sup>248</sup>

Andrew Buckoke, a British foreign correspondent who has written for **The Guardian**, **The Economist**, **The Observer**, **The Financial Times** and **The Times**, has provided prime examples of blatant media distortion with regard to Sudan, even on issues unrelated to war. Stating that: “Most of the writers settle for the exaggeration of the romantic or sensational aspects”<sup>249</sup>, Buckoke provides the example of the sensationalistic coverage of the floods in Sudan in August 1988. Torrential rain on the headwaters of both the White Nile and Blue Niles had resulted in intense press prediction and speculation that Khartoum “would disappear under a gigantic whirlpool”.<sup>250</sup> Buckoke was sent to cover this impending disaster and found there was none to report on: “The Nile never did burst its banks, nor was any significant damage due to the downpour evident in central Khartoum”.<sup>251</sup> This, however, did not stop “the story was still being taken very seriously in the outside world, and I was rebuked by a telex demanding more drama and detail”. Despite their being a non-event, “the floods were the biggest story out of black Africa”.<sup>252</sup> Buckoke questions the international coverage: “Words like catastrophic and devastating were freely bandied about, even before any considered eyewitness reports had emerged. How did the coverage and the response of relief agencies get so distorted and imbalanced, as they so often do when Africa is involved? Well it was August,

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<sup>247</sup> Max Hastings, “A Tabloid Professor”, **The Sunday Telegraph** Review (London), 5 May 2002, p.13.

<sup>248</sup> Alex de Waal (Editor), **Who Fights? Who Cares? War and Humanitarian Action in Africa**, Justice Africa and InterAfrica Group, Africa World Press, Trenton, 2000, p.189

<sup>249</sup> Andrew Buckoke, **Fishing in Africa: A Guide to War and Corruption**, Picador, London, 1992, p.42.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

but there were other reasons. The floods were relatively easy to get to and made good television.”<sup>253</sup> He also notes that:

Many of the journalists who flooded into Khartoum did not know how little changed most of the city was, never having been there before, but before they even arrived the whole story was out of control. Journalists, aid agency workers, the government and donors had been caught from the beginning in a self-sustaining spiral of exaggeration. Initial reports made it sound like the greatest natural disaster of the decade.<sup>254</sup>

Buckoke concludes that: “the media were simply stuck with their initial overestimation of the story and the editors’ continuing demand for drama”. He also records that “Another big story out of Africa in late 1987 and early 1988 was the new Ethiopian famine. It did not happen, though an American news magazine devoted a cover story to it”.<sup>255</sup> Much the same can subsequently be said for sensationalistic stories of “slavery”, “slave redemption”, terrorism and “weapons of mass destruction”. Buckoke demonstrates the clear difficulties even a journalist on the ground faces in attempting to cover sensationalist stories in Sudan. Trying to verify and check sensationalist claims thousands of miles away in Europe or the United States, without visiting the country, is considerably more difficult and has resulted in some appallingly inaccurate writing on Sudan.

Several years later we have yet another clear example of the media’s desperate need for “drama”. Maggie McCune, the mother of Emma McCune, a British woman who married a Sudanese rebel leader and lived with him in southern Sudan, documents questionable journalism on the part of CNN:

A CNN crew flew out to Waat [in southern Sudan] to report on a ‘famine situation’ only to find to their dismay that there were not many desperate, hungry people there after all. Pressed for time and determined to get some footage, they asked for Emma’s help and she, it seemed, willingly gave it. Spreading the word around the surrounding villages that there was going to be a ‘food drop’ at a specific place hundreds of people flocked in from the bush, eager for aid. When they arrived at the appointed ‘drop-off’ point within the walls of the garrison, they found only a film crew and had to go home empty-handed. When challenged about what she had done later by an aid-worker colleague, Emma shrugged her shoulders and smiled. ‘Bad news

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p.45.

is better than no news at all,' she said, simply. 'At least we got Waat on the world stage.'<sup>256</sup>

While reporting on Sudan has generally been lacklustre, dramatic events such as the cruise missile attack on the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory produced some remarkably good journalism. As we shall see below, **The New York Times** and other American newspapers led the vivisection of Clinton Administration claims about al-Shifa.

In the absence of serious reporting many newspapers have been more than content to go with "accepted" wisdom on Sudan – wisdom characterised in large part by bias, pivotal factual inaccuracies, misperceptions and often blatant disinformation. Even for those who have sought to put together a "balanced" article, questionable sources results in questionable journalism. Some papers are often content and comfortable with stereotypes – for example **The Daily Telegraph** and **The Sunday Telegraph** in the United Kingdom. They continue to run "slave redemption" stories despite the fact that these exercises have been exposed. They also continue to run with stories disingenuously speaking of a "Christian" south.

There are several reasons that can be advanced to explain why it is that the media has on many occasions seriously misrepresented both the Sudanese situation and events within that country.

**A Case Study in Poor Journalism:  
Claims that southern Sudan is "Christian" or that the SPLA is "Christian"**

There are many facets of poor journalism. The inability to get simple but strategically important facts right in coverage of Sudan is a clear example of unacceptably weak journalism. Newspaper claims of a Christian majority in southern Sudan is a case in point. Not only is this factually inaccurate but more importantly it is a fundamental distortion of the situation in Sudan.

This is a crucial inaccuracy for any newspaper to make. Independent, and even anti-government sources report that Christians make up perhaps between 10-15 percent of the southern population. Christians therefore account for less than one-fifth of the southern population, and there appear to be marginally more

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<sup>256</sup> Maggie McCune, **Till the Sun Grows Cold: Searching for My Daughter Emma**, Headline Books, London, 1999, p.236.

Christians than Muslims. Christians may comprise 4 percent of the national population.<sup>257</sup> Speaking in 1970, Joseph Garang, perhaps the most prominent southern politician in the 1960s, a former Minister of Southern Affairs, stated that “less than one per centum of the Southern population is Christian.”<sup>258</sup> Muslims make up well over 75 percent of the Sudanese population.<sup>259</sup> It should be noted that at least some of the confusion about the numbers of Christians in Sudan can be placed at the feet of Christian leaders. Former Sudanese vice-president Abel Alier, a southern Sudanese Christian Dinka, has claimed, for example, that there are 11 million Christians in Sudan, that is to say over thirty percent of the national population.<sup>260</sup> The Rev Enoch Tombe, the general-secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches, has claimed that there are 8 million Christians.<sup>261</sup> Such claims, of course, enhance the prestige and status of such leaders within Christian-dominated countries such as the USA and amongst Christian groups and constituencies with regard to financial sponsorship.

Some sources claim a massive two, three or four hundred percent increase in Christians in southern Sudan while at the same time alleging the deaths of millions of southern Sudanese Christians.

By far the majority of southern Sudanese are neither Christian nor Muslim, and are adherents of native animist religions. It is for that reason that the present government exempted southern Sudan from *sharia* law in 1991. Claims of a “Christian south”, forced to live under Islamic law, with all the implications for religious conflict, merely perpetuate an inaccurate stereotype of Sudan, and an equally inaccurate and superficial context for the Sudanese conflict. This is somewhat similar to claiming that Northern Ireland is Catholic. Such

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<sup>257</sup> There is a certain amount of divergence in respect of estimates of the religious breakdown of the southern population. Human Rights Watch states that 4 percent of the population are Christian and that about 15 percent of southern Sudanese are Christian (Testimony of Jemera Rone, Human Rights Watch, Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Africa, 25 September 1997). The Economist Intelligence Unit in its report entitled **Sudan: Country Profile 1994-95** also puts the Christian population of southern Sudan at 15 percent. The definitive United States government guide, **Sudan – A Country Study**, published by the Federal Research division and Library of Congress, states that “In the early 1990s possibly no more than 10 percent of southern Sudan’s population was Christian.” Muslims may make up a similar percentage in southern Sudan.

<sup>258</sup> “An Historical Perspective”, in **Horn of Africa**, Vol. 9, Number 1, 1985.

<sup>259</sup> See, for example, **Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Sudan**, US Department of State, Washington DC, 9 September 1999.

<sup>260</sup> Speech made at the Khartoum International Forum on Inter-Religious Co-Operation and Peace in Sudan, 13-16 November 2000.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

elementary mistakes would not be allowed in reporting of First World affairs, but apparently appallingly inaccurate journalism is perfectly permissible in “coverage” of the developing world.

Claims of a “Christian” south abound in media coverage. Newspapers of record such as **The Washington Post** and **The Financial Times** have also made this very unprofessional error.<sup>262</sup> The BBC has repeatedly made this mistake<sup>263</sup>, with its religious affairs correspondent claiming on one occasion that Christian churches “minister to about 40 percent of Sudan’s population”.<sup>264</sup> **The Economist** has also made similar mistakes<sup>265</sup>, as have news agencies as diverse as Reuters<sup>266</sup>, the Kenya News Agency<sup>267</sup> and Africa Online<sup>268</sup>, television companies such as ABC<sup>269</sup> and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation<sup>270</sup>, relief organisations<sup>271</sup>, and newspapers such as **The Boston Globe**<sup>272</sup>, the South African **Mail and Guardian**<sup>273</sup> and **The Financial Post**<sup>274</sup> and **The Globe and Mail** of Canada.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> “Averting Famine in Sudan”, **The Washington Post**, 4 January 1999, “largely Christian population of the south”; “Foreign Affairs: The Real Face of Sudan - Hassan Turabi, the Islamic Leader, Presents a Picture of His Country Unfamiliar to the West”, **The Financial Times** (London), 29 April 1992, refers to “mainly Christian rebels in the south of the country”.

<sup>263</sup> See, for example, articles such as “Sudan Haunted by Slavery”, News Article by BBC News, 15 August 1999, “largely Christian south”; “Sudan Moves Turabi out of Jail”, News Article by BBC News, 30 May 2001, “mainly Christian south”; “US Peace Envoy Starts Sudan Mission”, News Article by BBC News, 14 November 2001, “mainly Christian rebels”.

<sup>264</sup> See, “George Carey Wants to Encourage Peace in Sudan”, News Article by BBC News World Service, 30 April 2000.

<sup>265</sup> “Sudan: Coming out of the Cold”, **The Economist** (London), 4 October 2001, “mainly Christian south”.

<sup>266</sup> See, for example, “Sudan Oil State Favours Secession, Governor Doesn’t”, News Article by Reuters, 12 May 1998, “mainly African and Christian south”; See also “Agencies Protest Over Sudanese Food Centre Attack”, News Article by Reuters Alertnet, 5 March 2002, “mainly Christian south” and “Oil Firm Could Face Sanctions”, News Article by ABC News, 26 October 1999, “predominantly Christian south”.

<sup>267</sup> “Factions Accused of Derailing Sudan Peace Efforts”, News Article by Kenya News Agency, 19 June 2001, “mainly Christian south”.

<sup>268</sup> “Sudan: Military Solution Won’t Work Says Afeworki”, News Article by Africa Online, 1 December 2001, “mainly Christian south”.

<sup>269</sup> “Oil Firm Could Face Sanctions”, News Article by ABC News, 26 October 1999, “predominantly Christian south”.

<sup>270</sup> “Child Soldiers Continue the Battle in Sudan”, Program Broadcast by Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 18 July 2001, “the predominantly Christian south”.

<sup>271</sup> “Sudan on Brink of ‘Unprecedented Calamity’ as War, Famine Continue”, News Article by Disaster Relief, 16 December 1998, “Christian South”.

<sup>272</sup> **The Boston Globe**, 27 July 1997, refers to “secessionist Christian rebels”.

<sup>273</sup> “Massacres End Three Month Sudan Ceasefire”, **Mail and Guardian** (Johannesburg), 8 March 1999, “mainly Christian south”.

**The Daily Telegraph** in particular provides observers with a clear example of how a newspaper of record, Britain's largest circulation title, has repeatedly, and perhaps even knowingly, seriously misrepresented the issue of Christianity in Sudan and southern Sudan especially. The newspaper has referred to the "Christian" south in Sudan for a number of years, since, for example, 1995.<sup>276</sup> The newspaper has also repeatedly referred to the SPLA as a "Christian" organisation, ignoring the fact that if that were the case it would be representative of a small minority within southern Sudan itself.<sup>277</sup> It has made these claims, at least since 1998, having been made perfectly aware that its assertions were widely inaccurate and distorted perceptions of the Sudanese conflict.<sup>278</sup> It cannot be said that it is inexperienced, but reporters who are making such elementary mistakes. A **Daily Telegraph** article, "The Church in Rags", written by the veteran journalist Lord Deedes, a former editor, demonstrated a continuing disregard to facts in speaking of "the Christian south".<sup>279</sup>

**The Daily Telegraph** is also the same newspaper that claimed Islamic *sharia* law was applied to southern Sudan, whereas the South has been exempt from *sharia* law since 1991. The Sudanese civil war is about the political status of southern Sudan. It is not a religious war. The conflict predates the present Islamic government by 34 years, and the most recent phase of the war started

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<sup>274</sup> "Analysts Upbeat About Talisman's Sudan Role", **Financial Post** (Toronto), November 1999, "largely Christian south".

<sup>275</sup> "My Week on the Cusp of War", **The Globe and Mail**, 17 December 1999, "Christian South".

<sup>276</sup> See, for example, "Ugandans 'Helping Rebels' in Sudan", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 31 October 1995, which refers to "the Christian south"; "Rebel victories revive 'forgotten war'", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 11 January 1996, refers to "the predominantly Christian south"; "Sudan rebels take control of south after key victory", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 9 May 1997, refers to "the largely Christian African south"; "Talks on Sudan offer scant hope of averting famine", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 5 May 1998, refers to "largely Christian southern rebels"; "Charities buy freedom for Sudan's child slaves", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 24 May 1998, refers to "mainly-Christian southern Sudan region"; "The Church in rags", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 30 March 1999, refers to "an African Christian south"; "Old War claims new victims", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 15 February 2000, refers to a "mostly Christian south".

<sup>277</sup> "Little faith in Sudan's Islamic regime", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 15 July 1995, refers to "Christian rebels in the south"; "Sudan regime 'blocking food aid'", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 2 August 1995, refers to "Christian rebels"; "Spectre of famine creeps up on Sudan", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 12 April 1998, refers to the SPLA as "a largely Christian southern rebel group".

<sup>278</sup> There were several letters from the British-Sudanese Public Affairs Council to the foreign editor of **The Daily Telegraph** outlining in detail the independently-verifiable facts of the religious composition of southern Sudan and Sudan itself.

<sup>279</sup> "The Church in Rags", **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 30 March 1999.

six years before the present government came to power. The most recent phase of the war also predates the imposition of Islamic *sharia* law by the Nimeiri government in 1983.

## Chapter 3

### *Sensationalism and Reality*

The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest – but the myth, persistent, persuasive, and realistic.

**John F. Kennedy**

In the 1999 report commissioned by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, it was observed that: “The public is virtually unanimous in believing that newspapers publish sensational stories to sell papers”. Eighty-five percent of the American public believes that “newspapers frequently over-dramatize some news stories just to sell more papers”. Forty-six percent of journalists polled also believed that to be the case.<sup>280</sup>

A study by the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security has also focused on the media’s vulnerability to manipulation: “The ‘dumbing down’ of the mass media, especially marked in countries with only a minimum commitment to public service broadcasting like the USA, means that it is especially vulnerable to stunts, spin doctoring and manipulation.”<sup>281</sup>

In late 2001, veteran CBS newsman Bernard Goldberg’s book, **Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News**, asserted that news stories are often twisted to fit certain journalists’ own political philosophy and interests.<sup>282</sup> Sudan has had more than its fair share of media sensationalism based on discredited material, questionable sources, stunts, disinformation and personal bias. These have included articles and programmes alleging “slavery” in Sudan and Sudanese involvement with weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that this sensationalism has served to distort the image of Sudan.

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<sup>280</sup> Christine D. Urban, **Examining Our Credibility: Perspectives of the Public and the Press**, A Report for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999.

<sup>281</sup> Ed Turner, “The Power and the Glory”, in Christopher Young, **The Role of the Media in International Conflict**, a report on a two-day seminar at the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, December 1991, pp.334-5

<sup>282</sup> Bernard Goldberg, **Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News**, Regnery Publishing, Washington-DC, 2002. See, also, “America’s TV Liberals ‘Twist Stories to Fit Their Own Agenda’”, **The Daily Telegraph**, 7 December 2001.

**A Case Study in Sensationalism:  
Allegations of “Slavery” and “Slave Redemption” in Sudan**

One of the most damaging and recurring media themes with regard to Sudan has been allegations of government-sponsored “slavery” and “slave trade” in Sudan. As “proof” for this, a great number of newspaper articles have “reported” instances of “slave redemption” in which alleged “slaves” were said to have been “bought” back from “slave traders”.

The origin of such claims can be traced back to a Christian Solidarity International-initiated article in **The Baltimore Sun**. This American newspaper sent two journalists into Sudan to “buy” “slaves” presented to them by CSI.<sup>283</sup> Alex de Waal, then director of African Rights, was particularly sceptical of the claims made by **The Baltimore Sun**: “Although they paid an exorbitant \$500 each for two ‘slaves’ in the small town of Manyiel, it is most probable that they were in fact paying a ransom to a go-between in a scheme whereby families pay, through a middleman, for their hostage children to be redeemed. They were not in a slave market.” Sudan has for some time been blighted by inter-tribal abductions, abductions that have increased the civil war grew in intensity and civil administration collapsed. De Waal also warned that “indiscriminate ‘buying back’” of abductees also “runs the risk of inflating the ransom beyond what families can afford, and, even worse, creating an incentive for further raiding and abduction”. De Waal, made the following comments with regard CSI’s claims:

(O)ver eager or misinformed human rights advocates in Europe and the US have played upon lazy assumptions to raise public outrage. Christian Solidarity International, for instance, claims that “Government troops and Government-backed Arab militias regularly raid black African communities for slaves and other forms of booty”. The organization repeatedly uses the term “slave raids”, implying that taking captives is the aim of government policy. This despite the fact that there is no evidence for centrally-organized, government-directed slave raiding or slave trade.<sup>284</sup>

Anti-Slavery International has also stated with regard to allegations of government involvement in slavery that: “[T]he charge that government troops engage in raids for the purpose of seizing slaves is not backed by the

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<sup>283</sup> See, “Close-up: Reporters Buy Slaves’ Freedom”, **The Baltimore Sun**, 18 June 1996.

<sup>284</sup> Alex de Waal, “Sudan: Social Engineering, Slavery and War”, in **Covert Action Quarterly** (Washington-DC), Spring 1997.

evidence.”<sup>285</sup> Nonetheless, both **Time** magazine and **Newsweek** carried **The Baltimore Sun** story as proof of an organised slave trade in Sudan. Amazingly enough, given the “lazy assumptions” underpinning its “slave redemption” article, **The Baltimore Sun** was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in the category of “explanatory journalism” in 1997.<sup>286</sup> These and numerous other similar articles in the years since then have greatly damaged the image of Sudan abroad. The organisations and people at the centre of these claims have been John Eibner and the Swiss-based Christian Solidarity International, and Baroness Cox, formerly of CSI and now president of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). Cox’s claims with regard to Sudan have long been questioned.<sup>287</sup> She has been described as “overeager or misinformed” by reputable human rights activist Alex de Waal, with regard to claims about slavery in Sudan. Her claims that Sudan was involved in chemical weapons have been denied by the British government and UNSCOM.<sup>288</sup> Cox’s claims about genocide in Sudan were contradicted by the British government.<sup>289</sup> And her claims, as late as 1999, that Sudan was involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing have even been contradicted by the Clinton Administration itself. Even a very sympathetic biography of Cox records that full-time humanitarian aid workers in Sudan “feel she is not well-enough informed. She recognizes a bit of the picture, but not all that’s going on”.<sup>290</sup> Even **The Times** newspaper has described her as appearing “ever so slightly unhinged”.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Peter Verney, **Slavery in Sudan**, Sudan Update and Anti-Slavery International, London, May 1997.

<sup>286</sup> It would not be the first time that the Pulitzer Prize mechanism was focused on lacklustre reporting. It should be remembered, for example, that Walter Duranty, the **New York Times** correspondent in Moscow, whose name is synonymous with the repetition of disinformation and propaganda, won the 1932 Pulitzer Prize for his mis-reporting of the great Ukrainian famine in the 1930s, mass starvation engineered by Stalin to destroy millions of peasants who opposed his policies. Duranty dismissed other correspondents’ reports of mass starvation. Duranty also took the rigged show trials conducted by the Stalin regime at face value, blithely accepting the guilt of the victims. The Pulitzer Prize was awarded to Duranty for work “marked by scholarship, profundity, impartiality, sound judgment and exceptional clarity” (“Musical Play Gets the Pulitzer Award; Mrs Buck, Pershing, Duranty Honored”, **The New York Times**, 3 May 1931, p.1) See also, S.J. Taylor, **Stalin’s Apologist: Walter Duranty: The New York Times’s Man in Moscow**, Oxford University Press, 1990.

<sup>287</sup> See, for example, **Baroness Cox and Sudan: How Reliable a Witness?**, The British-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 1999, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org).

<sup>288</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 19 March 1998, cols. 818-820.

<sup>289</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 10 December 1998, column 103.

<sup>290</sup> Andrew Boyd, **Baroness Cox: A Voice for the Voiceless**, Lion Publishing, Oxford, 1998, p.324.

<sup>291</sup> **The Times**, (London), 30 January 2001, p.27.

The sensationalist claims made by Cox, Eibner and others, while understandably very attractive to any journalist, are deeply questionable where not simply untrue. Sir Robert ffolkes, director of the Save the Children (UK) programme in Sudan, an organisation at the forefront of the abductions issue, has publicly stated: “I have seen no evidence at all of slave trading. And believe me, we have looked”.<sup>292</sup> Sir Robert has also said: “I do not believe the government is involved in slave-taking.”<sup>293</sup>

What CSI and groups such as the American Anti-Slavery Group have basically done is administer what in effect have been “slave redemption” tourist package tours, taking naïve, partisan or already sympathetic journalists and activists on one, two or three day “safaris” to “redeem” “slaves”. For many of these journalists and activists it would have been their first visit to Africa; they would not be able to speak any local languages, nor Arabic, and in some cases not even English as a first language; they were totally in the hands of their hosts, and dependent upon them for travel, translation and “context”. Articles essentially taking Christian Solidarity International claims about “slavery” and “slave redemption” at face value have appeared throughout the world, and have been published in several reputable newspapers and journals, including *Newsweek*<sup>294</sup>, *Time*<sup>295</sup>, CNN<sup>296</sup>, *Reader’s Digest*<sup>297</sup>, *The Wall Street Journal*<sup>298</sup>, *The New York Times*<sup>299</sup>, *The Washington Post*<sup>300</sup>, *The Washington Times*, *International Herald Tribune*<sup>301</sup>, *USA Today*<sup>302</sup>, *The Times*<sup>303</sup>, *The Observer*<sup>304</sup> and *The Daily Telegraph*<sup>305</sup>. Reputable news

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<sup>292</sup> Sir Robert ffolkes was quoted in “‘Sudan’, A Special International Report”, *The Washington Times*, 10 July 2001.

<sup>293</sup> “Anti-Slavery Drive in War-Torn Sudan Provokes Response Critics Say Buyback Boost Market”, *The Washington Times*, 25 May 2000.

<sup>294</sup> “Out of Bondage”, *Newsweek*, 3 May 1999. See, also, sympathetic article on Baroness Cox, “‘Grandmother, Lord, Rebel’”, *Newsweek*, 12 March 2001.

<sup>295</sup> “Baroness Who Frees the Slaves”, *Time* (European Edition), 26 July 2001.

<sup>296</sup> See, for example, “Buying the Freedom of Slaves in Sudan”, News Article by CNN, 20 December 1997.

<sup>297</sup> “Slavery’s Shameful Return to Africa”, *Reader’s Digest*, March 1996.

<sup>298</sup> “Black Slaves in Africa”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 November 1995.

<sup>299</sup> There have been several Articles. See, for example, “Selling Sudan’s Slaves into Freedom”, *The New York Times*, 25 April 1999; “Modern-Day Slavery”, *The New York Times*, 9 September 2000; “Redemption of Sudanese Slaves”, editorial, *The New York Times*, 27 April 2001

<sup>300</sup> “The Price of Freedom in Sudan”, *The Washington Post*, 1 May 1999.

<sup>301</sup> See, “Two Goats Can Free a Slave in Sudan”, *International Herald Tribune*, 29 June 2001.

<sup>302</sup> “Congress’ Words, Sudan’s Slaves”, *USA Today*, 26 September 2000.

<sup>303</sup> “Sudanese children sold as slaves, say Christian groups”, *The Times* (London), 16 March 1996.

<sup>304</sup> “Sudan revives the slave trade”, *The Observer* (London), 9 April 1995.

agencies such as Reuters has also repeatedly reported CSI claims seemingly as fact.<sup>306</sup> From time to time so have other news agencies such as Agence France Presse<sup>307</sup>, Associated Press<sup>308</sup> and UPI<sup>309</sup>. Several regional news agencies have also run with the claims.<sup>310</sup>

The BBC also conspicuously accepted CSI claims at face value, publishing numerous articles citing their assertions.<sup>311</sup> In January 2001, BBC television also screened **Everyman: The Dangerous Adventures of Baroness Cox**, a programme which uncritically allowed Baroness Cox, President of Christian Solidarity Worldwide to make her claims about “slave redemption” in Sudan.<sup>312</sup>

Journalists such as Nat Hentof at New York’s **Village Voice** have written dozens of articles on Sudan based on claims made by CSI, often accepting the most lurid allegations.<sup>313</sup> Important regional newspapers as far apart as **The Los Angeles Times**<sup>314</sup>, **The Houston Chronicle**<sup>315</sup> and **The Philadelphia Inquirer**<sup>316</sup> have also repeated CSI claims. Several Boston newspapers have seen fit to repeatedly, and uncritically, publish material provided by Christian

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<sup>305</sup> See, for example, “2,000 Slaves Freed in one Week”, **The Daily Telegraph**, 9 July 1999, “Slave Traders Cash in on Human Misery”, **The Daily Telegraph**, 8 February 2000.

<sup>306</sup> See, for example, “Swiss Group Says it Freed 1,783 Sudanese Slaves”, News Article by Reuters, 20 April 1999; “Aid Group Redeems Over 2,000 Slaves in south Sudan”, News Article by Reuters, 8 July 1999; “Aid Group Tries to Break Sudan Slavery Chain”, News Article by Reuters, 11 July 1999; “Christian Group Buys Freedom for More Sudan Slaves”, News Article by Reuters, 7 October 1999; “Mass Liberation of Slaves in Sudan, Group Says”, News Article by Reuters, 20 December 2001.

<sup>307</sup> “Swiss NGO Buys Freedom for 4,000 Sudanese Slaves”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 1 February 2000.

<sup>308</sup> “Slave Trade Thrives in Sudan”, News Article by Associated Press, 9 February 1998.

<sup>309</sup> “Boston Group Pays to Free Sudan Slaves”, News Article by UPI, 13 July 2001.

<sup>310</sup> See, for example, “Redeemed Slaves Speak of Assault. Brutality by Masters”, All Africa News Agency, 2 March 1999.

<sup>311</sup> See, for example, articles such as “Slaves Freed in Sudan”, News Article by BBC News, 28 January 1999; “More Slaves Freed in Sudan”, News Article by BBC News, 22 February 1999; “More Slaves Freed in Sudan”, News Article by BBC News, 8 July 1999; “More Slaves Freed in Sudan”, News Article by BBC News, 7 October 1999; “More Sudanese Slaves Freed”, News Article by BBC News, 8 October 1999; “Freedom for Thousands of Sudanese Slaves”, News Article by BBC News, 22 December 1999

<sup>312</sup> “Everyman: The Dangerous Adventures of Baroness Cox” was screened on 29 January 2001.

<sup>313</sup> See, for example, “Gang Rape in Sudan”, **Village Voice** (New York), 7 February 2001;

<sup>314</sup> See, “In Sudan, a 12 Year-Old Girl Can be Bought for \$50”, **The Los Angeles Times**, 28 December 1998; “Swiss-Based Rights Group Helps Buy Freedom of 1,050 Slaves”, **The Los Angeles Times**, 29 January 1999.

<sup>315</sup> “U.S. Cannot Ignore Horror of Slavery in Sudan”, **The Houston Chronicle**, 20 May 2001.

<sup>316</sup> “Students Protest Slavery in Sudan: They Marched to Raise Freedom Money”, **Philadelphia Inquirer**, 19 May 2001.

Solidarity International and its Boston-based partner, the American Anti-Slavery Group. These have included **The Boston Globe**<sup>317</sup>, **Boston Phoenix**<sup>318</sup>, and **The Boston Herald**<sup>319</sup>. Christian Solidarity International's newspaper propaganda outreach extended all the way down to school groups in Colorado<sup>320</sup>, radio talk show hosts<sup>321</sup> through to rock stars.<sup>322</sup> It is also clear that the Clinton Administration actively encouraged this campaign, with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, for example, publicly meeting with the Colorado school children involved in CSI-directed "slave redemption".<sup>323</sup>

The Canadian media have also been remarkably unprofessional in accepting CSI's controversial claims. **The Ottawa Citizen** ran a five-day series on "slavery" in Sudan.<sup>324</sup> In 1997, **The Calgary Sun** ran an eight-part series uncritically citing CSI claims.<sup>325</sup> In April 2000, **Maclean's**, Canada's premier magazine, also ran with an extensive, front-cover, CSI feature.<sup>326</sup>

An early advocate of CSI claims was one of Britain's most distinguished journalists, **Times** writer Bernard Levin. Writing in **The Times**, in an article entitled "A slave state of our time", published on 31 May 1996, Levin alleged that slavery was alive and well in Sudan "at the hands of the savages of Khartoum": "I should add that the slave-market is filled with men, women and children indiscriminately, and that those taken for slavery are used not only for the normal work of slavery, but for sexual services. Yes, yes, and yes again, I am talking about the horrors of Sudan". It should be noted, in passing, on this

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<sup>317</sup> See, for example, "In Campaign to Liberate Sudan's Child Slaves, Money Talks", **The Boston Globe**, 19 February 1999.

<sup>318</sup> See, for example, "This Just In: Slaves for Sale", **Boston Phoenix**, 1999.

<sup>319</sup> See, for example, "Harvard Teen Says He Heeded 'Calling' to Free Sudan Slaves", **The Boston Herald**, 15 September 2000.

<sup>320</sup> "Youthful Crusaders Get Boost", **The Denver Post**, 2 March 1999; "Aurora Kids Fighting Sudan Slavery Visit D.C.", **The Denver Post**, 9 June 2000; "Fifth-Grade Freedom Fighters", **The Washington Post**, 1 August 1998; "Students Protest Slavery in Sudan", **The Philadelphia Inquirer**, 19 May 2001.

<sup>321</sup> See, for example, "The Black Eagle Swoops into Sudan", **Village Voice** (New York), 16 May 2001.

<sup>322</sup> "Rock Star Helps Free Slaves in Sudan", **Miami Herald**, 15 December 2001.

<sup>323</sup> "Secretary Albright's Meeting with Colorado School Children Involved in Sudanese Anti-Slavery Campaign", Statement by Philip T. Reeker, Deputy Spokesman, Department of State, Washington-DC, 28 September 2000.

<sup>324</sup> See article in response, "Sudanese Diplomat Blasts Slavery Stories", **The Ottawa Citizen**, 7 March 1999.

<sup>325</sup> For a critique of this series see **Fuelling War in Sudan and Prejudice in Canada? The Calgary Sun and Sudan**, The European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 2000.

<sup>326</sup> "Freeing the Slaves of Sudan", **Maclean's** (Toronto), 10 April 2000.

particular claim by Levin that in a submission to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Anti-Slavery International observed of such claims:

Unless accurately reported, the issue can become a tool for indiscriminate and wholly undeserved prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. **[We] are worried that some media reports of “slave markets”, stocked by Arab slave traders – which [we] consider distort reality – fuel such prejudice.**<sup>327</sup> (emphasis added)

Levin also claimed that twelve thousand southern children were “currently enslaved in the North”. His article ends with: “And that is the fate of the people who live and are murdered in Sudan: terror; slavery; at the end, genocide. It all began with human rights, but what can we do against savages who literally do not know the meaning of those words?”. He freely conceded that the source for these outlandish claims was Baroness Cox, then with CSI, quoting from her in the article.

Levin had previously shown a predilection for such questionable material. A **Times** article of Levin’s on 23 March 1993 headlined “Islam’s fearful bloodletting” touched in passing on the Sudan, claimed that “In the Sudan, where genocide has been practised for some time against the Christian communities, crucifixion the real thing is being employed, and men in Christian villages have been slaughtered wholesale in that very fashion by Islamic soldiers”. A **Times** article one month later, on 27 April 1993 refers to the Sudanese government as “savages who hold the entire country”. Significantly he did add the rider that “We must, of course, be wary of deception. What we have been told about these terrible things is obviously hard to prove without, for instance, photographic evidence. Again and again in history, particularly modern history, such apparent wickedness has later been proved to be exaggerated”. Nonetheless, Levin returned to Sudan theme in early 1994. **The Times** of 11 January 1994 published his article headlined “And the evil goes on”. He recorded that: “When I wrote here...about the horrors being perpetrated in the Sudan, I was careful to make clear that solid evidence was rare; since one of the most persistent stories I heard was that the savages who had the upper hand were crucifying their opponents, scepticism was surely in order.” He concluded that “That scepticism is not hardly needed” because of an alleged

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<sup>327</sup> The reference number of this submission to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights is TS/S/4/97, and is available to view on the Anti-Slavery International web-site at [www.charitynet.org/asi/submit5.htm](http://www.charitynet.org/asi/submit5.htm)

disagreement between the Sudanese government and the Archbishop of Canterbury. There has been no evidence to support lurid allegations of the crucifixion of Christians in Sudan.<sup>328</sup>

Given these sorts of claims, it is somewhat disconcerting given the grave issues discussed in his articles that Levin has openly admitted to exaggerations in his work: "It is quite widely known that my middle name is Hyperbole, and I think I can say that I have lived up to it...I have got into the habit of multiplying...awfulnesses, just for fun".<sup>329</sup> Levin's concept of slavery is also a deeply flawed one.<sup>330</sup> A glaring example of what can only be described as grotesquely bigoted journalism involving Sudan was **The Times** article Levin wrote immediately following the devastating terrorist bomb in Oklahoma City in the United States in April 1995. In his article, interestingly entitled 'An explosion of bigotry', Levin pins the blame on Muslims:

I am quite certain that, somewhere in the United States perhaps in Oklahoma itself, even in Oklahoma City two or three people are sitting before their television set, going back and forth with the video, and perhaps even making notes, their eyes a-glow in the success of their mission their mission having been to murder and maim as many people in Oklahoma City as their bomb could offer...We come back to that room in Oklahoma, where the two or three are going over their success and beginning to think about the next bomb. (They are not toasting themselves, or not at any rate with liquor, because it is forbidden for them)...Do you realise that in perhaps half a century not more, and perhaps a good deal less there will be wars, real wars, in which the fanatical Muslims will be winning? Winning what, you ask? But you do not ask, because you know. As for Oklahoma, it will be called Khartoum-on-the-Mississippi, and woe betide anyone who calls it anything else.

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<sup>328</sup> See, for example, **2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Sudan**, Department of State, Washington-DC, 5 September 2000.

<sup>329</sup> **The Times** (London), 2 September 1994.

<sup>330</sup> It would perhaps place Mr Levin's predilection for exaggeration, as well as his definition of "slavery", into perspective that in a 8 June 1993 column in **The Times**, entitled 'Of inhuman bondage', he states that: "Slavery has reappeared in Britain", claiming that he had in his hands "unchallengeable evidence of the truth of it. A book by Bridget Anderson, entitled Britain's Secret Slaves and published by Anti-Slavery International, has provided the copious evidence, scrupulously documented. There are slaves in Britain...it is absolutely essential, in thinking about this dreadful business, to understand that...the slavery...is going on at this moment, all over the country, and the British government condones it". He believes that there are hundreds, if not thousands of slaves in Britain, What Levin is actually referring to is the mistreatment of domestic servants brought to London by foreign families resident in Britain. This illustrates quite clearly a tendency to use terms such as slavery in a particularly slapdash manner, as clearly, from Mr Levin's point of view, the governments of Sudan and Britain both condone slavery. It also illustrates a tendency to respond to single issue campaigning items.

It is of course a matter of record that the Oklahoma City bombing was carried out by white Americans. A decorated American former serviceman, Timothy McVeigh, was subsequently tried and executed. There was no Arab, Islamic or Sudanese link whatsoever.

It may be that Levin did not care that at least some of his materials have contained grotesque exaggerations, inaccuracies and unfounded sensationalism, or that he has clearly been very slapdash in his assessment of materials placed in front of him – materials which have then formed the basis of his articles, or that he has demonstrated the very bigotry he condemns in his journalism. It may be that he found it difficult finding material upon which to base his regular articles in **The Times**, and responded eagerly to sensationalist stories and rumours, even if they were provided without evidence. But in levelling accusations of genocide, slavery, international terrorism and other heinous crimes, it simply will not do to base these accusations on hearsay and at best second and third hand material provided by organisations with an anti-Sudanese axe to grind – material which has been distorted beyond all recognition by the propagandistic intention with which it was presented.

The damage done to Sudan's reputation by Christian Solidarity International's claims of "slavery" and "slave redemption" in that country is clear. Yet these claims have now been comprehensively exposed as fraudulent and untrustworthy. A Western diplomat in Khartoum stated that CSI has "zero credibility" among mainstream aid organisations and the United Nations.<sup>331</sup>

Exposés of the claims made by CSI began to emerge as early as 1999.<sup>332</sup> Also in that year, respected Italian priest Father Renato Kizito Sesana, long active in southern Sudan, questioned CSI's claims. Writing in the Kenyan **Sunday Nation**, he observed: "When you know the reality of Sudan on the ground, you cannot believe that it is possible to come to Nairobi from Switzerland, the following day hire a plane at Wilson Airport, fly somewhere in Sudan with a pocketful of money and redeem 1,050 slaves. Somebody, somewhere, plays a dirty trick."<sup>333</sup> One month later, Father Renato added that he was "afraid" that CSI "might have fallen victims of some fraud perpetrated by local people, possibly with the connivance of elements living abroad who have some more or less legitimate interests in the area. Only the Swiss branch of CSI is involved in

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<sup>331</sup> "Baroness Faces Anger Over Sudan 'Slave Scam'", **The National Post** (Toronto), 20 April 2002.

<sup>332</sup> Richard Minitier, "The False Promise of Slave Redemption", **The Atlantic Monthly**, July 1999.

<sup>333</sup> **Sunday Nation** (Nairobi), 21 February 1999.

the redemption of slaves. The German and Austrian branches, that were involved at the beginning, have withdrawn. What were their reasons? Did they smell a rat, too?”<sup>334</sup> In 2000, the Canadian government also clearly questioned the credibility of large-scale “slave redemptions” as claimed by CSI: “[R]eports, especially from CSI, about very large numbers were questioned, and frankly not accepted. Mention was also made to us of evidence that the SPLA were involved in “recycling” abductees...”<sup>335</sup>

In February 2002, in an unprecedented international focus, and as the result of some excellent investigative journalism, **The Irish Times**, London’s **Independent on Sunday**, **The Washington Post** and **International Herald Tribune**, chose to publish, or republish, articles exposing the deep fraud and corruption at the heart of claims of “slave redemption” in Sudan.<sup>336</sup> These articles are the culmination of long-standing concerns about the activities of several organisations involved in what had become a Western-financed “redemption” industry in parts of Sudan. The claims by John Eibner and Christian Solidarity International and Baroness Cox and Christian Solidarity Worldwide, and others, to have “redeemed” tens of thousands of Sudanese “slaves” were sharply called into question. **The Washington Post** reported that in numerous documented instances “the slaves weren’t slaves at all, but people gathered locally and instructed to pretend they were returning from

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<sup>334</sup> See, “Redeeming Slaves in Sudan: Truth of Trickery?”, **Africa News**, Nairobi, March 1999.

<sup>335</sup> John Harker, **Human Security in Sudan: The Report of a Canadian Assessment Mission**, Prepared for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa, January 2000

<sup>336</sup> “The Great Slave Scam”, **The Irish Times**, 23 February 2002; “Scam in Sudan - An Elaborate Hoax Involving Fake African Slaves and Less-than-Honest Interpreters is Duping Concerned Westerners”, **The Independent on Sunday** (London), 24 February 2002; “Ripping Off Slave ‘Redeemers’: Rebels Exploit Westerners’ Efforts to Buy Emancipation for Sudanese”, **The Washington Post**, 26 February 2002; “Sudan Rip-Offs Over Phony Slaves”, **International Herald Tribune**, 27 February 2002. “Slave Redemption” has also been extensively questioned. See, for example, Richard Minter, “The False Promise of Slave Redemption”, **The Atlantic Monthly**, July 1999; **The Reality of Slave Redemption**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, March 2001; **The Use of Intertribal Raiding as ‘Slavery’ Propaganda in Sudan: A Statement of Concern to Mrs Mary Robinson, The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, March 2001, all available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org). Christian Solidarity International’s Sudan activities have long been seriously questioned. See, for example, **Time to Speak out on Christian Solidarity International and Sudan: An Open Letter to Anti-Slavery International**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, June 2001; **Prejudiced and Discredited: Christian Solidarity International and Sudan**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 2000, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org); David Hoile, **Sudan, Propaganda and Distortion: Allegations of Slavery and Slavery-Related Practices**, The Sudan Foundation, London, March 1997.

bondage”.<sup>337</sup> **The Independent on Sunday** reported that it was able to “reveal that ‘redemption’ has often been a carefully orchestrated fraud”.<sup>338</sup> Rev Cal Bombay, whose Crossroads Christian Communications organisation in Canada had been involved in “slave redemptions” revealed that SPLA leaders such as Dr Samson Kwaje, in candid comments about “slave redemption”, “doubted that even 5%” of the “slaves” had ever been abducted, and that “they were coached in how to act, and stories to tell.”<sup>339</sup>

**The Irish Times** reported “According to aid workers, missionaries, and even the rebel movement that facilitates it, slave redemption in Sudan is often an elaborate scam.” **The Irish Times** article also stated that in many cases “the process is nothing more than a careful deceit, stage-managed by corrupt officials”.

In reality, many of the ‘slaves’ are fakes. Rebel officials round up local villagers to pose for the cameras. They recruit fake slavers – a light skinned soldier, or a passing trader, to ‘sell’ them. The children are coached in stories of abduction and abuse for when the redeemer, or a journalist, asks questions. Interpreters may be instructed to twist their answers. The money, however, is very real. CSI can spend more than \$300,000 during a week of redemptions at various bush locations. After their plane takes off, the profits are divvied up – a small cut to the “slaves” and the “trader” but the lion’s share to local administrators and SPLA figures.

In an open letter in 2000 senior SPLA commander Aleu Ayieny Aleu stated that “slave redemption” had become a “racket of mafia dimensions”. He also revealed, as an example, that one of his lighter-skinned relatives, SPLA captain Akec Tong Aleu, had been “forced several times to pretend as an Arab and simulate the sale of free children to CSI on camera”.<sup>340</sup> Aleu declared: “It was a hoax. This thing has been going on for no less than six years”.<sup>341</sup> This account, **The Washington Post** stated, “coincides with descriptions of the scam offered by Sudanese officials and Western aid workers, who said the sheer volume of

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<sup>337</sup> “Ripping Off Slave ‘Redeemers’: Rebels Exploit Westerners’ Efforts to Buy Emancipation for Sudanese”, **The Washington Post**, 26 February 2002.

<sup>338</sup> “Scam in Sudan – An Elaborate Hoax Involving Fake African Slaves and Less-than-Honest Interpreters is Duping Concerned Westerners”, **The Independent on Sunday** (London), 24 February 2002

<sup>339</sup> “Slave Redemption”, Email message from Rev Cal Bombay to the European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, 8 April 2002.

<sup>340</sup> “The Great Slave Scam”, **The Irish Times**, 23 February 2002.

<sup>341</sup> “Ripping Off Slave ‘Redeemers’”, **The Washington Post**, 26 February 2002.

allegation made in the Bryce Report. It has subsequently been described as “largely a tissue of invention, unsubstantiated observations by unnamed witnesses, and second-hand eyewitness reports, depending far more on imagination than any other factor.”<sup>18</sup> The American historian H.C. Peterson called the Bryce Report “one of the worst atrocities of the war.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, there is no doubt that Sudanese combatants have also been party to unacceptable behaviour, such is invariably the case in war-time, but not to the extent or seriousness of the allegations against them. Sudan has had its fair share of Bryce Report-type publications, similarly based upon “unnamed witnesses and second-hand eyewitness reports”. These assertions, whether they be on “oil displacement”, “slavery” or “terrorism”, also seem to have depended more on imagination than reality. Nonetheless they have been widely circulated, especially in this media age, by the latter-day equivalents of Orwell’s overeager academics and unquestioning newspapers.

In the course of the 1990s, although not at war with Sudan, the Clinton Administration similarly chose to demonise Sudan and used every means at its disposal to bring down the Sudanese government.<sup>20</sup> And, in comparison with 1915, modern propagandists have a much wider and more impressive range of print, radio, television, and electronic media to use in their campaigns. Every propaganda device at its disposal was deployed by Washington to isolate Africa’s biggest country. Several of the sorts of claims made in the Bryce Report can be seen in the Clinton Administration’s attacks on Khartoum, including the use of “reports”, secondary accounts and unattributed claims.

Such outright American hostility jarred with previous attitudes towards Sudan. On independence in 1956, Sudan’s immediate post-independence foreign policy was friendly towards the West. The country subsequently experienced both civilian and military government, and in 1969 General Gafaar Nimeiri came to power in a *coup d’état*. Nimeiri abolished all existing political institutions and parties and assumed the role of president. Politically, Nimeiri’s regime initially veered towards the left until an attempted *coup* by the Sudanese communist party in July 1971. He then made overtures towards Washington.

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Buitenhuis, **The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda 1914-18 and After**, B.T. Batsford Ltd, London, 1989, p.27; Phillip Knightley, **The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo**, Prion Books, London, 2000, p.87-88.

<sup>19</sup> H.C. Peterson, **Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality**, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1939, p.58.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, “Wielding Aid, U.S. Targets Sudan to be Sent to Neighbors Who Are Backing Rebel Forces”, **The Washington Post**, 10 November 1996.

children and slavery, CBS anchorman Dan Rather observed: “[w]hat has been done to these people and to these children may not be what it appears. One insider has come forward with claims that the scenes of mass redemptions seen around the world are a hoax.” The insider in question was Jim Jacobson, who had worked for Eibner and had previously participated in “slave redemptions”. Jacobson stated: “It’s a show. It’s a circus, it’s a staged event.” At alleged “slave redemptions” that Jacobson had witnessed he had seen SPLA round up children in the village: “Instant slaves. Kids of the village. Kids that were just playing around.” The programme also interviewed Father Riva who confirmed purposeful misinterpretations during “redemptions”. Riva also stated that the “slave traders” were local people given money to round up villagers and bring them to “redemptions”.<sup>347</sup> Dan Rather was told by Jacobson that Rather and CBS had been deceived when they covered, and accepted at face value, claims of “slave redemption” in a two-part series made in 1999.<sup>348</sup>

It is also worth noting that Christian Solidarity International had also able to get its anti-Sudan “slave redemption” “theatre” onto American network television. The 1999 season premiere of the CBS network show, “Touched By An Angel”, featured “slave redemption” in Sudan.<sup>349</sup> By the show’s executive producer own admission, this episode was intended to influence the passage of anti-Sudanese legislation through Congress.<sup>350</sup>

This CSI propaganda piece, based on claims of a CSI-style “slave redemption” of the sort subsequently seen to be fraudulent, was viewed by an estimated 20 million Americans. In so doing, this episode directly echoed an earlier, equally fraudulent and equally successful attempt to influence the United States Congress. Phillip Knightley has described this earlier incident thus:

Take the Kuwaiti babies story. Its origins go back to the first world war when British propaganda accused the Germans of tossing Belgian babies into the air and catching them on their bayonets. Dusted off and updated for the Gulf war, this version had Iraqi soldiers bursting into a modern Kuwaiti hospital, finding the premature babies ward and then tossing the babies out of incubators so that the incubators could be sent back to Iraq. The story,

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<sup>347</sup> “The Slave Trade and Mass Redemptions Hoax in Sudan”, CBS “60 Minutes”, 16 May 2002.

<sup>348</sup> Dan Rather, “Slavery in Sudan”, CBS News, two-part series screened on 1 and 2 February 1999.

<sup>349</sup> “For Such a Time as This”, Touched by an Angel, CBS, 26 September 1999. Ironically, it was a CBS “60 Minutes” programme, “The Slave Trade and Mass Redemptions Hoax in Sudan”, screened on 16 May 2002, that subsequently exposed the fraudulent nature of CSI’s claims.

<sup>350</sup> See, for example, “Basis for our Statement that the Writer of the ‘Angels in Sudan’ Episode Said it was ‘Propaganda’”, South Sudan Friends, at [www.southsudanfriends.org/tba2.html](http://www.southsudanfriends.org/tba2.html)

improbable from the start, was first reported by the Daily Telegraph in London on September 5 1990. But the story lacked the human element; it was an unverified report, there were no pictures for television and no interviews with mothers grieving over their dead babies. That was soon rectified. An organisation calling itself Citizens for a Free Kuwait (financed by the Kuwaiti government in exile) had signed a \$10m contract with the giant American public relations company, Hill & Knowlton, to campaign for American military intervention to oust Iraq from Kuwait. The Human Rights Caucus of the US Congress was meeting in October and Hill & Knowlton arranged for a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl to tell the babies' story before the Congressmen. She did it brilliantly, choking with tears at the right moment, her voice breaking as she struggled to continue...President Bush referred to the story six times in the next five weeks as an example of the evil of Saddam's regime...John R MacArthur's study of propaganda in the war says that the babies atrocity was a definitive moment in the campaign to prepare the American public for the need to go to war. It was not until nearly two years later that the truth emerged. The story was a fabrication and a myth and...the teenage Kuwaiti girl, coached and rehearsed by Hill & Knowlton for her appearance before the Congressional Committee, was in fact the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States.<sup>351</sup>

That there was a clear intention for the "Touched by an Angel" episode to influence Congressional opinion was clear. The Iviews news agency reported at the time that:

Martha Williamson, the show's executive producer, said Senator Sam Brownback (R-Ks) and another member of Congress approached her with the idea of doing a show on the subject of Sudan. 'They asked me to plant the seed,' said Williamson. Not only did Brownback ask Williamson to do the show, he acted as a consultant to the producers, visited the set as the episode was being filmed, and hosted the show's screening Tuesday night. The screening followed the introduction in July of legislation co-sponsored by Brownback (S. 1453) that, according to materials distributed by the senator's office, will provide food assistance to rebel forces in Southern Sudan and tighten sanctions on the Sudanese government. 'I hope this show stirs action,' said Brownback. 'There are a number of doors people need to step through to get the Sudan Peace Act approved this session of Congress. I'm asking each of you, as you watch this tonight, to say to yourself, "I'm going to find out and I'm going to learn how I'm going to push" for the proposed legislation.'<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> "The Disinformation Campaign", **The Guardian** (London), 4 October 2001. See, also, John MacArthur, **New York Times** Op-Ed, 6 January 1992 and ABC's "20/20" program, 17 January 1992, and "Did PR Firm Invent Gulf War Stories", **In These Times**, 22 January 1992, p.2.

<sup>352</sup> "CAIR: Senator Uses Hit CBS Show to Push Sudan Legislation", News Article by Iviews.com, 22 September 2002.

The screening was attended by politicians, their families, evangelical Christians, TV stars, CBS executives, and various advocacy groups.<sup>353</sup> The script-writer admitted that Christian Solidarity International material had shaped the story.<sup>354</sup> It is clear that the claims made in this episode were as false as those in the baby incubators story. In both cases claims that have subsequently revealed as either deeply questionable where not false were used to influence the United States Congress. In the case of Sudan, these false images resulted in the provision of millions of dollars in aid to one of Africa's most murderous insurgencies. Ironically, it was CBS's flagship investigative programme, "60 Minutes", that subsequently clearly exposed the "slave redemption" hoax that was so central a part of the "Touched by an Angel" show.

An insight into CSI's stage-managed "slavery" imagery so enthusiastically accepted by "Touched by an Angel", **Newsweek**, Reuters and journalists such as Levin was provided by Mike Dottridge, director of Anti-Slavery International: "I have been shown some things which are obvious theatre, a slave train of people in single file moving through the bush, meant to conjure up images of 19<sup>th</sup> century slavery. There is a disconnect between the information in the north, and the information in the south, and stories that don't remotely match up."<sup>355</sup> Against this, it is worth noting that Reuters, for example, had previously naively accepted CSI imagery: "A single file of African women and children approaches through the trees in groups of a hundred or more, led by their Arab owners. In an eerie throwback to the dark days of Africa's history, these people...are slaves."<sup>356</sup> Similarly, a CSI-prompted **Newsweek** feature on "slavery" in Sudan prominently featured over two pages a picture of precisely the single-file, "slave train" spoken of by Dottridge as "theatre".<sup>357</sup> And the "Touched by an Angel" show also featured an Arab marching a column of "slaves" through the desert.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> "'Touched By An Angel' Touches on Sudan", News Article by Conservative News Service, 28 September 1999.

<sup>354</sup> "CAIR: Senator Uses Hit CBS Show to Push Sudan Legislation", News Article by Iviews.com, 22 September 2002.

<sup>355</sup> "Baroness Faces Anger Over Sudan 'Slave Scam'", **The National Post** (Toronto), 20 April 2002.

<sup>356</sup> "Aid Group Tries to Break Sudan Slavery Chain", News Article by Reuters, 11 July 1999

<sup>357</sup> See, "Out of Bondage", **Newsweek**, 3 May 1999.

<sup>358</sup> "CAIR: Senator Uses Hit CBS Show to Push Sudan Legislation", News Article by Iviews.com, 22 September 2002.

### **The American Anti-Slavery Group**

An organisation that has also been at the heart of the anti-Sudanese propaganda war has been the self-styled “American Anti-Slavery Group” (AASG). Headed by Charles Jacobs, AASG is based in Boston. Jacobs has confirmed that the American Anti-Slavery Group works closely with Christian Solidarity International<sup>359</sup>, and has been closely identified with the subsequently discredited claims of mass “slave redemptions” and claims of Arab “slave” raiders “enslaving” black women and children in Sudan.

In examining earlier claims made by the AASG, David Hecht, a BBC correspondent based in Senegal, directly challenged the credibility of Charles Jacobs, bluntly referring to “the misinformation of Jacobs and his anti-slavery group”.<sup>360</sup> Hecht focused on claims made before congressional sub-committees in 1996 by Jacobs and the American Anti-Slavery Group which spoke of Arab slave raiders capturing black women and children in Mauritania. Jacobs testified that slaves are treated as “concubines”. He also claimed that many slaves undergo exotic torture, including “camel treatment,” the “insect treatment” and the “burning coals treatment”. The congressmen were also presented with a receipt by Jacobs and his colleagues to be for the sale of a slave and her baby daughter.

The then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William Twaddle, stated with regard to the allegations made by Jacobs that they “have not credibly been brought to our attention.” He stated, for example, that the American government had investigated the receipt for the “slave purchase” and concluded that the signatures were forged.<sup>361</sup> Jacobs claimed that there were hundreds of thousands of black slaves in Mauritania. The State Department’s country report on human rights in Mauritania for 1996, however, stated: “Slavery in the form of officially sanctioned forced or involuntary servitude, is extremely rare, and a system of slavery in which government and society join to force individuals to serve masters no longer exists”.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> “Statement of Charles Jacobs, Ed.D., President American Anti-Slavery Group, Boston, Mass.”, Testimony before the sub-committee on international operations and human rights of the Committee on International Relations, US House of Representatives, Washington-DC, 27 May 1999.

<sup>360</sup> David Hecht, “‘Slavery’ African Style”, The Wisdom Fund, 14 February 1998. This article was based on a letter on “slavery” in Mauritania to **The Washington Post** which the newspaper declined to publish.

<sup>361</sup> David Hecht, “Virtual Slavery”, **The New Republic**, 12 May 1997.

<sup>362</sup> **Country Report on Human Rights for Mauritania**, United States Department of State, Washington-DC, 1997.

In his study of Jacobs' claims, Hecht interviewed Hindou Mint Ainina, editor-in-chief of **Le Calame**, one of Mauritania's leading independent newspapers, about the claims made by Jacobs. Hecht records that Ms Ainina scoffed at the stories of "slave raids" described to Congress and has never heard of the "bizarre" camel, insect or hot sand tortures cited by Jacobs. Hecht reported that "many in Mauritania believe these tales were concocted by members of FLAM (*Forces pour la liberation des Africains Mauritanien*s), a liberation group for non-Maur Africans as anti-government propaganda." A senior US Foreign Service official observed: "They [the rebels] have many legitimate grievances but slavery is not one of them." Hecht quoted Ainina as asking of American congressmen "Do they think we have big plantations here and white mansions on top of the hill? They are sadly mistaken."<sup>363</sup>

Jacobs has been accused of "Muslim baiting" and has referred to the Prophet Muhammed as a swindler.<sup>364</sup> Prior to his involvement with AASG, Jacobs had been involved in ultra-conservative, pro-Israeli activism. He headed, for example, the 'Mosaic Group', described by **The Jewish Advocate** newspaper as "an activist group which countered anti-Israel propaganda in community organizations."<sup>365</sup> When asked about Mosaic, one of Jacobs' colleagues stated: "Well, it's not the name that he [Jacobs] goes under anymore. I think that sort of fell by the wayside when he renamed it the American Anti-Slavery Group."<sup>366</sup> In any instance, the AASG is clearly partisan with regard to the Sudanese conflict, supporting and working with the SPLA rebel movement. One of the AASG co-founders was David de Chand, a southern Sudanese rebel official. It has been noted that there is an ideological context for Jacobs' support for the SPLA. Israel had historically supported and given military aid to southern Sudanese rebels as part of policies designed to destabilise Islamic countries.<sup>367</sup>

In 2000, Jacobs became the Director of the "Sudan Campaign", a coalition of anti-Sudanese groups. The similarities between AASG's claims about Mauritania and Sudan are clear. Just as in Mauritania, allegations about Arab slave raiders and claims of "slavery" in Sudan make for good anti-Muslim

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<sup>363</sup> David Hecht, "Virtual Slavery", **The New Republic**, 12 May 1997.

<sup>364</sup> Ismail Royer, Sudan "'Anti-Slavery' Campaign is Outgrowth of pro-Israel Lobby", Iviews.com, available at [www.iviews.com](http://www.iviews.com)

<sup>365</sup> **The Toronto Star**, 23 December 1989.

<sup>366</sup> Ismail Royer, Sudan 'Anti-Slavery' Campaign is Outgrowth of pro-Israel Lobby", Iviews.com, available at [www.iviews.com](http://www.iviews.com).

<sup>367</sup> Ismail Royer, Sudan "'Anti-Slavery' Campaign is Outgrowth of pro-Israel Lobby", Iviews.com, available at [www.iviews.com](http://www.iviews.com). See, also, **The Washington Post**, 28 April 1998.

propaganda. Jacobs once again alleged the existence of “concubines”.<sup>368</sup> Allegations of “slavery” have been closely associated with, and have directly benefited, rebel movements in both countries. Jacobs was also able to focus considerably more attention on Sudan by presenting the issue as one of northern Arab “slavers” and African Christian southerners. And in Sudan the whole issue has been a very lucrative one for “slave redeemers”, with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash allegedly changing hands. The AASG has also shamelessly exploited the naivety of school teachers and schoolchildren<sup>369</sup> as well as Harvard University undergraduates in its campaigns.<sup>370</sup> Jacobs has managed to secure considerable media coverage for his claims.<sup>371</sup> In addition to claims of slavery, he has also described Sudan as a “terrorist, genocidal” state<sup>372</sup> engaged in a “holy war”.<sup>373</sup>

It has clearly been easy for the AASG to get its claims into print, particularly within local newspapers and television stations whose journalistic standards have been less than demanding. They have obviously welcomed what John Stauber, the founder of the Center for Media and Democracy, described as “PR puff pieces disguised as news stories”. There is considerable evidence that Charles Jacobs and his American Anti-Slavery Group’s carefully-designed “PR puff pieces” have found fertile ground in Boston.<sup>374</sup> Jacobs has managed to secure national media coverage for his claims.<sup>375</sup> The Boston ad agency of Hill,

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<sup>368</sup> “Halting Sudan’s Slavery and Slaughter”, **The Boston Globe**, 8 November 1999.

<sup>369</sup> See, for example, “Students Buy 2 Sudanese Out of Slavery”, **The Denver Post**, 24 April 1998; “Colorado Fourth Graders Leading Charge to Gain Freedom of Sudanese Slaves”, News Article on NBC Nightly News, 21 December 1998, and “Bloomsburg High Grad Fights Slavery in Sudan”, **Press Enterprise** (Bloomsburg, PA), 14 April 2002.

<sup>370</sup> See, for example, “Sophomore Skips Orientation to Free 4,000 Slaves in Sudan”, **The Harvard University Gazette**, 28 September 2000; “Student’s Journey to Sudan Shed Light on Slavery”, **Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**, 16 April 2002.

<sup>371</sup> The activities of the AASG have been featured in publications including **The Wall Street Journal**, **The New Yorker**, and **The Boston Globe**. Jacobs has also appeared on ABC’s “World News Tonight”, CBS’ “This Morning”, and National Public Radio’s “Talk of the Nation”

<sup>372</sup> “Statement of Charles Jacobs, Ed.D., President American Anti-Slavery Group, Boston, Mass.”, Testimony before the Sub-Committee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, US House of Representatives, Washington-DC, 27 May 1999.

<sup>373</sup> “Should Wall Street Be Open to Slavers?”, **The Boston Globe**, 8 September 2001.

<sup>374</sup> See, for example, articles such as “In Campaign to Liberate Sudan’s Child Slaves, Money Talks”, **The Boston Globe**, 19 February 1999; “Harvard Teen Says He Heeded ‘Calling’ to Free Sudan Slaves”, **The Boston Herald**, 15 September 2000.

<sup>375</sup> The activities of the AASG have been featured in publications including **The Wall Street Journal**, **The New Yorker**, and **The Boston Globe**. Jacobs has also appeared on ABC’s “World News Tonight”, CBS’ “This Morning”, and National Public Radio’s “Talk of the Nation”

Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos launched a campaign on behalf of AASG. Adverts were aimed at “grabbing readers with a provocative, even offensive, approach” and sought to place these ads in national papers such as **The New York Times** and **The Washington Post**. A senior vice-president at the advertising agency, Todd Riddle, said of the ad campaign “[i]t puts a spin on the old slave auctions.”<sup>376</sup>

Similarly, several months after the definitive exposé of Sudanese “slave redemptions”, the AASG was still managing to place questionable “redemption” articles into local media.<sup>377</sup> In a further surprising footnote to the issue of “slave redemption”, despite the fact that the **International Herald Tribune** published the exposé of claims of “slave redemption” made by John Eibner and CSI, the newspaper subsequently published an article by him restating the same discredited claims.<sup>378</sup>

And in a related development, Joe Madison and Del Walters, a Washington-DC radio presenter and an ABC-7 news reporter respectively, received an award for international reporting from the National Association of Black Journalists for a report based on a CSI-orchestrated “slave redemption” trip to Sudan.<sup>379</sup>

It is also worthwhile examining why it is that people become involved in the propaganda campaigns on Sudan. Doubtless many of those involved have been sincere, some are cynical and some are calculating. As the articles in **The Irish Times** and **The Washington Post** showed, some are involved for financial gain as part of the burgeoning anti-Sudan industry that emerged in the 1990s. Some obviously enjoy the personal kudos and praise they receive from their peer groups in the United States or Britain. Despite basing their campaigns on allegations described by reputable human rights specialists as “overeager or misinformed” that have “played upon lazy assumptions to raise public outrage”, Charles Jacobs has received awards, including the “Boston Freedom Award” and Baroness Cox received the Wilberforce Award for her Sudan “work”. An insight into the ego of some was provided by John Eibner’s self-styled article “My Career Redeeming Slaves”.<sup>380</sup> And, for many, the anti-Sudan campaign coincided with their own narrow, partisan or religious interests.

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<sup>376</sup> “This Just In: Slaves for Sale. A Boston Ad Agency Teams up with an Anti-Slavery Organization for some Compelling, and Disturbing, Advocacy”, **Boston Phoenix**, 1999.

<sup>377</sup> “Buying Freedom in Sudan”, **The Boston Globe**, 9 July 2002.

<sup>378</sup> “Meanwhile It Takes 2 Goats, or \$33, to Free a Slave in Sudan”, **International Herald Tribune**, 11 June 2002.

<sup>379</sup> “Joe Madison Wins NABJ Award”, Web-posted by Ms4Freedom, 14 June 2002.

<sup>380</sup> John Eibner, “My Career Redeeming Slaves”, **Middle East Quarterly**, December 1999.

### **A Case Study in Propaganda: The Kola Boof Story**

Another clear example of the manipulation of the image of Sudan for personal and propaganda purposes was the campaign surrounding a woman calling herself Kola Boof.<sup>381</sup> The author of **Long Train to the Redeeming Sin: Stories of African Women**, Ms Boof's "sudden" appearance on the Internet "several months ago" was noted by **The New York Times** in December 2002.<sup>382</sup> Ms Boof came to prominence when she claimed that she had been made the subject of a Sudanese government *fatwa* issued by a Sudanese diplomat in London, Mr Jamal Ibrahim, and Dr Hasan Turabi, the former speaker of the Sudanese Parliament, allegedly sentencing her to death for being opposed to the Khartoum government and blaspheming Islam. Ms Boof claimed that she had been sentenced to be beheaded. These claims were carried by several media outlets.<sup>383</sup> She claimed that the *fatwa* had been issued in September 2002 by the Sudanese government, and that this had been conveyed to her by the SPLA, who in turn claimed to have had it confirmed by a Mr

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<sup>381</sup> There appears to be some doubt as to her original name. On one of her websites, she says that her name is Naima Bint Harith ("The Woman is Dangerous: Biography of Kola Boof", at <http://www.kolaboof.com/dangerous.htm>). On another of her websites, she gives her name as "Naima Alu Kolbookek ("Kola Boof", at [http://authors.aalbc.com/kola\\_boof.htm](http://authors.aalbc.com/kola_boof.htm)). In an interview with **The New York Times** she states that her given name is Naima Bahri (Julie Salmon, "Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona", **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002). In her 2003 book, **Diary of a Lost Girl**, Ms Boof says that she calls herself Kola Boof "in honour of Clara Bow and Betty Boop - I'm a silent movie buff, you see" ([http://authors.aalbc.com/kola\\_boof.htm](http://authors.aalbc.com/kola_boof.htm)).

<sup>382</sup> Julie Salmon, "Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona", **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002.

<sup>383</sup> See, for example, "'Anti-Islam' Books Spark Fatwa: Author Speaks Out Despite Warning From Bin Laden", News Article by World Daily Net, 9 November 2002. This article claimed that Sudanese diplomat Jamal Ibrahim had issued a fatwa calling for her to be beheaded. It also claimed that Ms Boof was "under the protection of U.S. government agents". On 7 November 2002, CNSNews.com claimed in an article entitled "Islam, Religion of Peace: Sudan's Threat to Behead Author Sparks US Protests", that there was a "Sudanese government death warrant calling for the beheading of best-selling author Kola Boof", and that this had prompted anti-Sudanese demonstrations in Washington, New York and Los Angeles. An article in **The Washington Times** claimed that Ms Boof was "sentenced to death for denouncing the oppression of women under Islamic law and the enslavement of non-Muslim black Africans in Sudan" ("Eminem's Raunchy Rap", **The Washington Times**, 15 November 2002). **The Village Voice** has also echoed her claims stating, for example, that "Prominent Sudanese writer Kola Boof has recently taken refuge in the US after death threats in Sudan, "Taslina Nassrin Speaks (Still)", **The Village Voice** (New York), 13-19 November 2002. The Russian newspaper, **Pravda** also repeated Ms Boof's claims ("Kola Boof, Some Lady", **Pravda**, Moscow, 26 July 2002).

Tanzim Wasti, Mr Ibrahim's secretary and by Islamist activist Sheikh Omar Bakri.

On the basis of these and other previous claims Ms Boof quickly emerged as a darling of the anti-Sudan campaign, and was embraced by activists such as Joe Madison and Maria Sliwa of "FreeWorldNow".<sup>384</sup> **The New York Times** revealed how impressionable members of African-American society came forward to help her campaign because of having read her claims as publicised on the Internet. Demonstrations were held in her name. The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWD), for example, arranged simultaneous demonstrations in New York city, Los Angeles and Washington-DC on 7 November 2002 to "protest" the "Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> death sentence from Sudan ordering that Black womanist writer Kola Boof is to be beheaded". The AWID protest literature spoke of "our beloved Queen Kola".<sup>385</sup>

Building on her anti-Khartoum theme, Ms Boof also stated in interviews for example: "I am a political activist, a soldier in Dr. John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Army".<sup>386</sup> It subsequently emerged that she had made a number of other interesting claims. She claimed, for example, that she was the daughter of an Egyptian archaeologist and a Somalian princess, and that she had lived in Omdurman, Sudan, until she was 10 or 11, in 1978. Ms Boof claimed that in 1978 "my parents...were murdered for speaking up against slavery and the brutish Islamic government of Sudan".<sup>387</sup> She claimed that "muraheen" tribesmen had killed them in front of her. She claims that her Egyptian grandmother then put her up for adoption and that through UNICEF she travelled to London and was taken in by an Ethiopian family who eventually gave her up because, she said, they thought she might be a witch. She says she was then adopted by a black family in Washington-DC in 1980.<sup>388</sup>

Ms Boof also claimed that the Sudan People's Liberation Army was in existence as early as 1977, and that as a little girl she had attended SPLA meetings.

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<sup>384</sup> Madison, for example, provided Ms Boof with considerable coverage on his radio program, a program already noted for its anti-Sudanese propaganda.

<sup>385</sup> "Kola Boof Fights Back!", Press Release by The Association for Women's Rights in Development, November 2002.

<sup>386</sup> "Kola Boof Surrenders", Interview by Nathan Lewis, at [http://www.nathanlewis.com/artist\\_of\\_month/Ko.../body\\_kola\\_surrenders-interview.htm](http://www.nathanlewis.com/artist_of_month/Ko.../body_kola_surrenders-interview.htm)

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> "'Anti-Islam' Books Spark Fatwa: Author Speaks Out Despite Warning From Bin Laden", News Article by World Daily Net, 9 November 2002.

Every one of these claims unravelled under examination. The facts were far less interesting. Mr Jamal Ibrahim, the deputy chief of mission at the Sudanese embassy in Britain, wrote an article critical of Ms Boof and claims that she had previously made, an article published in **Al-Sharq Al-Awsat** in September 2002. In this article he criticised her “falsehood and dishonesty” in previous claims. Ms Boof subsequently claimed that this article was in fact a *fatwa*, inaccurately stating that *fatwa* is “a contract for assassination”.<sup>389</sup>

Unlike Ms Boof, **The New York Times** took the trouble to confirm the claims made to her by the SPLA in London. The newspaper spoke to Sheikh Omar Bakri, a senior judge of the Islamic *sharia* court in London, and someone noted for his forthright views. Ms Boof claimed that Bakri had been party to the *fatwa*. He stated that “nobody issued a fatwa against Kola Boof”.<sup>390</sup> The Islamic judge went on to state: “I know she was criticized by a Muslim official in London, but he isn’t in a position to issue a fatwa.” This was confirmed by Mr Ibrahim himself, who said the claim was “bizarre and baseless” and that: “My own view is that she wants to make use of this to help her in selling her books. It is a bizarre exercise in public relations.”<sup>391</sup> Mr Ibrahim did criticise Ms Boof in his article, and there would appear to be considerable grounds for legitimate criticism, but as **The New York Times** observed “criticism isn’t the same as a fatwa”. It would appear that the SPLA in London deliberately misrepresented the issue.

Ms Boof’s claims about her early life are similarly flawed. She alleged that *murahleen* tribesmen killed her parents in Omdurman. These horsemen are only found in southern Kordofan, several hundred miles away from Omdurman. It is the equivalent in American terms of being attacked in a Washington-DC suburb by a band of Oklahoma cattlemen. She also claimed that the SPLA were in existence in 1977. It is also a simple matter of record that the SPLA was founded only in late 1983.<sup>392</sup> Ms Boof’s claim that her father was murdered in 1978 for speaking “up against...the brutish Islamic government of Sudan” similarly jars with reality. In 1978 Sudan was resolutely secular, governed by

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<sup>389</sup> **The New York Times** correctly pointed out that far from being a murder contract, a fatwa “is a juristic opinion issued by a Muslim scholar to address a specific problem, that can be related to political, economic or social issues”, (“Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona”, **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002).

<sup>390</sup> Julie Salmon, “Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona”, **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> See, for example, the 1983 SPLM Manifesto, published in **Horn of Africa**, Volume VIII, Number 1, New Jersey, 1985

President Jaafar Nimeiri, a close American ally whose government was one of the largest recipients of international American economic and military assistance. The present Islamic government in Sudan only came to power in 1989.

Ms Boof made a number of other claims about herself. In August 2002, she claimed to have been shot at outside Los Angeles by Arab Muslim gunmen, and that she shot back. Boof further claimed to be under FBI protection. **The New York Times** reported that the FBI “had no knowledge of Ms. Boof”.<sup>393</sup>

Ms Boof was also said by **The New York Times** to have “told flamboyant stories about her life in Egypt and Morocco, where, she said she was a B-movie actress and a high level prostitute, operating in luxury hotels...” It was during this time in Morocco that Ms Boof also claimed to have had an affair with Osama bin Laden in 1996. She elaborated on this alleged affair in a January 2003 statement when she claimed that it was a four month sexual relationship in Morocco. She had met bin Laden in a Senegalese restaurant “which was the only place in Marrakech where they knew how to cook lion’s meat” (one of her “favorite” dishes). She claimed that she subsequently became “Osama’s mistress” and that she had “lounged about in silk and diamonds”.<sup>394</sup> One of the most watched men in the world, there is no record whatsoever of bin Laden being in Morocco in 1996.

Boof has also made other jarring claims, speaking, for example, about “rich Palestinians who have black women slaves working in their kitchens, their tongues cut out of their heads.”<sup>395</sup>

Ms Boof’s somewhat elaborate claims began to be actively challenged by the end of 2002. **The New York Times** examined her allegations in some depth.<sup>396</sup> In an interview with the newspaper, Ms Boof admitted to being manipulative: “I can’t deny that I’m a conniving person...I have to manipulate the system, and I don’t mind if you publish that...” The newspaper discredited the *fatwa* claim. Ms Boof was dropped by her publisher at the end of 2002. And, despite having been warmly embraced and extensively publicised by the anti-Sudan

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<sup>393</sup> Julie Salmon, “Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona”, **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002.

<sup>394</sup> “Who’s Afraid of Kola Boof?”. Statement by Kola Boof, 3 January 2003, available at <http://poetwomen.50megs.com/custom2.html>

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Julie Salmon, “Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona”, **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002.

lobby within the United States and elsewhere, Ms Boof's claims soon became even too outrageous for all but the diehard fringe. The SPLA has distanced itself from Ms Boof. **The New York Times** reported that the SPLA "embraced her and then backed away, as Ms. Boof's personal, if not literary credentials have been called into question."

Deng Ajak, secretary-general of the anti-government Sudan Commission for Human Rights, stated that he was initially supportive of Ms Boof "but when she said in one of her own e-mails to me that she had a brief encounter of dating Osama bin Laden, I said to my colleagues that we need to pull the plug on this one". He stated that "This could be one of the most impressively spun and choreographed pieces of fiction that one could imagine". Nevertheless, Ms Boof claimed that "the Southern Blacks of my homeland" have accorded her the title of "Queen Kola".<sup>397</sup>

**The New York Times** reported that Ms Silwa has also "distanced" herself from Kola Boof's claims, quoting her as stating: "I don't think it behooves our human rights interest to connect ourselves with someone who is inconsistent and can't prove her identity."<sup>398</sup> Joe Madison continues to publicise Ms Boof.

Ms Boof and her claims provide a clear example of how patently false and self-serving lies about Sudan have been accepted at face value and publicised by the anti-Sudan industry. She has sold more of her books as a result of these claims. Ms Boof has deliberately sought publicity, both personal and commercial, in much the same way as Baroness Cox and John Eibner.

### **A Case Study in Sensationalism: Claims of Genocide in Sudan**

One of the constant propaganda claims made against Sudan is that the Khartoum government is pursuing a policy of "genocide" against southern Sudan.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> "Statement by Kola Boof", North African Book Exchange, 11 December 2002.

<sup>398</sup> Julie Salmon, "Mystery Enshrouds Kola Boof, Writer and Internet Persona", **The New York Times**, 11 December 2002. Ms Sliwa does, however, continue to publicise a number of similarly discredited claims about Sudan, including allegations of "slave redemption" still made by groups such as Christian Solidarity International.

<sup>399</sup> See, claims made by groups ranging from the National Association of Evangelicals, US Commission for International Religious Freedom, Institute on Religion and Democracy, Center for Religious Freedom through to the Persecution Project and Family Research Council. The US Commission for International Religious Freedom has claimed "genocide" (see "Freedom Panel

On 26 January 2002, for example, Gordon Muortat-Mayen, the spokesman of the South Sudan Human Rights Monitor, and described by a SPLA spokesman as “our elder politician”, officially complained to the BBC World Service that Sudan had not been included in a list of “world genocides” in the course of a BBC radio broadcast that day.<sup>400</sup> Mr Muortat-Mayen stated that “[a]mazingly you have omitted the South Sudan genocide”, where, he claimed, over one and a half million people had died “in a genocide committed during the 17 year war (1955-1972), and over two million dead in the on-going war (1983-Now)”. He claimed that this genocide had been committed by “various Khartoum based governments of the past, and made worse by the current National Islamic Front (NIF) government.” Mr Muortat-Mayen’s evidence for such claims included two US Congressmen, Representatives Tancredo and Wolf, the US Committee for Refugees, and assertions made in a Christian Aid report on Sudan. All of these “sources” are partisan with track records of biased and inaccurate claims about Sudan.

The simple fact is that the conflict, fought since 1983 between the government and the SPLA, cannot be simplistically presented as a war between northern and southern Sudan. Mr Muortat-Mayen has conveniently ignored the fact that the majority of deaths within southern Sudan during the post-1983 conflict has been as the result of political, factional and ethnic rivalry within southern Sudan organisations and ethnic groups themselves. The observations of Washington Office on Africa, an American-based Africa interest group – and no friend of the Khartoum government – are instructive:

The largely Dinka, mostly southern SPLM/A is the main rebel organisation, although there has been significant fragmentation and rivalry, within the South. In 1991 the SPLM/A split roughly along ethnic lines, with most Dinka remaining in the SPLM/A and most Nuer breaking away to form a separate faction called the South Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIM/A)...The war is being fought largely in the South, with devastating consequences for the southern Sudanese. Because the various factions use guerilla war tactics and target civilians, and because the factions are split along ethnic lines, rivalry and discord amongst southern Sudanese non-combatants flourish in the South. **In fact, factional fighting in the South is**

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Alleges Genocide”, **Christianity Today**, 21 May 2001). The Family Research Council has published papers entitled “Genocide in Sudan” (see [www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org)). The Canadian-based anti-Khartoum group “Freedom Quest International” has also claimed “genocide” (“Religious Persecution in Sudan: A Call for Action”, Freedom Question International website, [www.freedomquest.ca](http://www.freedomquest.ca)). The New York **Jewish Post** has published articles entitled “Stop Genocide: Support the Sudan Peace Act”.

<sup>400</sup> Letter posted on Sudanese internet discussion group at MSU.EDU, 17 February 2002.

**responsible for a greater number of deaths than direct clashes between Sudanese government forces and southern rebels.** Villages and villagers have become pitted against one another, competing for scarce resources, made scarcer through the many years of war.<sup>401</sup> (emphasis added)

This has also been confirmed by the New Sudan Council of Churches. Emmanuel Lowila, NSCC project director has stated: “The deaths that have happened from fighting between the tribes is more than the deaths from the fighting between the north and south.”<sup>402</sup>

That there has been considerable inter-ethnic conflict in southern Sudan is sadly all too well documented. The **Economist**, for example, has described the SPLA as “little more than an armed gang of Dinkas...killing, looting and raping. Its indifference, almost animosity, towards the people it was supposed to be ‘liberating’ was all too clear.”<sup>403</sup> Given that the Dinka tribal grouping is one amongst nineteen major ethnic communities within southern Sudan, the implications are clear. Following splits in the SPLA, Amnesty International stated that the two groups which emerged attacked each other and civilian groups “for ethnic reasons”.<sup>404</sup> Thousands of southern civilians were killed and tens of thousands more displaced in these clashes. Lieutenant-General Joseph Lagu, the leader of the southern Sudanese rebels in the first civil war has himself stated that the SPLA “broke up on ethnic lines”.<sup>405</sup>

Discredited claims of “genocide” have also been made by British commentators. On 26 May 1998, for example, **The Daily Telegraph** carried an interview with Baroness Cox in which she alleged that genocide was taking place in the Bahr al-Ghazal region of southern Sudan.<sup>406</sup> **The Daily Telegraph** spoke of “Khartoum’s ‘Holy War’”, and claimed, on the basis of the assertions made by Cox, that “Sudan has become the Killing Fields of the Nineties”. The

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<sup>401</sup> “Slavery, War and Peace in Sudan”, Washington Office on Africa, Washington-DC, 29 November 1999.

<sup>402</sup> “Slave Redemption: Americans are becoming instant Abolitionists. But is the Movement Backfiring?”, **Christianity Today**, 9 August 1999.

<sup>403</sup> **The Economist** (London), March 1998.

<sup>404</sup> **Sudan: The Ravages of War: Political Killings and Humanitarian Disaster**, Amnesty International, London, AI Index: AFR 54/29/93, 29 September 1993, p.21.

<sup>405</sup> See, “The Sudan Peace Summit in Nashville (USA)”, posted on Sudanese internet discussion group at MSU.EDU, 31 October 2001.

<sup>406</sup> “Baroness Accuses Sudan of Genocide”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 26 May 1998. See, also, “Sudan Accused of Atrocities”, News Article by BBC, 26 May 1998, and “Sudanese Government Kills, Displaces Thousands, Aid Group Says”, News Article by Associated Press, 26 May 1998.

paper also claimed “fundamentalist murder, slavery and pillage”.<sup>407</sup> The reality was markedly different. Baroness Cox had been commenting on fighting between Dinka and Rizaiquat tribesmen in the course of May 1998, during which Rizaiquat tribesmen had raided Dinka and SPLA-controlled areas. She ignored that fact that, as reported by Agence France Presse on the 7 and 12 May of that year, Dinka and SPLA members had repeatedly raided northwards into Rizaiquat villages.<sup>408</sup> Baroness Cox’s claim of genocide appears to be based on raids by Arab civilians on people, camps and villages associated with raids earlier in late April and May by the SPLA.<sup>409</sup> It is clear that to Cox SPLA/Dinka attacks on Arab civilians in late April and early May 1998, attacks which resulted in considerable deaths and destruction of property, were not deemed “genocide”, while what appear to have been similar attacks in retaliation were classified as “genocide” by her. When the British government was asked in Parliament if they had any evidence to verify Baroness Cox’s claims of genocide in Bahr al-Ghazal the government replied:

The situation was very complicated and the picture unclear, making it difficult to verify facts...these killings should be seen in the context of a long history of tribal conflicts. It would appear from the information available to us that no one side was entirely to blame.<sup>410</sup>

It is worth noting here that in Andrew Boyd’s sympathetic biography of Baroness Cox, **Baroness Cox: A Voice for the Voiceless**, Christopher Besse of Medical Emergency Relief International, an aid group with which Cox is closely associated, is quoted as saying:

She’s not the most popular person in Sudan among the humanitarian aid people. She has her enemies, and some of them feel she is not well-enough informed. She recognizes a bit of the picture, but not all that’s going on.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> “Baroness Accuses Sudan of Genocide”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 26 May 1998.

<sup>408</sup> See, “Rebels Raid Government-Held Area in Central Sudan”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 23 June 1998; “Sudanese Regime Blames Tribal Massacres on Southern Rebels”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 7 May 1998; “Western Sudanese Plan to Form Militia to Confront Southern Rebels”, News Article by Deutsche Press Agentur, 7 May 1998; “Official Warns Against Rebel Raids on Central Sudan Tribes”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 12 May 1998.

<sup>409</sup> That it was tribal retaliation was confirmed by Agence France Presse, “Tribal ‘Knights’ Wreck Sudanese Rebel Camps, Recover Livestock”, 29 May 1998.

<sup>410</sup> House of Lords, **Official Report**, 10 December 1998, column 103.

<sup>411</sup> Andrew Boyd, **Baroness Cox: A Voice for the Voiceless**, Lion Publishing, Oxford, 1998, p.324.

That Baroness Cox only “recognizes a bit of the picture” is clearly borne out by her claims on “genocide” outlined above. That Cox is not popular amongst the humanitarian aid workers and organisations is very significant. These workers and groups are people involved in Sudanese issues and relief on a day-to-day basis.

It should be clear, therefore, that the claims and assertions of a southern Sudanese “genocide” at the hands of the Khartoum government as made by people such as Baroness Cox and Mr Muortat-Mayen are woefully misleading. His facile claims of “genocide” are fundamentally undermined by the fact that well over half of the population of southern Sudan has fled not to SPLA-controlled parts of the country, or neighbouring countries, but rather to Khartoum and other centres in northern Sudan. Victims of genocide very rarely flee towards those who seek to destroy them. To use an analogy, very few European Jews voluntarily moved to Berlin in the 1930s and 1940s. It is regrettable that his claims have been dressed up in the guise of a Sudanese human rights organisation. It is sadly all too characteristic of the propaganda that has clouded how the Sudanese conflict has been interpreted. It is also the sort of propaganda that has actively misinformed several important constituencies within the United States, which in turn has further contributed to artificially prolonging the war itself.

In alleging “genocide” in southern Sudan, Baroness Cox, Mr Muortat-Mayen, the “South Sudan Human Rights Monitor”, the SPLA and the anti-Sudan lobby within the United States and elsewhere devalues the true meaning of that poignant term.

### **The Issue of Bias in the Media**

American civil liberties lawyer Morris Ernst, who represented the Newspaper Guild in the 1930s, noted in a legal brief: “The Constitution does not guarantee objectivity of the press, nor is objectivity obtainable in a subjective world. The question really raised is not whether news shall be unprejudiced, but rather whose prejudices shall color the news.”<sup>412</sup>

The 1999 American Society of Newspaper Editors report stated that “Among the majority of the public that believes the news media are biased, 42 percent

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<sup>412</sup> Cited by Washington Post media columnist Dick Harwood in **Summary of the New York Forum. Session II: Bias, Cynicism, Superficiality and Elitism**, Project for Excellence in Journalism, Committee of Concerned Journalists, Washington-DC, 1997.

see TV as the worst offender; 23 percent say that newspapers are the most biased news medium.<sup>413</sup> There were at least three working definitions of bias offered. Thirty percent of the American public saw bias as “not being open-minded and neutral about the facts.” Twenty-nine percent defined bias as “having an agenda, and shaping the news report to fit it.” A similar percentage saw bias as “favoritism to a particular social or political group.”<sup>414</sup>

There have been claims that many North American or Western European newspapers and other media or academic outlets have an innate bias against manifestations of Islam, Islamic governments – especially those seen as in conflict with Christian minorities or “fundamentalist” in orientation. The academic rationale for this was put forward by Samuel Huntington and his “clash of civilisations” theory.<sup>415</sup> There is also, in many instances, a cultural tendency to identify with “Christian” elements in any story. While many newspapers are somewhat hesitant about showing overt bias, this has not been the case with **The Daily Telegraph**, who in 1998 called for the West to arm the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) rebels in Sudan.<sup>416</sup> To **The Daily Telegraph**, the SPLA were “Christian rebels”. Several American groupings have consciously chosen to characterise the conflict within Sudan as a “jihad” or holy war of some sort on the part of the Sudanese government.<sup>417</sup> This despite the fact that close Christian observers of Sudan deny the basis for such claims: “Jihad has never been formally declared as government policy. Even the 1992 declaration of jihad in the Nuba Mountains does not seem to have

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<sup>413</sup> Christine D. Urban, **Examining Our Credibility: Perspectives of the Public and the Press**, A Report for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> See, Samuel P. Huntington, **The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order**, Simon & Schuster, London, 1996. Huntington, a former deputy national security adviser under Zbigniew Brzezinski during the Carter Presidency, speculates on a change in the nature of post-Cold War world conflict, with increased religious, ethnic and cultural factors. He argues that a “quasi-war” has existed between Islam and the West since 1979. See, also, Samuel Huntington, “The Age of Muslim Wars”, **Newsweek**, December 2001-February 2002.

<sup>416</sup> “Taking sides in Sudan”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), **20 July 1998**.

<sup>417</sup> See, for example, “Sudan: The Jihad Intensifies”, Religious Liberty Prayer List No. 139, World Evangelical Alliance, 17 October 2001; “Sudan’s Holy War: A Call to Action”, Crosswalk.com News Channel, 8 June 2001; Baroness Cox, “Sudan: A Contemporary Jihad”, “Statesmanship and Sudan: What Should America Do?”, Claremont Institute, Washington-DC, 14 June 2000; “To Stop Sudan’s Brutal Jihad, Support Sudan’s Opposition”, Backgrounder No. 1449, The Heritage Foundation, Washington-DC, 13 June 2001; “Sudan Jihad Forces Islam on Christians”, WorldNetDaily, 4 March 2002.

been the result of a considered government decision. The government consistently denies the existence of a policy of promoting jihad.”<sup>418</sup>

### **A Case Study in Bias: Claims of Christian Persecution in Sudan**

**The Daily Telegraph** has sadly provided numerous examples of bias in its coverage of Sudan. One article which met all three of the working definitions of bias mentioned above was ‘The Church in Rags’, published on 30 March 1999. This article was written by veteran British journalist Lord Deedes and the newspaper’s religious affairs correspondent Victoria Combe. That this was biased reporting was very clear. The article referred to the Sudanese Catholic Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako being released from a police cell in Khartoum, “having been arrested on a trumped-up charge involving an unpaid grocery bill.” There are several facts with regard to this which Lord Deedes and Victoria Combe appear to have ignored or missed. The “grocery bill” in question was more than \$660,000. This bill was incurred by Sudanaid, the Sudanese Catholic Church’s own relief agency, in 1988-90, and was owed to the private Sudanese trading firm Abu Huzaifah. The firm has gone to court on numerous occasions over the past decade to recover the \$660,000, and in 1998 secured a court order freezing Sudanaid’s accounts as well as seizing several Sudanaid vehicles to be held against the outstanding bill. The civil court on learning that Sudanaid personnel had resisted the seizure of vehicles ordered the arrest of the head of Sudanaid, Archbishop Zubeir, on 1 May 1998. In considerably more accurate coverage of the issue Agence France Presse on 1 May 1998 reported that:

Sudanaid...was unable to get the Omdurman civil court ruling overturned when it first went to the appeal court and then to a tribunal of five judges set up by the chief justice. Under the initial ruling, the Omdurman court ordered the freezing of Sudanaid’s accounts with Citibank and the seizure of the relief agency’s vehicles. The court ordered Wako’s arrest after being informed by police that Sudanaid personnel had ‘resisted’ the taking away of the vehicles.

That this was a civil rather than a political decision was evident in the Sudanese government’s embarrassment given that Archbishop Zubeir was to be present

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<sup>418</sup> Rev William Anderson, Dr Roland Werner, Rev Andrew Wheeler, **Day of Devastation, Day of Contentment: The History of the Sudanese Church Across 2000 Years**, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 2000.

during peace negotiations that month in Kenya. The Sudanese President intervened to request the suspension of the arrest, but the local courts went ahead. The Archbishop was subsequently bailed. **The Daily Telegraph** article was a prime example of “not being open-minded and neutral about the facts”, of journalists “having an agenda, and shaping the news report to fit it”, and in so doing demonstrating “favoritism to a particular social or political group.”

It is also worth noting that several journalists who have written extensively on Sudan have been clearly prejudiced against the present government in Sudan. A prime example is Judith Miller. A prominent foreign correspondent for **The New York Times**, Miller has publicly declared her antipathy to Khartoum.<sup>419</sup> Having spent quite some time in Sudan in the 1980s, she stated: “I had vowed never to return to ‘Islamic Sudan’ after spending time in Khartoum in 1992”.<sup>420</sup> She nevertheless visited Sudan in 1994 to interview Dr Turabi, noting, however, that “I had really come back to see whether this Islamic paradise was on the brink of being overthrown, as my dissident Sudanese friends had told me.”<sup>421</sup> Miller could not have been more clear in her sentiments when she subsequently declared: “I could only hope that one day the Sudanese would rise up, that they would pour into the streets, as they had in 1964 and 1985, to rid their country of these vile rulers.”<sup>422</sup>

It is therefore perhaps of little surprise that Miller has accepted at face value many of the key claims made against Khartoum. It is clear, for example, that she advanced claims that the Sudanese government was involved in the 1993 World Trade Center and New York bombing plots, stating that “Sudan’s entire mission to the United Nations had been named as ‘unindicted coconspirators’ in the plot to blow up New York bridges and monuments.”<sup>423</sup> This was untrue. It is also clear that Miller accepted at face value American government claims of Sudanese involvement in threats to Americans and American interests, referring uncritically to the “non-message” delivered to the Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir and to Dr Hasan Turabi by American ambassador Donald Petterson.

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<sup>419</sup> Miller is a senior writer at **The New York Times**, specialising in the Middle East, national security issues and weapons of mass destruction. In 1983 she became the Cairo bureau chief for **The New York Times**, moving on to Paris and then Washington. She is the author of **God has Ninety-Nine Names**, a study of Islamist politics in ten Middle Eastern countries. Miller has appeared as an expert on the Middle East on programmes such as “Sixty Minutes”, CNN ABC’s “Night Line” and “Good Morning America”.

<sup>420</sup> Judith Miller, **God has Ninety-Nine Names**, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, p.143.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.

Miller also followed Clinton Administration claims in stating that Sudan was listed as a state sponsor of terrorism “only after five Sudanese nationals were indicted in New York in connection with the latter phase of the World Trade Center bombing plots – the scheme to blow up the United Nations and New York bridges and public buildings.”<sup>424</sup> Buried in a footnote, however, Miller does record, however, that “State Department officials said that the addition of Sudan to the terrorist list was related not to the New York bombing plots but to other intelligence information linking Khartoum to terrorist plots to harm Americans and American interests in Sudan.”<sup>425</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 1, the “other intelligence information linking Khartoum to terrorist plots to harm Americans and American interests in Sudan” was subsequently revealed to have been baseless. Not only has Miller repeated clearly inaccurate claims about Sudan and terrorism, but she has in any case seen fit to have contradictory claims about particularly serious allegations published. It may have been an oversight, it may have been prejudice or it may have lazy journalism on her part.

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<sup>424</sup> Judith Miller, **God has Ninety-Nine Names**, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996, p.148.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid*, p.498.

## Chapter 4

### *Disinformation within the Sudanese Conflict*

Disinformation, noun. The dissemination of deliberately false information, esp. when supplied by a government or its agent to a foreign power or to the media, with the intention of influencing the policies or opinions of those who receive it; false information so supplied.

Misinformation, Noun. 1. The action of misinforming or condition of being misinformed. 2. Erroneous or incorrect information.<sup>426</sup>

The importance of the media within any conflict or controversial issue is clear.<sup>427</sup> It is equally obvious that there will be attempts to influence media coverage by the parties to such conflicts.<sup>428</sup> The Sudanese civil war has been no exception. Amongst those who have sought to manipulate the media with regard to Sudan have been governments, non-governmental organisations, pressure groups and individuals.<sup>429</sup> A particularly insidious sort of manipulation has been the systematic and deliberate use of “disinformation”. In the ASNE Journalism Credibility Project think tank session journalists noted that “Journalists [have a] willingness to print the ‘official’ version of events...”;

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<sup>426</sup> **Oxford English Dictionary.**

<sup>427</sup> For histories of the relationship between the media and propaganda see, Philip M. Taylor, **Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945**, Routledge, London, 1997, and the classic study by Phillip Knightley, **The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo**, Prion Books, London, 2000.

<sup>428</sup> See, for example, recent controversy over the Bush Administration’s information war within the war on terrorism: “Pentagon Plans Propaganda War”, News Article by BBC News, 20 February 2002; “Pentagon Steps Up Propaganda Efforts”, **The Guardian** (London), 19 February 2002; “Revealed: Pentagon’s New Black Propaganda Unit”, **The Independent** (London), 20 February 2002; “US Well Versed in ‘Black Arts’”, News Article by BBC News, 20 February 2002; “Bush and Rumsfeld Disown ‘Black Propaganda’ Plan”, **The Independent** (London), 26 February 2002; “New Agency Will Not Lie, Top Pentagon Officials Say”, **The New York Times**, 21 February 2002; “Defining Propaganda, Illegal Deception. Rumsfeld Denies Reports of Pentagon Plan to Spread Disinformation to Foreign Media”, **The Christian Science Monitor**, 22 February 2002; “US Closes ‘Disinformation’ Unit”, News Article by BBC News, 26 February 2002; “A ‘Damaged’ Information Office is Declared Closed by Rumsfeld”, **The New York Times**, 27 February 2002. See, also, Phillip Knightly, “The Disinformation Campaign: Western Media Follow a Depressingly Familiar Formula When it Comes to the Presentation of a Nation for Conflict”, **The Guardian** (London), 4 October 2001.

<sup>429</sup> See, “CIA Boasts of Ability to Manipulate American News Media”, News Article by Associated Press, 25 March 2001.

[Newspapers have] a tendency to give credibility to certain spokesmen, even if they're certifiably mad."<sup>430</sup>

American government-initiated disinformation has sought, when deemed necessary, to shape domestic and foreign opinion on numerous issues, Sudan has certainly been the focus for such activities. An insight into the American government's ability to deliberately influence the media was provided by Carl Bernstein, one of the two investigative journalists who broke the Watergate story. Bernstein has claimed that four hundred American journalists had worked as "cooperating agents" for the CIA over the past thirty years or so. This figure did not include foreigners or journalists who had a casual give-and-take relationship with the agency.<sup>431</sup>

**The New York Times** subsequently confirmed Bernstein's claims following a three-month in-depth investigation into the CIA and the media. It reported that the CIA had owned or subsidised more than fifty newspapers, news services, radio stations, periodicals and other communications facilities, many of them overseas. These were used for propaganda purposes. Another twelve foreign news organisations were infiltrated by paid CIA agents. At least 22 American news organisations were said to have employed American journalists who were also working for the CIA, and nearly a dozen American publishing houses printed some of the more than 1,000 books that had been produced or subsidised by the CIA. One researcher estimated, based on information released in a Congressional investigation of the CIA, the "Church Committee"<sup>432</sup>, that the CIA spent \$265 million on propaganda in 1978 alone, involving some 2,000 personnel.<sup>433</sup>

When asked in a 1976 interview whether the CIA ever told its media agents what to write, the then CIA director William Colby replied, "Oh, sure, all the

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<sup>430</sup> Christine D. Urban, **Examining Our Credibility: Perspectives of the Public and the Press**, A Report for the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999.

<sup>431</sup> Carl Bernstein, "The CIA and the Media", **Rolling Stone**, 20 October 1977, pp. 65-67.

<sup>432</sup> **The Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities** ("Church Committee"), Book 1, "Foreign and Military Intelligence", US Senate, 26 April 1976.

<sup>433</sup> Sean Gervasi, "CIA Covert Propaganda Capability", **Covert Action Information Bulletin**, No. 7, December 1979 - January 1980, pp. 18-20. See, also, "The CIA's Use of the Press: A 'Mighty Wurlitzer'", **Columbia Journalism Review**, September/October 1974, pp.9-18,

time.”<sup>434</sup> The interaction of government officials and journalists in general has been well studied:

While journalists on their beats are looking for signs of political conflicts, political actors (most often government officials) are trying to feed reporters the daily news most advantageous to their policy preferences. In short, the same officials who make up the journalist’s news index are, themselves, active players in a press management game, applying various techniques of strategic communications to elevate the volume of their own messages and reduce the credibility of their opponents.<sup>435</sup>

That Sudan was the target of deliberate, state-sponsored, disinformation, is clear. The Clinton Administration all but went to war with Sudan, even going so far as to attack the capital on one occasion with cruise missiles. There is no doubt that they would have used every other means at their disposal to destabilise and discredit Sudan. This campaign ranged from Clinton Administration propaganda claims about Sudan and state sponsored terrorism all the way through to disseminating disinformation stories about Sudan through government news agencies and other outlets. As much was admitted by American officials, and there are numerous, well-documented examples of such media manipulation. In his account of his time in Sudan, for example, former United States ambassador to Sudan, Donald Petterson, gave one example of anti-Sudanese disinformation in the early 1990s:

Reports appeared in the media that hundreds, even thousands of Iranians, many of them Revolutionary Guard military and security police advisers, had come to Sudan. Reports also persisted that the Iranians were training Palestinian, Egyptian, Algerian, and other radical Islamist terrorists at sites in

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<sup>434</sup> John M. Crewdson and Joseph B. Treaster, “The CIA’s 3-Decade Effort to Mold the World’s Views”, **The New York Times**, 25 December 1977, pp.1,12; Terrence Smith, “CIA Contacts With Reporters”, p.13; Crewdson and Treaster, “Worldwide Propaganda Network Built by the CIA”, **The New York Times**, 26 December 1977, pp. 1, 37; Crewdson and Treaster, “CIA Established Many Links to Journalists in U.S. and Abroad”, **The New York Times**, 27 December 1977, pp.1, 40-41. See, also “What’s the Story Behind the CIA and Newsmen Abroad”, **Human Events**, No.33, 22 December 1973; Bernardo A. Carvalho, “The CIA and the Press”, Freedom of Information Report No, 382, University of Missouri School of Journalism, 1977; Loch K. Johnson, “The CIA and the Media”, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol, 1, No. 2, May 1986, pp.143-169.

<sup>435</sup> W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (Editors), **Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War**, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p.29. See, also, J.B. Manheim, **All of the People, All the Time: Strategic Communication and American Politics**, M. E. Sharp, Armonk, 1991, and J.B. Manheim and R.B. Albritton, “Changing National Images: International Public Relations and Media Agenda Setting”, **American Political Science Review**, Number 78, pp. 641-54.

Sudan, some of them quite large. The reports were based in part on information provided by Egyptian intelligence sources, which were conducting an assiduous disinformation campaign against Sudan. The truth was something far less alarming. There were Iranian advisers and technicians in Sudan, and Shiite propagandists and clerics as well, yet their numbers were relatively small, certainly nothing like the numbers being reported by the Western press.<sup>436</sup>

The United States government was also party to spreading this particular piece of disinformation, with news reports by the US Information Agency claiming that 2,000 Iranian revolutionary guards were in Sudan.<sup>437</sup> The Congressional Research Service also repeated this disinformation.<sup>438</sup> The Director of the Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare of the United States Congress, Yossef Bodansky, claimed that there had been five thousand Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Sudan in 1991.<sup>439</sup> Even **Time** magazine saw fit to carry similar claims.<sup>440</sup> They were also carried in several Western newspapers, including **The Financial Times**, in the early 1990s.<sup>441</sup> The **Sunday Telegraph** boldly repeated the disinformation: “At any given time there are estimated to be 3,000 of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards in Sudan.”<sup>442</sup> **Jane’s Defence Weekly** also carried this disinformation.<sup>443</sup> By 1994, however, **The Independent** newspaper in London was reporting that “intelligence assessments...say that reports of Iranian revolutionary guards [in Sudan]...are without foundation”.<sup>444</sup> Interestingly enough, the SPLA were able to recycle this particular piece of misinformation about Iranian soldiers in 1999 on an all too gullible Canadian **Globe and Mail** journalist who repeated it without reservation.<sup>445</sup> Discredited claims about Iranian revolutionary guards in Sudan

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<sup>436</sup> Donald Petterson, **Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe**, Westview Press, Boulder, 1999, pp.42-43

<sup>437</sup> See Berta Gomez, “Iran Exports Fundamentalism, Says Resistance”, News Article by USIA, 25 February 1992.

<sup>438</sup> “Sudan: Civil War, Famine, and Islamic Fundamentalism”, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington-DC, 13 September 1993.

<sup>439</sup> Yossef Bodansky, **Target America: Terrorism in the U.S. Today**, SPI Books, New York, 1993, pp. 161-62.

<sup>440</sup> “Is Sudan Terrorism’s New Best Friend?”, **Time**, 30 August 1993.

<sup>441</sup> “Sudanese Political Trends Alarm Cairo: Growing Tensions Between Neighbours in North-East Africa”, **The Financial Times**, 13 February 1992.

<sup>442</sup> “Sudan Trains Terrorism’s New Generation”, **The Sunday Telegraph** (London), 15 May 1994.

<sup>443</sup> Robert Lowry, “Sudan Strengthens Forces as Fighting is Stepped Up”, **Jane’s Defence Weekly**, 9 May 1992.

<sup>444</sup> See, “‘Innocent Sudan’ Exploits Carlos Case”, **The Independent** (London), 23 August 1994.

<sup>445</sup> See, Stephanie Nolen, “My Week on the Cusp of War”, **Globe and Mail** (Toronto), 17 December 1999. For a critique of this particular article see **Naivety, Poor Journalism or**

were still being recycled by right-wing American think-tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the Global Security Council well into the 1990s and even in 2001.<sup>446</sup> In 1998, Human Rights Watch repeated claims that 2,000 Iranian advisers were present in Sudan in 1992.<sup>447</sup> The reality is that the number of Iranians of all sorts in Sudan at the time could be numbered in tens rather than hundreds or thousands.

The “Iranian Revolutionary Guards” story provides one particular example of the widespread dissemination of this sort of disinformation about Sudan, and its repetition throughout the international media, newspapers of record, reputable defence analysis journals, foreign policy think-tanks, human rights groups and so on. Such claims have been repeated on many occasions, very often without having been exposed to the slightest critical examination.

### **The Congressional Research Service**

The “Iranian revolutionary guards” affair was only one of many examples of questionable claims made about Sudan by the Congressional Research Service. The service describes itself as “the public policy research arm of the United States Congress” created to provide Congress with “its own source of nonpartisan, objective analysis and research on all legislative issues.”<sup>448</sup> CRS also specifically states that it seeks to “provide products and services that can be relied upon to be free of partisan or other bias” and that are “reliable, current and comprehensive”. It is clear that this has not been the case with regard to its work on Sudan. Its principal “expert” on Sudan has for some years been Ted Dagne. He has authored most of Congressional Research Service’s documents on Sudan. They have been noticeably partisan, stale and selective.

Dagne’s bias towards the rebel position is clear. In November 1997, for example, Dagne spoke in a seminar on Sudan at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Former Congressman Mervyn Dymally, a past chairman of

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**Islamophobic Prejudice? The Globe and Mail’s Coverage of Sudan**, The European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, 2000.

<sup>446</sup> See, for example, “The Challenge of Revolutionary Iran”, Committee Brief No. 24, The Heritage Foundation, Washington-DC, 29 March 1996; “Should The U.S. Attack Sudan?”, Global Security Council, Washington-DC, 1997; “To Stop Sudan’s Brutal Jihad, Support Sudan’s Opposition”, Background No. 1449, The Heritage Foundation, Washington-DC, 13 June 2001.

<sup>447</sup> “IV. Arms Transfers to the Government of Sudan”, in ‘Sudan. Global Trade, Local Impact. Arms Transfers to All Sides in the Civil War in Sudan’, Vol. 10, No. 4 (A), Human Rights Watch, New York, August 1998.

<sup>448</sup> “About CRS”, Congressional Research Service website at <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/whatscrs.html>

the House of Representatives Africa Sub-Committee, said of Dagne's presentation that instead of an "objective presentation, one would think that Ted represents the SPLA here." It comes as little surprise that former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen has confirmed that Dagne was a "good friend" of SPLA leader John Garang, and that Dagne would host meetings for Garang in his Washington home.<sup>449</sup>

His selectivity is equally clear. While reviewing Sudan, "terrorism" and the Clinton years, for example, Dagne cites Osama bin Laden's stay within Sudan, but does not mention any of the well-documented offers made by Khartoum to extradite him to the United States, nor Khartoum's attempts to co-operate in counter-terrorism, including repeated offers from 1996 onwards to share information on the bin Laden network. Indeed, he keeps to the revisionist line, denying that any such offers were made.<sup>450</sup> Dagne also claims Sudanese involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing<sup>451</sup> (despite this having been previously ruled out<sup>452</sup>) in so doing ignoring a clear statement made on 30 April 1996, Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr, the Department of State's counter-terrorism supremo, specifically stating there was no "evidence" of state sponsorship of the bombing.<sup>453</sup> Dagne also conspicuously avoids any mention of the al-Shifa fiasco.<sup>454</sup>

Dagne's congressional work also still cites the comprehensively discredited Christian Solidarity International as a source.<sup>455</sup> He has even gone so far as to co-author critiques of Sudan policy with anti-Sudan activists such as Eric

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<sup>449</sup> Herman J. Cohen, **Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent**, Macmillan, London, 2000, p.83.

<sup>450</sup> "Sudan and Terrorism", News Article by Voice of America, 7 October 2002.

<sup>451</sup> Ted Dagne, **Sudan: Humanitarian Crisis, Peace Talks, Terrorism, and U.S. Policy**, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington-DC, 23 January 2003.

<sup>452</sup> See, for example, **The New York Times**, **The Washington Post**, 25 June 1993.

<sup>453</sup> **Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1996 Briefing**, Press briefing by Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr, Washington-DC, 30 April 1996 on US Government Home Page, at [www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/960430.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/960430.html)

<sup>454</sup> Dagne's only mention of al-Shifa was in September 1998, when he followed the Clinton Administration line to the letter, citing the two or three news articles at the time which repeated the Administration line, while studiously ignoring the dozens of American and foreign articles which comprehensively rebutted White House claims about the factory (See, **Sudan: Humanitarian Crisis, Peace Talks, Terrorism, and U.S. Policy**, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington-DC, 4 September 1998).

<sup>455</sup> Ted Dagne, **Sudan: Humanitarian Crisis, Peace Talks, Terrorism, and U.S. Policy**, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington-DC, 23 January 2003, p.12.

Reeves.<sup>456</sup> With people such as Dagne providing “research” and “analysis” on Sudan to Congress it is unsurprising that the legislation on Sudan passed by Congress has been so skewed as it has been.

Weapons of mass destruction appear to be a favourite theme in anti-Sudanese disinformation. In February 1998, for example, the House of Representatives “Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare” claimed that Iraq had somehow managed to move four hundred Scud missile systems, including support vehicles some twelve hundred vehicles, out of Iraq to Sudan for safekeeping since the Gulf War in the face of unprecedented satellite, electronic and physical surveillance of that country by the United States, the United Nations and other concerned members of the international community.<sup>457</sup> These claims were immediately taken up by the media.<sup>458</sup> It is a matter of record that Reuters reported on the same day that the White House discounted the claims: “We have no credible evidence that Iraq has exported weapons of mass destruction technology to other countries since the (1991) Gulf War.”

The British government also stated in relation to these claims that: “We are monitoring the evidence closely, but to date we have no evidence to substantiate these claims....Moreover, we know that some of the claims are untrue...” The British Government Minister also cited UNSCOM, stating that: “Nor has the United Nations Special Commission reported any evidence of such transfers since the Gulf War conflict and the imposition of sanctions in 1991.”<sup>459</sup>

One example of a particularly questionable article was that written by well-known American journalist, William Safire, in **The New York Times**, and echoed in **The Washington Times**, claiming that Iraq was financing a \$475 million weapons of mass destruction missile factory in Sudan. The source was said to have been a “Pentagon intelligence agency report.”<sup>460</sup> The British

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<sup>456</sup> See, Ted Dagne, Eric Reeves and Roger Winter, **A Critique of the CSIS Report on Sudan**, 25 February 2001, available at the Africa Action/Africa Policy Home Page <http://www.africaaction.org/docs01/sud0102b.htm>

<sup>457</sup> **The Iraqi WMD Challenge. Myth and Reality**, Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, US House of Representatives, Washington-DC, 10 February 1998.

<sup>458</sup> See, for example, “Iraq’s Allies Stockpiling Weapons for Baghdad: Report”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 15 February 1998; “Moving Target Iraq Has Secretly Built Chemical Weapons Plant in Sudan”, **US News**, 16 February 1998. **Sudan Update** also repeated the allegations (28 February 1998, Volume 9, No. 4).

<sup>459</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 19 March 1998, cols. 818-820.

<sup>460</sup> “Saddam’s Sudan”, **The New York Times**, 23 March 2000 and ‘Saddam’s Rogue Alliance’, Editorial, **The Washington Times**, 3 April 2000.

government later revealed that there was no evidence for such a claim.<sup>461</sup> This disinformation, at the expense of Sudan and Sudan's reputation, was clearly linked to attempts to justify the introduction of a National Missile Defence shield, the "son of Star Wars", with the spectre of convenient "rogue" states.

It is worth noting that as part of its in-house Sudan propaganda theme, together with the ritual annual listing of Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism, every year the United States government repeats claims that Sudan is involved with weapons of mass destruction. It did so again in January 2003<sup>462</sup> despite the fact that senior US Senators Arlen Specter, a former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Richard Shelby had placed on record that Sudan was "allowing unlimited, unannounced visits to any location, to break locks, inspect and photograph." In 2002, Senator Specter stated that American intelligence officers in Sudan had concluded: "[t]hey are confident that Sudan is not developing weapons of mass destruction at any of these installations."<sup>463</sup>

Similar disinformation was carried elsewhere. In 1997 the **Sunday Times** published an article alleging that there had been weapons of mass destruction transfers from Iraq to Sudan.<sup>464</sup> Unfortunately for this story, as outlined above, three months later the United States government itself stated that there was no evidence for chemical weapons or technology transfers from Iraq to Sudan.

The British media has also been a conduit for disinformation. In a key 2000 article in the **British Journalism Review**, David Leigh, a veteran journalist with **The Observer**, revealed some examples of intelligence involvement with the British press, bluntly stating that: "British journalists – and British journals – are being manipulated by the secret intelligence agencies."<sup>465</sup> Leigh stated that the most "insidious" form of manipulation was "when intelligence agency propaganda stories are planted on willing journalists, who disguise their origin from their readers. There is – or has been until recently – a very active

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<sup>461</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 27 September 2000, column WA 169.

<sup>462</sup> See, for example, "Libya, Syria, possibly Sudan also seek WMD, CIA Warns", News Article by Agence France Presse, 8 January 2003. See also "Sudan Denies Possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction", News Article by Agence France Presse, 10 January 2003. It was also clear that Sudan had not been notified of the "report": "Sudan Waiting for U.S. Report on Weapons of Mass Destruction", News Article by Deutsche Press Agentur, 9 January 2003.

<sup>463</sup> "Arlen Specter Speaks", Newsletter by Senator Specter, Vol. 1, Issue 3, September 2002, p.4.

<sup>464</sup> Jon Swain, "Iraq Making Lethal Gas in Covert Sudan Pact", **The Sunday Times** (London), 16 November 1997. This story was also carried by Africa News Online, "Sudan Has Poison Gas Plant Near Uganda", 21 November 1997.

<sup>465</sup> "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Journalist", **British Journalism Review**, June 2000. This article was also published in **The Guardian** (London), 12 June 2000.

programme by the secret agencies to colour what appears in the British press, called...‘I/Ops’...Black propaganda - false material where the source is disguised - has been a tool of British intelligence agencies since the days of the Second World War.” By way of example Leigh pointed to an article which appeared in **The Sunday Telegraph** in November 1995, written by the paper’s chief foreign correspondent, Con Coughlin, alleging that Saif al-Islam Kadhafi, the son of Libya’s Colonel Kadhafi, was involved in a currency counterfeiting plan. The story was falsely attributed to a “British banking official”. Leigh reports that: “In fact, it had been given to him by officers of MI6, who, it transpired, had been supplying Coughlin with material for years.” Colonel Kadhafi’s son began libel proceedings against **The Sunday Telegraph**.<sup>466</sup> In the course of the resultant legal proceedings, in October 1998, the newspaper then admitted that the source had in fact been a “Western government security agency”. It was subsequently revealed in a book on libel, **Reputations Under Fire**, published in 2000, that: “In reality [they were] members of MI6.” In April 2002, **The Sunday Telegraph** published an apology for the claims contained in the two articles published concerning Saif al-Islam Kadhafi. The paper stated that it accepted “not only that there is no truth in these allegations, but there is no evidence to suggest that there is any truth in them.”<sup>467</sup>

Leigh also pointed to the fact that **The Spectator** magazine, part of the **Telegraph** Group, had also been used in the course of I/Ops: “Two articles appeared in the Spectator in early 1994 under the byline Kenneth Roberts. They were datelined Sarajevo, and Roberts was described as having been working with the UN in Bosnia as an adviser. In fact, he was MI6 officer Keith Robert Craig...whose local cover was a civilian ‘attached’ to the British military unit’s Balkan secretariat...What is not clear is how the introduction to the Spectator was made, or whether Craig confided his real trade to the then editor of the Spectator, Dominic Lawson. In his recent book about MI6, Stephen Dorril points out that Dominic Lawson’s brother-in-law, Anthony Monckton, was himself a serving MI6 officer, who was to take over the Zagreb station in the Balkans in 1996...These relationships...have only slowly emerged into the public domain.” It should be further noted that Dorril’s book also asserted that no fewer than three MI6 officers, working in Bosnia, Belgrade and Moldova,

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<sup>466</sup> See, “Gaddafi Son Sues Over Forged Cash Plot Claim”, **The Times** (London), 17 April 2002.

<sup>467</sup> “Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi: An Apology”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 21 April 2002. See also, “Gadafy ‘Sting’ Untrue, Paper Admits. Humiliation for Sunday Telegraph, and Apology for Son of Libyan Leader”, **The Guardian** (London), 19 April 2002.

used **The Spectator** as cover.<sup>468</sup> In December 1998, Lawson acknowledged that some articles were “probably” written by an MI6 officer.<sup>469</sup>

Even more disturbing was the assertion made by the MI6 whistleblower, Richard Tomlinson, who claimed that a “national newspaper editor” was a key MI6 agent, having received up to £100,000 in covert payments. David Leigh observed: “This claim set off a hue and cry, during which the hapless Dominic Lawson, now editor of **The Sunday Telegraph**, issued his denial, and other editors came under suspicious scrutiny.” These claims led to Mr Lawson being named in the British Parliament as an MI6 agent and calls by British parliamentarians for Lawson to resign as editor. A House of Commons motion laid down by several members of parliament stated that they were “greatly disturbed by the news that a national newspaper editor, Mr Dominic Lawson of The Sunday Telegraph, has for a considerable period of time served as an intelligence asset of the British security services, which paid him large sums of money into foreign back accounts for the services he rendered under the guise of a journalist and editor.”<sup>470</sup>

### **The Telegraph Group and Sudan**

The **Telegraph** group is owned by newspaper magnate Conrad Black, who is the third biggest owner of newspapers in the world. In addition to owning the Telegraph group, his company, Hollinger International Inc. also owns major newspapers in the United States, Canada, Israel and Australia, including **The Chicago Sun Times**, **The National Post**, **The Jerusalem Post** and **The Sydney Morning Herald**. It must be said that the **Telegraph** Group, including **The Daily Telegraph**, **The Sunday Telegraph** and **Spectator**, seems to have been remarkably accident-prone with regard to disinformation, especially with regard to Sudan.<sup>471</sup> As we have seen already, the foreign editor of **The Sunday**

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<sup>468</sup> See, for example, “Editor ‘Provided Cover for Spies’”. Plot Thickens: Dominic Lawson Denies New Accusations That He Helped MI6 Agents When Working For The Spectator”, **The Guardian** (London), 26 January 2001.

<sup>469</sup> “Bosnia Author ‘MI6 Man’”, **The Guardian** (London), 21 December 1998.

<sup>470</sup> “MPs Act Over Case of Editor and MI6”, **The Times** (London), 18 December 1998.

<sup>471</sup> It should also be noted that it was **The Daily Telegraph**, in an article on 5 September 1990, which first ran with the claims that following their invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi soldiers had been removing babies from incubators in premature baby units in order to take the incubators back to Iraq, action said to have resulted in the deaths of many babies. This was subsequently exposed as disinformation – see John MacArthur, **New York Times** Op-Ed, 6 January 1992 and ABC’s “20/20” program, 17 January 1992, and “Did PR Firm Invent Gulf War Stories”, **In These Times**, 22 January 1992, p.2.

**Telegraph**, Con Coughlin, had as early as 1994 been repeating disinformation claims about thousands of Iranian Revolutionary guards being present in Sudan.<sup>472</sup> A year later, in 1995, **The Daily Telegraph** was repeating Christian Solidarity International claims about “slavery” in Sudan.<sup>473</sup> In August 1998, **The Daily Telegraph** claimed that the Iraqi air force had somehow been flown *en masse* to Sudan to avoid its destruction in the Gulf War.<sup>474</sup> The newspaper did not explain quite how several hundred Iraqi bombers were able to fly over Saudi Arabian or Israeli airspace without being challenged or destroyed at that somewhat sensitive time. In an equally inventive 1999 article, **The Daily Telegraph** claimed that Osama bin-Laden was buying child slaves from Ugandan rebels and using them as forced labour on marijuana farms in Sudan in order to fund international terrorism.<sup>475</sup> When asked about this claim, the British government stated they had seen no evidence for such allegations.<sup>476</sup> And, as we have seen, **The Daily Telegraph** was one of the first newspapers to repeat discredited United States government claims of Iraqi links to the al-Shifa medicine factory following the disastrously inept attack on that facility in 1998.<sup>477</sup>

Aficionados of disinformation may be amused to learn that in July 2000, **The Sunday Telegraph** published claims, in an article written by its diplomatic correspondent Christina Lamb, that the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had sent specially-trained belly-dancing assassins, including one known by the stage name of Maleen, to London to kill Iraqi dissidents.<sup>478</sup> When asked in Parliament about these serious claims, the British government stated that there was no evidence to support this allegation.<sup>479</sup> **The Sunday Telegraph** subsequently retracted the article and publicly apologised to Ms Maleen for the claim, admitting that “she is not linked in any way to the regime, has never

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<sup>472</sup> “Sudan Trains Terrorism’s New Generation”, **The Sunday Telegraph** (London), 15 May 1994.

<sup>473</sup> See, “Villagers in Sudan ‘sold as slaves’”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 24 August 1995.

<sup>474</sup> “Did Saddam pull the strings of the terrorist bombers?”, **The Daily Telegraph**, 12 August 1998.

<sup>475</sup> David Blair, “Bin Laden Buys Child Slaves for his Drug Farms in Africa”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 29 March 1999. This particular story was also carried in other articles, such as “Bin Laden and his Quest for Slaves”, **The Chicago Tribune**, 23 January 2002, and “Searching for Slaves in bin Laden’s Attic”, **Jewish World Review**, 25 January 2001.

<sup>476</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 5 March 2001, column WA 10.

<sup>477</sup> “Iraqi scientists ‘helped Sudan make nerve gas’”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 26 August 1998.

<sup>478</sup> “Saddam Sends Female Assassins on London Murder Mission”, **The Sunday Telegraph** (London), 30 July 2000.

<sup>479</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 7 March 2001, column WA 31.

been employed by the Iraqi intelligence service, and has never been trained as a terrorist or assassin”.<sup>480</sup>

On 26 August 2000, **The Sunday Telegraph** newspaper published an article, also written by Christina Lamb, alleging that China was deploying 700,000 soldiers to Sudan to protect Chinese interests in the Sudanese oil project.<sup>481</sup> When asked in Parliament about this allegation, the British government stated that “We have no evidence of the presence of any Chinese soldiers in Sudan, let alone the figure of 700,000 alleged in one press report”.<sup>482</sup> Even the Clinton Administration, as hostile as it was to the Sudanese authorities, dismissed the claims, stating that even “the figure of tens of thousands of troops is just not credible based on information available to us”.<sup>483</sup>

In September 2000, **The Sunday Telegraph** published an article alleging that Abdel Mahmoud al-Koronky, a senior Sudanese diplomat who had served as Sudan’s Chargé d’Affaires in London between September 1998 and April 2000, had kept a “slave girl” in his house.<sup>484</sup> This article was also written by Christina Lamb. Legal action against the newspaper established that the Sudanese woman said to have been the “slave” had come to London as an au pair for the diplomat’s family. Ms Lamb did not even speak to the au pair before writing the article, relying instead upon Sudanese opposition members and Baroness Cox’s Christian Solidarity Worldwide for the “story”. **The Sunday Telegraph** subsequently admitted the article was untrue, and acknowledged that they had “greatly wronged” the diplomat in question, “unreservedly” withdrew the allegations, and “sincerely and unequivocally” apologised for the “distress and gross hurt” the article had caused. The

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<sup>480</sup> See published apology, “Sanna Karim, aka Maleen”, **The Sunday Telegraph** (London) 5 August 2001.

<sup>481</sup> “China Puts ‘700,000 Troops’ on Sudan Alert”, **The Sunday Telegraph** (London), 26 August 2000. Given that Ms Lamb states that she is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, she showed a remarkable ignorance of geographical and logistical realities. Lamb had previously worked for **The Financial Times** and **The Sunday Times**. She was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University.

<sup>482</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 5 March 2001, column WA 10.

<sup>483</sup> “U.S.: Reports of China’s Role in Sudanese War Are Overstated”, News Article by UPI, 29 August 2000.

<sup>484</sup> “Sudan Diplomat ‘Kept Slave Girl in London Home’”, **The Sunday Telegraph** (London), 17 September 2000. The story was also carried internationally. See, for example, “Sudan Diplomat Kept Servant Girl as Slave in London Home: Report”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 17 September 2000.

newspaper also paid “very substantial” damages to Mr al-Koronky.<sup>485</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, given the transparently farcical “700,000” Chinese soldiers in Sudan article and the al-Koronky libel fiasco, Christina Lamb won the best foreign reporter award at the 2002 British Press Awards.<sup>486</sup>

The al-Koronky “slave girl” story was a variant on similarly untrue claims made in **The Observer** newspaper in London that the Sudanese president had four slaves in his home.<sup>487</sup>

In September 2001, in the wake of the World Trade Center and Pentagon outrages, **The Daily Telegraph** claimed that Osama bin Laden’s wealth was increasing “every time a soft drink is sold in the world” because he controlled a large part of the Sudanese gum arabic trade.<sup>488</sup> Sudan has a near monopoly on this crop which is used as an emulsifier in a wide variety of products including sweets, medicines and cosmetics. First floated as disinformation following the disastrous cruise missile attack on the al-Shifa medicine factory in Khartoum<sup>489</sup>, **The Daily Telegraph** repeated the claim despite the fact that the American government has been very specific in saying that there was no evidence that bin Laden had any financial interest in the Sudanese gum arabic industry.<sup>490</sup>

In October 2001, **The Daily Telegraph** once again returned to Sudan, publishing an article replete with inaccuracies.<sup>491</sup> The article carried tired and discredited claims, alleging, for example, that the Sudanese government had used chemical weapons in southern Sudan, and that there were terrorist training camps only three miles from the city centre – this months after American

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<sup>485</sup> “Statement in Open Court”, Case No. HQ006869, In the High Court of Justice, Queen’s Bench Division, between Abdel Mahmoud al-Koronky and Dominic Lawson, Christina Lamb and The Sunday Telegraph Limited, 4 July 2002.

<sup>486</sup> “British Press Awards”, Media Section, **The Guardian** (London), 20 March 2002.

<sup>487</sup> See, “Sudan Revives the Slave Trade”, **The Observer** (London), 9 April 1995. This was the same article that also claimed that black southern children in Sudan were being “used as a living blood bank for northern soldiers...every time there is a major battle, they are rounded up to donate their blood”. The source was anonymous.

<sup>488</sup> “Terror Chief Has Global Cash Machine”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 16 September 2001.

<sup>489</sup> See, for example, “Gum Arabic Defenders Dispute Reports of Terrorist Ties to Industry”, News Article by Associated Press, 25 August 1998; “Right Thing, Odd Time”, **Christian Science Monitor** (Boston), 24 August 1998.

<sup>490</sup> The National Soft Drink Association Statement Regarding Gum Arabic, National Soft Drink Association, Washington-DC, 20 September 2001, available at [www.nsda.org/About/news/gumarabic.html](http://www.nsda.org/About/news/gumarabic.html). See, also, “Bin Laden’s Assets Kept Under Wraps”, **The Baltimore Sun**, 19 September 2001.

<sup>491</sup> “Sudan Hides its Regime of Terror Behind a Mask of Diplomacy”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 19 October 2001.

counter-terrorist teams had given Sudan a clean bill of health following 18 months of exhaustive investigations.

It was not only the **Telegraph** group that has published questionable articles on Sudanese affairs.

On 6 July 1997, **The Sunday Times** in London published an article headlined “‘Torture’ doctors working for NHS”. This article claimed that two Sudanese doctors then working in National Health Service hospitals in Britain had “worked in secret torture centres for their military government” and were accused of “depriving political prisoners of medical treatment”. The two doctors cited by the newspaper were Dr Ahmed El-Sayed, a specialist registrar in the Cardio-thoracic Surgery Department at the prestigious St Bartholomew’s Hospital in London, and Dr Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub, an honorary registrar at Ninewells Hospital and Medical School in Dundee. Dr Mahgoub had also been completing post-graduate research in haematology at the University of Dundee.<sup>492</sup> Dr El-Sayed had served for several years as the personal doctor of the Sudanese President. In 1992 he was the youngest consultant surgeon in Sudan, and had received several public commendations for his work and dedication as a doctor. He subsequently opened Sudan’s first heart surgery centre.

While both doctors had spent time at the military hospital in Omdurman, and had treated detainees, the article in question was quite simply without foundation. Dr El-Sayed observed: “I did see political detainees in Sudan...It was one of my many duties and responsibilities as a registrar at the military hospital. I believe that I visited Kober prison on three occasions to do so. These occasions also gave me the opportunity to check on several of my cousins who were also political detainees held from time to time at the prison. Sudanese society, especially in northern Sudan, is quite a small one in effect and everyone knows everyone else. The idea of doing something unethical or in any way questionable as suggested by the Sunday Times article is beyond the pale. Such behaviour would have been common currency.”<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Dr El-Sayed graduated MBBS (Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery) from the University of Khartoum’s medical faculty in 1986, and became a FRCS (Edinburgh) in 1992. Dr Mahgoub graduated MBBS from the medical faculty of the University of Khartoum in 1987. He also studied in the United Kingdom and holds the diploma in clinical pathology from the Royal Postgraduate Medical School at Hammersmith Hospital, part of the University of London.

<sup>493</sup> Complaint by Dr El-Sayed to the Press Complaints Commission, London, 28 July 1997.

The headline presented both doctors as implicated in the torture of patients. Dr El-Sayed commented:

As a medical doctor I have sworn an oath before God to treat sick people to the best of my ability...As a field medical officer in southern Sudan for periods from 1988 onwards through to 1992 and 1994, I treated any and all patients regardless of colour, creed or religion, and regardless of whether they were a government or rebel soldier. I have also been involved in considerable volunteer work outside of my official duties. And as I pointed out to [the Sunday Times] however unfashionable it may appear to be in today's world, I am a God-fearing man and the thought of deliberately leaving an ill man untreated is quite simply one which jars with every religious and ethical belief I hold dear.<sup>494</sup>

**The Sunday Times** gave Dr El-Sayed 24 hours to respond to the forthcoming article, an article making very grave allegations dating back several years, in another country on another continent, while also carrying out his hospital duties as a heart surgeon. Dr El-Sayed stated: "I am surprised ...that they did not contact me somewhat sooner, rather than affording me 24 hours in which to respond. I work as a heart surgeon in the cardiothoracic department of St Bartholomew's Hospital, and was contacted by [the journalist] at 2pm on Friday on what was a very busy day, just as I was about to go into an operation. I explained this to [the **Sunday Times** journalist]. In fact I was reprimanded by the hospital for taking up hospital time to even speak with [the journalist]. I am normally on duty at the hospital for days at a time. It is simply unrealistic and unfair of the Sunday Times to have expected me to respond in the time allowed. It is also somewhat disingenuous to say that I had 24 hours to respond, given that several of those hours are normally taken up by rest and that it is impossible to contact people in any case late at night. In my case given my surgery and other hospital commitments the time realistically left to me to respond was negligible."<sup>495</sup> Dr Mahgoub was faxed details of the accusations on 5 July, with the article appearing the following day. While affording him almost no time to respond to the allegations, **The Sunday Times** had, however, arranged to have him photographed, without permission, on 2 July.<sup>496</sup> It was the journalistic equivalent of a mugging.

Dr Mahgoub noted that **The Sunday Times** journalist stated categorically that most of the allegations concerning him dated to 1990: "Yet after I had asked

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<sup>494</sup> Complaint by Dr El-Sayed to the Press Complaints Commission, London, 28 July 1997.

<sup>495</sup> Complaint by Dr El-Sayed to the Press Complaints Commission, London, 28 July 1997.

<sup>496</sup> Complaint by Dr Mahgoub to the Press Complaints Commission, London, 28 July 1997.

him to provide me with the dates of the incidents, given I was in southern Sudan for most of 1990, [the **Sunday Times** journalist] conspicuously avoided mentioning 1990 in the article when it appeared. This would not appear to show much confidence on the part of [the **Sunday Times** journalist] for the information he had been given”.<sup>497</sup>

In the whole half-page article published by **The Sunday Times**, Dr El-Sayed was afforded one sentence in his defence. Despite their requests for a right of reply in some form, even an edited letter, none was published in the following or subsequent weeks. **The Sunday Times** declined to publish a letter from either of the doctors, physicians seeking to respond to and deny grave and serious allegations of torture, mistreatment and malpractice, in its weekly “Letters to the Editor” columns.<sup>498</sup>

The doctors were subsequently vindicated. When asked in Parliament about the accusations made in **The Sunday Times**, the British government replied that “there is no evidence to substantiate these allegations.”<sup>499</sup> After extensive investigations of the allegations, the Scottish judicial authorities found there was no case to answer.<sup>500</sup> In a mirror image of the subsequently discredited al-Koronky “slave girl” article in **The Sunday Telegraph**, **The Sunday Times** story had emerged from Sudanese opposition circles.

The Clinton Administration had since 1993 sought to project Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism. This issue is dealt with in a different section of this study. Needless to say, most if not all, articles or stories about Sudan mention that Sudan has been listed as a state sponsor of terrorism. The Clinton Administration’s willingness and capacity for using the media for disinformation was revealed in the lead-up to Sudan’s listing in August 1993. Former President Carter, and the former American ambassador to Sudan, Donald Pettersen, commented on the fact that there was no evidence whatsoever to support Sudan’s listing. Former Ambassador Pettersen provides us with clear instances of the media being exploited in the absence of any evidence to provide at least a passing justification for the listing. He pointed out

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<sup>497</sup> Complaint by Dr Mahgoub to the Press Complaints Commission, London, 28 July 1997.

<sup>498</sup> **The Sunday Times** did, however, find space to carry letters commenting on articles about whether or not George III had a secret son, the plight of British film makers (Letters, 13 July 1997), letters headlined “Hands off our favourite radio programmes” and “Sexuality of SAS hero was never in doubt” (Letters, 20 July 1997), and letters commenting on articles about hunting and the countryside, and whether or not students work hard for their degrees (Letters, 27 July 1997).

<sup>499</sup> House of Lords **Official Record**, London, Written Answer, 30 July 1997.

<sup>500</sup> See “Sudan Doctor Torture Case is Dropped”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 29 May 1999

that the Clinton Administration chose to opportunistically link Sudan with the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center:

On the sixteenth [August] ABC television reported there was strong evidence linking the Sudanese government to the bombing of the World Trade Center building in New York. ABC also said Washington was expected to put Sudan on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>501</sup>

Sudan was listed as a state sponsor of terrorism, two days later, on 18 August. **The New York Times** and **The Guardian** in London saw fit to carry American government claims that Sudan was involved in the World Trade Center bombing as a prelude to listing Sudan as state sponsor of terrorism. Other journalists received government briefings totally at variance with these claims, with **The Independent** reporting that “State Department officials are at pains to emphasise that the decision is entirely unrelated to the investigations into the 26 February bombing of the World Trade Center in New York. They state that the evidence of the Sudanese government being implicated in at best flimsy”.<sup>502</sup> The fact is, nevertheless, that both **The New York Times** and ABC news, as well as the other media outlets who carried the claims, were conduits for disinformation.

In its attempts to justify Sudan’s listing by claiming Khartoum’s involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Clinton Administration contradicted itself on several occasions. In March 1993, for example, the United States government stated that the bombing was carried out by a poorly trained local group of individuals who were not under the auspices of a foreign government or international network.<sup>503</sup> In June 1993, the American authorities again stated there was no evidence of foreign involvement in the New York bombing or conspiracies.<sup>504</sup> When convenient, the American government then reversed its position in August 1993 alleging Sudanese involvement in the New York bomb plots<sup>505</sup> only then to subsequently once again deny Sudanese government involvement. On 30 April 1996, Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr, the Department of State’s counter-terrorism supremo, unambiguously exonerated Sudan:

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<sup>501</sup> Donald Petterson, **Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe**, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1999, p.70

<sup>502</sup> “US Brands Sudan a Terrorist Lair”, **The Independent** (London), 19 August 1993.

<sup>503</sup> **The New York Times**, 26 March 1993.

<sup>504</sup> **The New York Times**, **The Washington Post**, 25 June 1993.

<sup>505</sup> **The New York Times**, 18 August 1993.

We have looked very, very carefully and pursued all possible clues that there might be some state sponsorship behind the World Trade Center bombing. We have found no such evidence, in spite of an exhaustive search, that any state was responsible for that crime. Our information indicates that Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and his gang were a group of freelance terrorists, many of whom were trained in Afghanistan, who came from various nations but who did not rely on support from any state.<sup>506</sup>

Nevertheless, in August 1993, in a classic example of disinformation, the Clinton Administration had told ABC television, **The New York Times**, and others, that there was “strong evidence” of Sudanese government involvement.

Moving on from state actors, the image of Sudan has also been seriously distorted by disinformation from the SPLA rebel movement and non-governmental organisations sympathetic to the rebels such as Norwegian People’s Aid, Christian Solidarity International and CSW. Even attempts by journalists to include material from the SPLA and these organisations by way of “balance” can be caught up in disinformation. The SPLA has a well-documented history of making claims which have not been truthful – something already illustrated by Dr Peter Nyaba’s comment about the group’s “sub-culture of lies, misinformation, cheap propaganda and exhibitionism”.

It is clear that the BBC has on several occasions accepted SPLA propaganda at face value. As much was admitted by Alfred Taban, the BBC correspondent in Khartoum for several years:

In 1987, the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) claimed that its members had sunk two or three government river barges, on their way from Malakal in southern Sudan to Kosti in the north. The BBC broadcast the claims (not sent by me), which annoyed the authorities in Khartoum. Consequently, the then army deputy chief of staff for operations...asked for journalists to accompany him on a helicopter trip to Kosti to see the barges, which, he said, had not been sunk. He specifically asked for the BBC to be present. I went. In Kosti, General Ahmed looked at me and pointed to some barges docked in the harbour. “These are the barges the BBC said were sunk,” he said. I tried to tell him that it was not the BBC which had made the claim, it was the SPLA. The BBC only quoted the SPLA...He wanted to know why the BBC should broadcast lies.<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> **Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1996 Briefing**, Press briefing by Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox Jr, Washington-DC, 30 April 1996 on US Government Home Page, at [www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/960430.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/960430.html)

<sup>507</sup> **Focus on Africa**, BBC, October-December 1993, Volume 4, Number 4.

SPLA propaganda claims have also focused upon their activities within the Sudanese oil-producing areas, claiming, for example, to have destroyed key oil pipelines. International energy sources such as **Africa Energy Intelligence** have noted that such claims “subsequently proved highly exaggerated”.<sup>508</sup>

#### **A Case Study in Disinformation: Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in southern Sudan, 1999.**

A key example of SPLA disinformation, assisted by foreign non-governmental organisations, can be traced to rebel claims in July 1999 that Sudanese armed forces had used chemical weapons in attacks on Sudanese rebels in Lainya and Kaya in southern Sudan.<sup>509</sup> Norwegian People’s Aid issued a press release on 2 August headed “Confirmed Chemical Bombing in Southern Sudan”.<sup>510</sup> From August 1999 onwards, several British newspapers, and the BBC, published these unconfirmed allegations. They were also repeated in other international media. The BBC Online Network published no less than six articles mentioning the allegations in July and August, with headlines such as “Sudan ‘Chemical’ Attack on Rebels”, “UN Investigates ‘Chemical’ Attack”, and “Warning on Sudanese ‘Chemical Attack’”.<sup>511</sup> **The Financial Times’** 5 August 1999 report was headlined “Sudan Chemical Attack Inquiry”, **The Guardian’s** 6 August 1999 article “UN To Check Chemical War Claims”, and **The Independent’s** prominent 4 August, 1999 article was entitled “Briton Taken Ill After Sudan ‘Chemical Raid’”.

These British media outlets basically repeated claims made by the SPLA and Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), a non-governmental organisation closely associated with the SPLA.<sup>512</sup> These allegations were also subsequently repeated by SPLA supporter Baroness Cox, President of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, in the British Parliament on 13 October 1999. Cox specifically claimed that the

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<sup>508</sup> “The Lying Game”, **African Energy Intelligence** (Paris), 9 October 2002.

<sup>509</sup> “Sudan Rebels Accuse Government of Using Chemical Weapons”, News Article by Reuters, 30 July 1999.

<sup>510</sup> “Confirmed Chemical Bombing in Southern Sudan”, Press Release by Norwegian People’s Aid on 2 August, 1999, carried on ReliefWeb at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

<sup>511</sup> See, “Sudan ‘Chemical’ Attack on Rebels”, News Article by BBC Online News, 31 July 1999; “Sudan Denies ‘Chemical’ Attack”, News Article by BBC Online News, 1 August 1999; “UN Teams Investigate Sudan Gas Attack”, News Article by BBC Online News, 5 August 1999; “UN Investigates ‘Chemical’ Attack”, News Article by BBC Online News, 5 August 1999; and “Warning On Sudanese ‘Chemical Attack’”, News Article by BBC Online News, 23 August 1999.

<sup>512</sup> See, for example, “Norwegian NGO Says Khartoum Bombed South Sudan With Chemicals”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 3 August 1999.

after effects were identical to symptoms associated with poisoning by compounds such as Lewisite.<sup>513</sup> The Sudanese government agreed immediately to a United Nations investigation of these claims. A UN Operation Lifeline Sudan medical team travelled to the area in which it was claimed the chemical weapons attack took place.

A Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General stated that this medical team had: “gathered medical samples (blood and urine) from 13 of the 35 people who had reported symptoms. The samples were sent for analysis to the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), an independent laboratory in Atlanta. The United Nations stated that the detailed tests, which included a test for Lewisite “indicated no evidence of exposure to chemicals.”<sup>514</sup> As we shall see below, further tests by British and Finnish government chemical weapons agencies also found the claims to be baseless.

The British media was irresponsible in at least two ways. Firstly, for accepting such claims at face value, and, secondly, despite having been made aware of the findings of the United Nations medical tests, none of these newspapers, nor the BBC, subsequently published the fact that these allegations had been shown to be groundless.<sup>515</sup> This despite the fact that the BBC, for example, had specifically mentioned “chemical” or “gas” attack in all six of its reports.

It has to be said that allegations of involvement in weapons of mass destruction technology, and their use, are amongst the most serious that can be levelled at any government. Reporting on sensationalistic allegations such as the use of chemical weapons against any target, and particularly civilians carries with it a great responsibility. These particular allegations were unusual in that the United Nations was able to scientifically collect samples from the area concerned and from the very people said to have been affected. Usually the claims are made and there is no way of independently verifying what has been alleged.

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<sup>513</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, 13 October 1999, col. 444. Her claims were also repeated by Christian Solidarity Worldwide, see “Chemical Weapons Being Used in Southern Sudan”, Press Release by Christian Solidarity Worldwide, London, 1 August 1999.

<sup>514</sup> “Note for the Spokesman of the Secretary-General on Sudan”, Note delivered by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr Philippe Borel, to the Sudanese Foreign Ministry, 17 October, 1999. The on-site inspection by United Nations medical teams had also found no evidence to support the claims made by Norwegian Peoples Aid: see, “UN: No Evidence of Serious Symptoms in Alleged Chemical Attack”, News Article by CNS, 13 August 1999.

<sup>515</sup> See Press Release by the Embassy of Sudan, S/50/17/99, London, 20 October, 1999. This press release contained a copy of the Secretary-General’s note, and was very widely distributed within the United Kingdom.

It may well be argued by journalists that the allegations were sufficiently important for them to be carried in the public interest by newspapers and by media outlets such as BBC News Online. This is of course true. But at the same time, and by the same argument, it is in the public interest that the conclusion of any neutral scientific investigations into such claims are reported – and with the prominence with which they were carried in the first place. In the case of the allegations made by the SPLA and its allies that the Sudanese government has used chemical weapons in southern Sudan, it is clear that the British media has failed to exercise even a semblance of caution or objectivity.

This particular piece of disinformation had an even longer run as it was made the subject of a “documentary” film. This film, “Death in the Air” was made in the course of 1999 by British film-maker Damien Lewis.<sup>516</sup> A 27-minute long programme, it claimed to be an investigation of the alleged use of chemical weapons within southern Sudan in July 1999 by Government of Sudan forces referred to above. It claimed to have produced “compelling” evidence for this claim. The word “chemical” was used 44 times in the programme. “Gas” was also mentioned several times, as was “poisoning” and “[c]ontaminated”. “War crime” was also mentioned. Damien Lewis claimed in his programme that: “The results of the analysis by the UK and Finnish chemical weapons agencies provides tantalising evidence...” He further states: “Experts say the evidence so far is compelling” and said that there is “[a] convincing body of evidence.” Those interested in media accuracy, press sensationalism and misinformation in general, and with regard to Sudan in particular, can read the transcript of the programme and compare it against the results of the tests conducted which were central to the claims made in it.<sup>517</sup>

The dozens of samples he theatrically produced in the course of his programme were subject to detailed, vigorous independent testing by chemical weapons agencies of his choosing in three countries: there was not the slightest trace of anything remotely indicative of the use of chemical weapons.

Even a cursory examination of what the British and Finnish chemical weapons agencies actually said unambiguously contradicted the claims made in ‘Death in the Air’. The Finnish laboratories stated: “Analysis of the gloves, control soil

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<sup>516</sup> Lewis had made earlier, equally-questionable, propaganda documentaries, including “Sudan: The Secret Story”, featuring SPLA commander John Garang and Baroness Cox alleging oil-related “genocide”.

<sup>517</sup> “Sudan – Death in the Air”, Phoenix Television. The entire transcript of the programme is available at [www.phoenix-tv.net/html/orange/recent/sudanche1.htm](http://www.phoenix-tv.net/html/orange/recent/sudanche1.htm)

sample and one water sample, revealed no relevant chemicals. Analysis of all soil samples and one water sample revealed the presence of 2,4,6-trinitrotoluene (TNT). In addition to TNT, one soil sample contained the following degradation products of TNT: 1,8-dinitronaphthalene, 1-nitronaphthalene and 1,5-dinitronaphthalene.”<sup>518</sup> That is to say, no evidence of any chemical weapons. There was, however, evidence that a conventional bomb had gone off.

The British government’s chemical and biological defence agency at Porton Down rigorously tested seventeen samples of water, soil and shrapnel provided by Lewis for the spectrum of known chemical agents. In the government’s response, the British Minister of State for Defence Procurement stated that “very careful analysis of all the available evidence” led the government to “conclude that there is no evidence to substantiate the allegations that chemical weapons were used in these incidents in the Sudan.” More of Lewis’s samples were independently tested in the United States. The minister also stated with regard to these and other samples that “a separate set of samples taken from the sites of the alleged CW attacks in the Sudan was tested independently in the US. The results of these tests also indicated no evidence of exposure to CW agents. I understand that Mr Lewis also passed samples to the Finnish institute responsible for chemical weapons verification (“VERIFIN”) and I am advised that this analysis likewise found evidence of TNT but none for CW agents.” In fact, the British government remarked on “the consistency of results from these three independent sets of analysis”.<sup>519</sup> Yet despite all these tests on his samples Mr Lewis somehow found the courage to claim in his programme that the tests provided “tantalising evidence...”, that “[e]xperts say the evidence so far is compelling” and that there is “[a] convincing body of evidence.” It is for the readers of this study to draw their own conclusions about Mr Lewis’s credibility and ethics as a reporter.

Amazingly, ‘Death in the Air’ was a finalist in 2000 in the prestigious British Rory Peck Awards for freelance film-making, with the judges stating: “This piece shows determination and stamina in getting the story – he has obviously built up contacts and come out with good evidence”. Lewis may well have

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<sup>518</sup> As published in **The ASA Newsletter**, Issue No. 79, 2000, Applied Science and Analysis Inc., available at [www.asanltr.com/newsletter/00-4/sudan\\_verifin.htm](http://www.asanltr.com/newsletter/00-4/sudan_verifin.htm)

<sup>519</sup> For text of the British Government’s Letter to Baroness Cox Regarding the testing of Damien Lewis’s samples at the Chemical and Biological Defence Agency, Porton Down, (Reference D/MIN(DP)/ECS/13/3/3), 5 June 2000, see **Damien Lewis, Sudan and ‘Death in the Air’: A Case Study in Irresponsible Television**, European Sudanese Public Affairs Council, August 2001, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org)

shown determination and stamina; quite what story was got is very questionable and the evidence is non-existent. It is a matter of record that Lewis added to his documentary in July 2000 and that the deadline for entries for the 2000 award was July 2000. Lewis would have had all the negative test results back by early June, comprehensively invalidating the entire thesis of his programme. Despite having the opportunity, Lewis did not draw the judges' attention to the fact that all of the independent agencies that examined his "evidence" found nothing to support his allegations.

"Death in the Air" is not just an indictment on Lewis's professionalism, but a disservice to British reporters and film-makers in general and, given that the programme was actually short-listed as a finalist in the Rory Peck awards, a particular disservice to those awards. The media has a responsibility to the truth. This was not evident in 'Death in the Air'. Nor was it seemingly present in the 2000 Rory Peck Awards.

The claims of chemical weapons use, as made by the SPLA and Norwegian Peoples Aid and echoed by Christian Solidarity Worldwide provide clear-cut instances of disinformation by these organisations. In its description of 'Death in the Air', the Rory Peck Awards stated, for example, that Lewis had "built up a working relationship" with the SPLA, and that they asked him to investigate the use of chemical weapons in southern Sudan. This case shows the close relationship between some media outlets and solidarity organisations closely associated with the SPLA.

#### **A Case Study in Disinformation: Clinton Administration Claims about the al-Shifa Medicine Factory, 1998**

On 7 August 1998, terrorist bombs devastated United States embassy buildings in Kenya and Tanzania. Hundreds of people, some of them American, were killed in the explosion in Nairobi and dozens in the blast in Dar-es-Salaam. Thousands more were injured. The American government linked Osama bin-Laden, the Saudi-born millionaire funder of Islamic extremism with these attacks. The Sudanese government immediately condemned the embassy bombings. The Sudanese foreign minister, Dr Mustafa Osman Ismail, stated, for example, that: "These criminal acts of violence do not lead to any goal."<sup>520</sup> The Sudanese government offered to help in tracking down the terrorists involved, stating: "Sudan supports Kenya in its efforts to reach the people who

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<sup>520</sup> "Sudan Condemns Bombings of U.S. Embassies", News Article by Reuters, 8 August 1998.

committed the incident and is prepared to cooperate fully with it in this regard.”<sup>521</sup> Sudan also immediately granted United States requests for access to Sudanese airspace to evacuate American diplomatic staff and citizens from Kenya, and to provide emergency assistance to those affected in the bombing. When the United States requested further humanitarian overflight authorisations they too were granted.

On 20 August, the Clinton Administration launched cruise missile attacks on the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, alleging that the plant was making chemical weapons as part of Osama bin-Laden’s infrastructure of international terrorism. The attack was decided upon by White House appointees and civilians who excluded the FBI, defence intelligence and other agencies from the decision-making process.<sup>522</sup> The al-Shifa plant was badly damaged by the 17 Cruise missiles used in the American attack. Several workers were injured in the attack. A nightwatchman was very badly injured. Two food processing factories were also damaged in the strike.<sup>523</sup>

In retrospectively seeking to justify its attack on the al-Shifa factory, the United States government made several, widely-reported, claims about the factory. Every one proved to have been disinformation on the part of the Clinton Administration.

The first of these claims was that the al-Shifa medicine factory produced nerve gas precursors. In the news briefing given by the United States Defence Secretary, William Cohen, on 20 August, he stated that the al-Shifa factory “produced the precursor chemicals that would allow the production of... VX nerve agent”. The claim that the al-Shifa plant was making precursors to the VX nerve gas was immediately challenged by American and European scientists, chemists and chemical warfare experts. Evidence of such claims was demanded. After several days of attempting to avoid naming the precursor, the American government stated that the chemical was said to be O-ethylmethylphosphonothioic acid, or EMPTA. The soil samples were said to have been obtained from the factory itself.<sup>524</sup> An American intelligence official added that:

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<sup>521</sup> “Sudan Offers to Help Find Kenya Bombings”, News Article by Reuters, 11 August 1998.

<sup>522</sup> For details of this process, see, Seymour Hersch’s article “Annals of National Security: Missiles of August”, **The New Yorker**, 12 October 1998: Wire service coverage such as “Report: Raid Planned Without FBI”, News Article by Associated Press, 4 October 1998 is also typical.

<sup>523</sup> “Two Food Processing Factories Hit in US Raid: Witness”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 21 August 1998.

<sup>524</sup> “US Strives to Justify Aid Strike on Sudan Attack on Factory”, **The Independent** (London), 26 August 1998.

“It is a substance that has no commercial applications, it doesn’t occur naturally in the environment, it’s not a by-product of any other chemical process. The only thing you can use it for, that we know of, is to make VX.”<sup>525</sup>

This was immediately challenged by **The New York Times**, which stated that: “The chemical precursor of a nerve agent that Washington claimed was made at a Sudanese chemical factory it destroyed in a missile attack last week could be used for commercial products.”<sup>526</sup> **The New York Times** cited the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as stating that the chemical could be used “in limited quantities for legitimate commercial purposes”. These purposes could be use in fungicides, and anti-microbial agents.<sup>527</sup> OPCW sources also pointed out that Empta is difficult to isolate when in soil. A chemical weapons expert at OPCW also stated that pesticide traces in the soil could result in a false-positive result.<sup>528</sup> Mike Hiskey, an expert at the world-renowned Los Alamos National Laboratory in the United States, said that the chemical had commercial uses, including the manufacture of some herbicides and pesticides.<sup>529</sup> **The Guardian** also reported that: “a search of scientific papers showed that it could be used in a variety of circumstances.”<sup>530</sup>

**The Observer** reported that American intelligence sources were moving to “less and less credible positions”.<sup>531</sup> In February 1999 it was reported that

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> “Chemical Made at Bombed Sudanese Factory had Commercial Uses: Report”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 27 August 1998.

<sup>527</sup> It should be noted that the OPCW is an independent U.N. international agency which oversees the inspections of governments and companies to ensure they are not making substances that contravene the chemical weapons ban treaty. There also appeared to be confusion in the official American government claims about the Empta compound. On 26 August, the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency stated that Empta was listed as a so-called Schedule 1 chemical – an immediate chemical weapons precursor with no recognised commercial use – by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency then changed its public stance within a matter of hours, after OPCW officials said that Empta could have commercial uses. Contradicting American government claims, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said that the organisation classifies Empta on its Schedule 2b of compounds that could be used to make chemical weapons but which also have commercial uses. The OPCW said that Empta is identified with a process to make plastics flexible and also with some fungicides and anti-microbial agents (See, “ ‘Smoking Gun’ for Sudan Raid Now in Doubt”, **The Chicago Tribune**, 28 August 1998.)

<sup>528</sup> “More Doubts Rise Over Claims for U.S. Attack”, **The Wall Street Journal** (New York), 28 August 1998.

<sup>529</sup> “ ‘Smoking Gun’ for Sudan Raid Now in Doubt”, **The Chicago Tribune**, 28 August 1998.

<sup>530</sup> “Expert Queries US Labelling of Sudan chemicals”, **The Guardian** (London), 28 August 1998.

<sup>531</sup> “Sudanese Plant ‘Not Built for Weapons’”, **The Observer** (London), 30 August 1998.

extensive tests by Professor Thomas Tullius, chairman of the chemistry department at Boston University, on samples taken from the wrecked al-Shifa plant and its grounds, found that “to the practical limits of scientific detection, there was no Empta or Empa, its breakdown product.”<sup>532</sup>

The second of these claims by the United States government was that Osama bin-Laden either owned or had a financial interest in the al-Shifa factory. American Defence Secretary Cohen also stated that Osama bin-Laden “has had some financial interest in contributing to...this particular facility”.<sup>533</sup> This was denied both by the owner and the Sudanese government. The owner was a Sudanese businessman, Salah Idris. The plant had been established by Bashir Hassan Bashir, and had been sold in March 1997 to Mr Idris.<sup>534</sup>

On 25 August a United States intelligence official, giving an official briefing to the media on the American missile strikes admitted that the ties between bin-Laden and the al-Shifa factory were “fuzzy”.<sup>535</sup> On the same day, Reuters reported that a United States intelligence official had said that he: “could not confirm any direct financial link between Bin Laden and the plant.”<sup>536</sup> **The Washington Post** reported that: “Within days, however, U.S. officials began pulling back from directly linking bin Laden to El Shifa Pharmaceutical.”<sup>537</sup> By 31 August, it was being reported by **The New York Times** that: “Some U.S. officials now say Mr. bin Laden’s financial support...did not directly flow to the plant itself” In a 1 September briefing, American Defence Secretary Cohen was forced to admit that the evidence linking bin-Laden to the al-Shifa plant “was a little tenuous”.<sup>538</sup> Interviewed in late 1999, Under Secretary of State

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<sup>532</sup> See, for example, “Experts Find No Arms Chemicals at Bombed Sudan Plant”, **The New York Times**, 9 February 1999, and Maureen Rouhl, “No Trace of Nerve Gas Precursor Found at Bombed Sudan Plant”, **Chemical and Engineering News**, 15 February 1999, pp.11-12; and “Patent Blunder”, **Scientific American**, November 1998, p.42.

<sup>533</sup> “Text of news briefing given by Defence Secretary William Cohen and Gen. Henry Shelton on military strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan”, the **Guardian** website, at [http://reports.guardian.co.uk/sp\\_reports/usbombs/376.html](http://reports.guardian.co.uk/sp_reports/usbombs/376.html). See, also, “Many in Sudan Dispute Plant’s Tie with Bomber”, **The Washington Post**, 22 October 1998.

<sup>534</sup> “Sudan Tells British Ambassador to go as Diplomatic Row Grows”, **The Guardian** (London), 25 August 1998.

<sup>535</sup> “U.S. Intelligence Cites Iraqi Tie to Sudan Plant”, News Article by Associated Press, 25 August 1998.

<sup>536</sup> “U.S. Intelligence defends VX-Sudan link”, News Article by Reuters, 25 August 1998.

<sup>537</sup> “Employees Dispute Charge That Plant Made Nerve Agent”, **The Washington Post**, 26 August 1998.

<sup>538</sup> “Administration Officials Detail Missile Strike Strategy”, News Article by Associated Press, 2 September 1998.

Thomas Pickering admitted that when the US Government attacked the al-Shifa factory, who actually owned the plant “was not known to us”.<sup>539</sup>

The third disinformation projection by the United States government was that no commercial medicines or drugs were made at the factory. **The New York Times**, for example, reported: “statements by a senior intelligence official hours after the attack that the plant in Khartoum...produced no commercial products.”<sup>540</sup> The American news service, ABC News, stated that senior intelligence officials had claimed “there was no evidence that commercial products were ever sold out of the facility.”<sup>541</sup> President Clinton’s National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, personally stated that the Al-Shifa factory: “has no other commercial distribution as far as we understand. We have physical evidence of that fact and very, very little doubt of it.”<sup>542</sup>

The factory’s lawyer, and Sudan’s most prominent anti-government activist, Ghazi Suleiman, said that the factory produced 60 percent of Sudan’s pharmaceutical drugs, including antibiotics, malaria tablets and syrups, as well as drugs for diabetes, ulcers, tuberculosis, rheumatism and hypertension.<sup>543</sup> He stated that the factory had employed three hundred workers, supporting some three thousand people.<sup>544</sup> Journalists who visited the site were able to find thousands of containers and bottles of human medication and animal drugs, clear evidence of the factory’s commercial production.

In the face of overwhelming evidence, the United States government eventually conceded that the al-Shifa factory had in fact been commercially producing medicines and drugs. Some days after the missile strike, State Department spokesman James Foley admitted, for example: “That facility may very well have been producing pharmaceuticals.”<sup>545</sup> The London **Times** also confirmed

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<sup>539</sup> “Was Sudan Raid on Target? Did FBI Botch Chance to Grab Embassy Bombing Suspects?”, MSNBC TV News, 29 December 1999, [www.msnbc.com/news/351435.asp](http://www.msnbc.com/news/351435.asp)

<sup>540</sup> “Possible Benign Use Is Seen for Chemical at Factory in Sudan”, **The New York Times**, 27 August 1998.

<sup>541</sup> “White House Has Trouble Explaining Attack on Sudan. More Questions Than Answers”, ABCNews.com, Barbara Starr, Washington, 26 August 1998.

<sup>542</sup> ‘Sample From Sudan Plant Said to Link It to Weapons’, **International Herald Tribune**, 25 August 1998.

<sup>543</sup> “US Bombing Accelerates Health Crisis, Says Sudan”, **Mail & Guardian** (Johannesburg), 25 August 1998.

<sup>544</sup> “Sudanese Lawyer Claims Factory Had No Links to bin Laden”, News Article by CNN, 23 August 1998.

<sup>545</sup> “Sudan’s Rogue Regime Savours Sudden Public Relations Victory. Harshest Critic a Poster Boy in Counter-Attack Against U.S.”, **The Toronto Star**, 29 August 1998.

the Clinton Administration's belated acceptance of this fact: "Now they admit it made 60 percent of Sudan's medicine."<sup>546</sup> It also emerged that the al-Shifa factory also held an American-approved United Nations medicines contract.

The Clinton Administration's fourth claim was that the al-Shifa factory was heavily guarded. The Clinton Administration had also claimed that the al-Shifa factory was a high security facility guarded by the Sudanese military. In a briefing on the al-Shifa factory soon after the strike on Khartoum, a senior American intelligence official told reporters in Washington that: "The facility also has a secured perimeter and it's patrolled by the Sudanese military."<sup>547</sup> These claims were almost immediately comprehensively contradicted by western journalists. **The Economist**, for example, reported that the al-Shifa factory was "open to the street", contrasting with other heavily guarded areas of Khartoum.<sup>548</sup> The only "military" guard was an old nightwatchman, who was badly injured in the missile attack. Associated Press stated that: "There are no signs of secrecy at the plant. Two prominent signs along the road point to the factory, and foreigners have been allowed to visit the site at all hours."<sup>549</sup>

The fifth claim was that the al-Shifa factory had Iraqi military links with the Clinton Administration attempting to justify its strike with claims that there were weapons of mass destruction technology links between Sudan and Iraq. Some four days after the attack on the al-Shifa factory, the United States government position and focus shifted once again. Unable to prove anything specific, the American government then fell back on to broader claims. In a news article on 25 August 1998, entitled "U.S. Intelligence Cites Iraqi Tie to Sudan Plant", for example, Associated Press reported that: "Intelligence officials are leaning toward the theory that Iraq was spreading its knowledge of chemical weapons production to other Muslim countries."<sup>550</sup> On the same day, in an article entitled "Times: U.S. says Iraq aided Sudan on chemical weapons", Reuters reported on American government claims of weapons of mass destruction technology transfer from Iraq to Sudan.<sup>551</sup> While, the United States government then claimed that the factory was attacked because of these alleged

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<sup>546</sup> "America Reviews Sudan Chemical Evidence", **The Times** (London), 29 August 1998.

<sup>547</sup> "CIA 'Has Residue from Shifa Plant'", **The Guardian** (London), 25 August 1998.

<sup>548</sup> **The Economist** (London), 29 August 1998.

<sup>549</sup> "Questions Remain, but Some Sudanese Claims on Factory Prove True", News Article by Associated Press, 24 August 1998.

<sup>550</sup> "U.S. Intelligence Cites Iraqi Tie to Sudan Plant", News Article by Associated Press, 25 August 1998.

<sup>551</sup> "Times: U.S. says Iraq Aided Sudan on Chemical Weapons", News Article by Reuters, 25 August 1998.

links, they were unable to provide any evidence to support the claim. Unsurprisingly **The Daily Telegraph** was nevertheless one of first to publish this disinformation.<sup>552</sup> Unfortunately for the credibility of this particular piece of disinformation, in February 1998, the United States government had itself stated that there was no evidence for chemical weapons or technology transfers from Iraq to Sudan, stating: “We have no credible evidence that Iraq has exported weapons of mass destruction technology to other countries since the (1991) Gulf War.”<sup>553</sup>

In addition to the American government, in February and March 1998, the British government also stated that there was no evidence for any weapons of mass destruction technology transfers from Iraq to Sudan. This was the view of both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Defence Intelligence staff of the British Ministry of Defence.<sup>554</sup> The government also stated: “Nor has the United Nations Special Commission reported any evidence of such transfers since the Gulf War conflict and the imposition of sanctions in 1991.”<sup>555</sup> Even the broad American claim of weapons of mass destruction technology transfer from Iraq to Sudan was simply unsustainable.

After just over one week of sifting through American government claims, **The Observer** newspaper spoke of “a catalogue of US misinformation, glaring omissions and intelligence errors about the function of the plant.”<sup>556</sup>

In a particularly blatant example of disinformation, when the American government eventually learnt, from subsequent media coverage of the attack, who actually owned the factory, that person, Salah Idris, was then retrospectively listed as a “terrorist” under legislation dealing with “specially designated terrorists”. On 26 August, 1998, the Office of Foreign Assets Control, the unit within the US Treasury Department charged with the enforcement of anti-terrorism sanctions, froze more than \$24 million of Mr Idris’s assets. These assets had been held in Bank of America accounts. On 26 February 1999, Mr Idris filed an action in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, for the release of his assets, claiming that the government’s actions had been unlawful. His lawyers stated that while the law used by the

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<sup>552</sup> “Iraqi Scientists ‘Helped Sudan Make Nerve Gas’”, **The Daily Telegraph** (London), 26 August 1998.

<sup>553</sup> “White House Says No Sign Iraq Exported Arms”, News Article by Reuters, 17 February 1998.

<sup>554</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, London, 19 March 1998, cols. 818-820.

<sup>555</sup> House of Lords **Official Report**, London, 19 March 1998, cols. 818-820.

<sup>556</sup> “Sudanese Plant ‘Not Built for Weapons’”, **The Observer** (London), 30 August 1998.

Clinton Administration to freeze his assets required a finding that Mr Idris was, or had been, associated with terrorist activities, no such determination had ever been made. Mr Idris had never had any association whatsoever with terrorists or terrorism. On 4 May 1999, the deadline by which the government had to file a defence in court, the Clinton Administration backed down and had to authorise the full and unconditional release of his assets.<sup>557</sup> American disinformation could not have survived legal scrutiny.

The tragic al-Shifa incident provides a clear example of systematic attempts at disinformation and a clear willingness to lie on the part of the Clinton Administration with regard to Sudan.

The media coverage and distortions shown above are proof enough that Sudan and the Sudanese people have been subject to a number of systematic attempts at disinformation leading to inaccuracies and injustice. International press coverage of Sudan is important for several reasons. It is in many instances perhaps the only image many observers will have of the country itself. International press coverage is also sometimes the only material many commentators and even legislators will have in mind when addressing issues either directly or indirectly related to Sudan. Journalists have in many instances managed to get away with some appalling reporting on Sudan. There has been a mixture of simply bad journalism, misinformation and deliberate disinformation. If doctors had been party to such shoddy, and, in some cases, dangerously inept work they would probably have been suspended from the profession or possibly even struck off the medical register. What has been surprising is that far from being held to account for appallingly bad journalism on Sudan, in some cases resulting in significant legal defeats in libel courts, journalists such as **The Sunday Telegraph's** Christina Lamb, Damien Lewis and even broadcasters such as Joe Madison have actually been nominated, or have won awards, for their reporting.

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<sup>557</sup> See, "US Unfreezes Assets of Sudan Factory Owner", Agence France Presse, 4 May 1999; "US OKs Payout for Sudan 'Mistake': Faulty Intelligence Blamed for Air Strike", **The Washington Times**, 5 May 1999; "US Admits Sudan Bombing Mistake", **The Independent** (London), 4 May 1999; "US to Unfreeze Accounts Frozen Over Plant", **The Asian Wall Street Journal**, 5 May 1999.

## Chapter 5

### *Sudan and Academia*

With some notable exceptions, Sudan has also been poorly served by North American and European academia. As was the case with journalism, there are several reasons for inadequate or questionable academic work on Sudan. Firstly, Sudan is somewhat off the beaten track academically. Secondly, there is in some cases what can only be described as a cultural impediment. Many of those who are now professors or lecturers at universities within the West come out of a secular tradition and are either unwilling or unable to move beyond a Western mindset and secular model in evaluating, assessing or analysing new religious phenomena such as Sudan's Islamist model. It is worth revisiting the writings of Robert Reich, Christopher Lasch, Charles Murray and others who focused on the "cognitive elite". Academics, as members of this elite derive "their world views, mindsets and biases, from their peers."<sup>558</sup> It is also clear in any instance that the emergence of Islamism has itself generally been poorly analysed by Western academics in general.<sup>559</sup>

There is also often a political bias. Many academics can also be seen as analysing issues from an innately left-of-centre perspective, and many are discomfited by what they would perceive as the conservative political model in Sudan. Paradoxically, the identification of the centre-right and conservative right with several anti-Islamic positions, especially within the United States, has also had the result of many conservative academics adopting ideological positions that are equally hostile to Sudan. In any instance, as much as academics may wish to appear objective and non-partisan issues are ultimately very often seen from a personal, subjective perspective.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Cited by **The Washington Post** media columnist Dick Harwood in **Summary of the New York Forum, Session II: Bias, Cynicism, Superficiality and Elitism**, Project for Excellence in Journalism, Committee of Concerned Journalists, Washington-DC, 1997.

<sup>559</sup> See, for example, the analysis offered by Samuel P. Huntington in **The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order**, Simon & Schuster, London, 1996

<sup>560</sup> See, for example, the controversy in Britain in early 2003 over the proposal by King's College, Cambridge, to award an honorary fellowship to the Arab-American academic Edward Said. Academics at the college were split over the issue along essentially political lines regarding Professor Said's position on Israel: "College Split Over Fellowship", **The Guardian** (London), 31 January 2003.

It is also the case that Western academics are in large part dependent upon written sources. With regard to Sudan from 1989 until the present, much of what has been written about Sudan in the English language has come from sources hostile to the Sudanese regime and its model of government. Indeed, there had been a flood of such material, at least a portion of which echoing deliberate disinformation. The Sudanese government itself has produced little by way of explanation or defence in English. Certainly very few books or other publications, articulating, or even sympathetically exploring its position have been published within the West. It may well be that such material exists in Arabic, but the academic perspectives on Sudan that have influenced opinion within North America and Europe have largely those that have appeared in English.

Academic coverage of Sudan and Sudanese affairs has also been made worse by the existence of mediocre academics who have from time to time written on Sudan. These academics have been very careful not to depart from generally-accepted projections of Sudan, with most generally not straying far from American government positions. They are the latter-day equivalents of the Flat-Earthers of previous centuries who tenaciously adhered to the view that the Earth was flat because that was the accepted wisdom of the day. Their intellectual contemporaries can be found adhering to much the same sort of orthodoxy about Sudan and the Sudanese situation, timidly echoing accepted wisdom about “Islamic fundamentalism”, “terrorism”, “religious persecution”, “slavery” and so on. To move too far outside of generally accepted views on Sudan would lead to academic or social ostracisation by their peer group.

Disappointingly, even established and reputable scholars such as Walter Laqueur have fallen back upon questionable assertions about Sudan.<sup>561</sup> Laqueur, for example, repeats claims that Sudan was listed by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism because of its “open sponsorship of terrorist activities” and seemingly accepts the attack on the al-Shifa factory. He also made the facile claim that the Sudanese “sold” the terrorist “Carlos” to the French government for one million dollars rather than seeing his extradition as yet one more attempt by Khartoum to address American claims in an effort towards being removed from Washington’s “terror” list.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> Laqueur is a distinguished historian. He was for 25 years the director of the Institute of Contemporary History and the Wiener Library in London. He is the co-editor of the **Journal of Contemporary History**. He also serves as chairman of the International Research Council at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington-DC. He is the author of many books.

<sup>562</sup> Walter Laqueur, **The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction**, Phoenix Press, London, 1999, p.180, and p.183.

There are also those academics whose analysis and writing on Sudan echoes positions arrived at, or disseminated, by American intelligence agencies. Even those academics merely repeating genuinely-held American government positions on Sudan, rather than consciously repeating disinformation, are party to a disservice – given the systemic intelligence failure that has been the hallmark of American government positions on Sudan.<sup>563</sup> The American intelligence community has long been interested in Middle Eastern, Islamic or African studies scholars and related programmes precisely because of the perceived importance of “academia” in framing or forming policy. The 1976 Church Committee congressional investigation into covert penetration by the CIA of the American academic community reported that the CIA was employing several hundred American academics, including administrators, faculty members and graduate students engaged in teaching, in over a hundred universities, colleges and related institutes for secret “operational” use. These academics were said to have provided leads, made introductions for intelligence purposes, and written books and other material for propaganda purposes.<sup>564</sup> The report said that there were no prohibitions on increasing the operational use of academics. Evidence for this sort of general activity exists. In 1986, for example, Professor Nadav Safran resigned as head of Harvard University’s Center for Middle Eastern Affairs when it emerged that he had secretly received payment from the CIA to hold a conference on Islamic fundamentalism and write a book about Saudi Arabia.<sup>565</sup>

Given the importance accorded to Sudan by the Clinton Administration in the 1990s there can be no doubt that several United States “academic” perspectives on Sudan were themselves commissioned or influenced to accord with American government positions of the day. These “academic” perspectives were then fed back into accepted wisdom on Sudan.

Related to this there has also undoubtedly been an often inadvertent repetition of such propaganda materials by other academics unaware of their provenance. In 1992, the American academic Professor Marshall Windmiller stated: “An unknown quantity of intelligence agency-sponsored black and grey propaganda has ended up in our libraries, and our students are citing it in all innocence in

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<sup>563</sup> See, for example, **The Clinton Administration and Sudan: A Systemic Intelligence Failure**, European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council, London, January 2001, available at [www.espac.org](http://www.espac.org)

<sup>564</sup> **The Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities** (“Church Committee”), Book 1, “Foreign and Military Intelligence”, US Senate, 26 April 1976.

<sup>565</sup> See, for example, “The CIA on Campus”, **Covert Action Information Bulletin** (Washington-DC), Winter 1989, pp.25-28.

their term papers...the CIA has denied to the congress and the public the titles of most of the propaganda books it commissioned, and so we in the academy don't know how much junk we may be inadvertently assigning to our students."<sup>566</sup>

The Clinton Administration's obvious desire to dominate the intellectual debate on Sudan, certainly within the United States, was nowhere better manifested than in the 1997 conference on Sudan entitled "A New Approach to Peace in Sudan" held by the federally-funded United States Institute of Peace (USIP) – an organisation which, despite being funded by the federal government describes itself as "an independent institution established by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity to promote resolution of international conflict". While including representatives of all northern and southern Sudanese opposition forces, non-governmental organisations hostile to Khartoum, American government "analysts" and tame academics, this key-note conference was held without any Sudanese government participation or of anyone else who would have articulated a position different to that generally dictated by American policy.<sup>567</sup> One of the academics attending was Ann Mosely Lesch, of Villanova University. A US Institute of Peace research fellow 1990-1991 and 1997, Dr Lesch was very comfortable with both the Clinton Administration policy and the SPLA, to the extent of even co-authoring books with the SPLA's American representative, Steven Wondu.<sup>568</sup> She was also President of the Sudan Studies Association 1998-2000.

The 1997 USIP conference provided a prime example of how sterile much of the American academic examination of Sudan has been. The American policy towards Sudan was reviewed by John Prendergast, Ted Dagne and Roger Winter, three of the very people responsible for perpetuating the Clinton Administration's farcical Sudan policy. The respondent was an American church leader. The US Institute of Peace subsequently convened a further "Consultation on the Sudan" in January 1999. Once again only representatives of Sudanese opposition groups and those American commentators supportive of

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<sup>566</sup> Professor Marshall Windmiller, "The Intelligence Community and Academia", Remarks Delivered to the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, Fort Mason, 26 February 1992.

<sup>567</sup> See, **A New Approach to Peace in Sudan**, Special Report, United States of Peace, Washington-DC, 25 February 1997.

<sup>568</sup> Ann Mosely Lesch and Steven Wondu, **Battle for Peace in Sudan: An Analysis of the Abuja Conferences, 1992-1993**, University Press of America, 2000.

confrontation rather than dialogue in Sudan predominated. It was noted that no representatives of the Sudanese government were invited.<sup>569</sup>

Much the same could be said of the Center for Strategic and International Studies study of the Sudanese conflict published in 2001. The CSIS “task force” that helped to formulate the study included members of the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Council, National Intelligence Council staff members representing fervently anti-Sudanese American legislators, federally-funded groups such as the US Committee on International Religious Freedom, aid agencies and favoured academics such as Dr Lesch.<sup>570</sup> The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum was also represented. The co-chairmen of this study were Dr J. Stephen Morrison and Dr Francis Deng. Dr Morrison had come to CSIS in January 2000. He had previously been a senior Africa analyst at the State Department during the Clinton Administration. Dr Deng, an academic and former Sudanese diplomat and minister, has long been an opponent of the Sudanese government. Once again, positions articulating a government or alternative perspective were absent.

There is a further reason why “academic” analysis of Sudan and Sudanese affairs has been, and to a great extent continues to be, unreliable. Several people who are currently in senior academic positions within the United States, for example, would appear to have continued to project the discredited images of Sudan they had previously been associated with whilst serving the Clinton Administration. Two such “academics” are Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin. Simon is currently assistant director and senior fellow for US Security Studies at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. He had previously been senior director for counterterrorism at the National Security Council from 1998-1999, and before that director for global issues from 1994-1998. Benjamin is a senior fellow at the prestigious Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington-DC. He served the Clinton Administration as director for counter-terrorism at the National Security Council from 1998-1999. Prior to that appointment he had been a speech-writer for President Clinton. Before that he had worked for **The Wall Street Journal** and for **Time** magazine.

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<sup>569</sup> See, for example, “USIP Boycotts Khartoum”, **The Indian Ocean Newsletter**, Number 843, Paris, 30 January 1999. The Institute had also previously, from 21-23 October 1993, sought to unify southern Sudanese rebel factions which would have had the effect of intensifying the Sudanese conflict.

<sup>570</sup> **U.S. Policy to End Sudan’s War: Report of the CSIS Task Force on U.S.-Sudan Policy**, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington-DC, February 2001.

Simon and Benjamin's study of "radical Islam's war against America", **The Age of Sacred Terror**, was published in 2002.<sup>571</sup> In this book they present a demonstrably inaccurate account of Sudan, Osama bin-Laden and the Clinton Administration. They claimed, for example, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that the Clinton Administration's cruise missile attack on the al-Shifa medicine factory was totally justified.<sup>572</sup> This is perhaps to be expected given that they were closely associated with the decision to attack the factory. A more accurate reading of the attack was that provided by Tim Carney, the American ambassador to Sudan in the mid-to-late 1990s. Ambassador Carney bluntly described it as an "intelligence failure", observing that "the Clinton White House didn't even have basic facts, such as who owned the plant. Instead, the president relied on unverifiable assertions".<sup>573</sup> Carney further noted that this fiasco "damaged U.S. counterterrorism policy". He also noted that "bad intelligence included faulty accusations, as well as weak political analysis".<sup>574</sup> Even anti-Sudan activists have found Simon and Benjamin's al-Shifa claims to be less than convincing.<sup>575</sup>

Interestingly enough, neither Benjamin or Simon attempt to explain why when they were responsible for counter-terrorism, the National Security Council refused Sudanese requests for American counter-terrorist experts to interview and extradite two suspects Khartoum had arrested in the wake of the 1998 embassy bombings in East Africa. These suspects, holding Pakistani passports, had clearly been involved in the bombings and were in the process of preparing to bomb the American embassy in Khartoum. Washington's response was the bombing of the al-Shifa factory. The suspects in question were subsequently

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<sup>571</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, **The Age of Sacred Terror**, Random House, New York, 2002.

<sup>572</sup> See, for example, **The Age of Sacred Terror**, Random House, New York, 2002, p. 259, pp. 260-61, p. 268, p. 269, p.280, p. 315, pp. 353-64, p. 365, pp. 375-76, p. 380 and p.383.

<sup>573</sup> Timothy Carney and Mansoor Ijaz, "Intelligence Failure? Let's Go Back to Sudan", **The Washington Post**, 30 June 2002.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>575</sup> Benjamin and Simon had previously attempted to defend the al-Shifa fiasco, and their role in it, in "A Failure of Intelligence?", **The New York Review of Books**, 20 December 2001. This formed the basis for the claims they later made in **The Age of Sacred Terror**. The self-serving claims made in **The New York Review of Books** were criticised at the time by the ardent anti-Khartoum activist, Dr Eric Reeves. Reeves stated that "their attempt to redeem the Clinton administration decision to bomb al-Shifa is seriously deficient". Reeves accused both authors of "obfuscation", concluding: "Benjamin and Simon, by omitting any discussion of the most damaging criticism of the forensic evidence, and by ignoring the issue of an appropriate evidentiary threshold, perversely continue the Clinton Administration debacle of August 1998": "The Attack on Khartoum", **The New York Review of Books**, 14 March 2002.

deported by the Sudanese to Pakistan.<sup>576</sup> Benjamin and Simon were seemingly party to one unbelievable intelligence fiasco while preparing to propel the United States into an even more incredible international intelligence disaster.

Benjamin and Simon have not only misled observers with regard to their time at the National Security Council, they also mislead readers about events prior to their involvement. For example, they chose to repeat discredited claims that the U.S. embassy in Sudan was evacuated in the 1990s because of “growing physical danger”<sup>577</sup> Ambassador Carney, the ambassador at the time, has noted that this “analysis was wrong” and had been based on “embellished or wholly fabricated information”. He further noted that even when Washington realised the embassy had been closed on false pretences it chose not to send its diplomats back: “The bad intelligence had taken on a life of its own”.<sup>578</sup> It is clear that this bad intelligence continues to live in the claims that continue to be made by Benjamin and Simon.

Benjamin and Simon also repeat allegations that Sudan was involved in a 1995 terrorist plot to assassinate Tony Lake, the then National Security Adviser, claiming that “a hit team had been dispatched” and Lake was “moved to a safe house”.<sup>579</sup> What they do not reveal is that this claim was untrue and was another of the over one hundred “reports” subsequently withdrawn by the CIA as having been fabricated.<sup>580</sup>

In their attempt to revise history, Benjamin and Simon also made the remarkable claim that the Sudanese government had never sought to extradite

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<sup>576</sup> This sequence of events is outlined in David Rose, “The Secret Bin Laden Files: The Al-Qaeda Intelligence the U.S. Ignored”, **Vanity Fair** (New York), January 2002, and in “U.S. Fumbles Chance to Nab Bombers: State Department Stopped FBI from Pursuing Leads in East Africa Blasts”, News Article by MSNBC TV News, 29 July 1999 (available at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/294848.asp>), “State, FBI Questioned Over Africa Blasts: Congress Questions Sudan Missile Strike, ‘Missed Opportunities’”, News Article by MSNBC TV News, 19 August 1999; and “Was Sudan Raid on Target? Did FBI Botch Chance to Grab Embassy Bombing Suspects?”, News Article by MSNBC TV News, 29 December 1999, <http://www.msnbc.com/news/351435.asp>.

<sup>577</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, **The Age of Sacred Terror**, Random House, New York, 2002, p.132.

<sup>578</sup> Timothy Carney and Mansoor Ijaz, “Intelligence Failure? Let’s Go Back to Sudan”, **The Washington Post**, 30 June 2002.

<sup>579</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, **The Age of Sacred Terror**, Random House, New York, 2002, p.244.

<sup>580</sup> See, for example, David Rose, “The Secret Bin Laden Files: The Al-Qaeda Intelligence the U.S. Ignored”, **Vanity Fair** (New York), January 2002, p.52, and Barton Gellman, “In ’96 Sudan Offered to Arrest bin Laden”, **The International Herald Tribune**, 4 October 2002.

Osama bin-Laden to the United States, stating that “press reports have alleged that Sudan was also prepared to hand bin Laden over to the United States. No senior U.S. official is aware of such an offer...this claim should be viewed with great skepticism.”<sup>581</sup> This despite the fact that their boss at the White House, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, not only publicly admitted that such an offer was made but went so far as to provide an excuse for not accepting him. Tellingly, Berger owned up to the offer and was quoted in **The Washington Post**, for example, as saying: “In the United States, we have this thing called the Constitution, so to bring him here is to bring him into the justice system. I don’t think that was our first choice.”<sup>582</sup> (Interestingly, Simon was also quoted in the same article.) As previously outlined, even former President Clinton admitted there had been such an offer, stating that his Administration’s refusal to accept the Sudanese offer was “the biggest mistake” of his presidency.<sup>583</sup> It is also worth noting that in his 2002 book on CIA activities in the 1990s, senior CIA officer Robert Baer also confirmed with regard to bin Laden that Khartoum “offered him to us on a platter”.<sup>584</sup>

A **Washington Post** reviewer categorised **The Age of Sacred Terror** as “a former official said” book. The review also noted that for all the claims made by Benjamin and Simon with regard to al-Shifa “forensics...said otherwise”.<sup>585</sup> Perhaps the only accurate observation made by these two “academics” with regard to Sudan in their book was “The press is in its element when unmasking official folly or malfeasance, and in the al-Shifa reporting, it had a field day.”<sup>586</sup> It is also for Americans to debate whether counter-terrorism policy should have been left in the hands of amateurs, including someone such as Benjamin, whose only qualification for the job would appear to have been that he spent time as a presidential speech-writer.

It is a reflection on American academic standards that Simon and Benjamin will undoubtedly continue to be invited to academic conferences and seminars.

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<sup>581</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, **The Age of Sacred Terror**, Random House, New York, 2002, pp. 246-247.

<sup>582</sup> See, for example, Barton Gellman, “’96 Bin Laden Offer Fell Through”, **The Washington Post**, 3 October 2001 and “In ’96 Sudan Offered to Arrest bin Laden”, **The International Herald Tribune**, 4 October 2002.

<sup>583</sup> “US Missed Three Chances to Seize Bin Laden”, **The Sunday Times** (London), 6 January 2002.

<sup>584</sup> Robert Baer, **See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA’s War on Terrorism**, Arrow Books, London, 2002, p.360.

<sup>585</sup> “Terrorism and the English Language”, **The Washington Monthly**, September 2002.

<sup>586</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, **The Age of Sacred Terror**, Random House, New York, 2002, p.360.

They will also undoubtedly continue to repeat bad intelligence, faulty accusations and weak political analysis with regard to Sudan.

### **The International Crisis Group and Sudan**

It is a sad reality that despite considerable movement elsewhere, the intellectual debate on Sudan has not improved much. In January 2001, the reputable International Crisis Group (ICG) published a book-length report on Sudan entitled **God, Oil and Country: Changing the Logic of War in Sudan**. Regrettably, it was written by ICG's Africa Program Co-Director, the former Clinton Administration's Africa director, John Prendergast, someone closely identified with that administration's disastrous Sudan policy, and a colleague of Messrs Benjamin, Simon and Morrison. Unsurprisingly perhaps, just as with **The Age of Sacred Terror**, this book was deeply flawed by questionable scholarship and a self-serving inability or unwillingness in several crucial respects to differentiate between truth and misinformation on Sudan.

It is questionable to allow individuals who were intimately, and ideologically, involved in clear policy failures, as Prendergast, Benjamin and Simon were regarding Clinton Administration policy towards Sudan, to then subsequently analyse that situation – and previous policy. It is a rare person who would be able to be honest and objective in such circumstances. Prendergast is not one of those people. His inability to do so is evident in this report, which includes commentary which in large part merely echoes propaganda. He persists in making allegations about Sudan on the basis of questionable second and third-hand claims, often from partisan sources – hardly the basis for a credible study of the Sudanese situation.

It is somewhat ironic that Prendergast is the International Crisis Group's Africa co-director, and that the ICG states that it “works to prevent and contain deadly conflict”<sup>587</sup>, given that Prendergast was closely associated with the Clinton Administration's Africa policies – policies which caused and built upon deadly conflict almost wherever it touched the continent. It was a Democratic congresswoman, Cynthia McKinney, a member of the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations and Committee on National Security, who described this Africa policy in a 1999 letter to President Clinton as: “an Africa policy in disarray, a continent on fire, and U.S. complicity in crimes against humanity....your Africa policy has not only NOT

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<sup>587</sup> John Prendergast, **God, Oil and Country: Changing the Logic of War in Sudan**, International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 39, Brussels, January 2002.

helped to usher in the so-called 'African Renaissance,' but has contributed to the continued pain and suffering of the African peoples."<sup>588</sup>

Congresswoman McKinney is only one amongst many critics. The American periodical, **The New Republic**, has also observed:

The Clinton administration's Africa policy will probably go down as the strangest of the postcolonial age; it may also go down as the most grotesque...Indeed, confronted with several stark moral challenges, the Clinton administration has abandoned Africa every time: it fled from Somalia, it watched American stepchild Liberia descend into chaos, it blocked intervention in Rwanda...Clinton's soaring rhetoric has posed a problem that his predecessors did not face – the problem of rank hypocrisy...the Clintonites have developed a policy of coercive dishonesty.<sup>589</sup>

**The New Republic** also pointed out that Capitol Hill Africa specialists have described the Clinton Administration's dishonesty as "positively Orwellian".<sup>590</sup> There was no clearer example of that dishonesty than the Clinton Administration's Sudan policy, and Prendergast was central to this Africa policy, serving as director of African affairs at the National Security Council from 1997-1999 and then as special advisor to the American assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Susan Rice.

This perhaps is enough to allow the readers of **God, Oil and Country** to assess Mr Prendergast's reliability as an analyst. Not only does Prendergast not have the honesty to admit to the Clinton Administration's involvement in a propaganda war with regard to Sudan, he actually attempts to recycle parts of it within this and subsequent reports. His repetition of claims that are clearly dubious are exemplified by his allegations of terrorism, "institutionalised slavery" in Sudan and the government's forced "displacement" of civilians from oil-producing areas. While Prendergast does have the courage to mention the al-Shifa factory, he doggedly clings to the facile line that American "evidence was not presented publicly, however, because the U.S. said it wished to protect intelligence sources and methods".<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Letter from Hon. Cynthia McKinney to U.S. President William Jefferson Clinton, 31 August 1999, available at <http://www.africa2000.com/UGANDA/mckinney.html>

<sup>589</sup> "Sierra Leone, the Last Clinton betrayal: Where Angels Fear to Tread", **The New Republic**, 24 July 2000.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

<sup>591</sup> Prendergast, op. cit., p.79.

Prendergast's scholarship is also wanting. In one of the more glaring examples he gives a less than accurate, self-serving, account of the dynamics behind the 1983 redivision of southern Sudan which contributed greatly later that year to the re-starting of the Sudanese civil war and the formation of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Prendergast sticks rigidly to his propaganda script, attributing all the impetus for Nimeiri's amendment to the 1972 accord to northern Sudanese intransigence. He states, for example: "Southerners were infuriated by abrogation of the Addis Agreement."<sup>592</sup> He ignores, or is unaware of, the fact that there was considerable pressure from the southern Sudanese themselves for such moves. In April 1982, for example, **Africa Now** published a special report on the politics of southern Sudan. In addition to pressure from northern politicians, **Africa Now** stated that there was also considerable southern pressure to redivide southern Sudan, emanating from people such as Joseph Lagu, the southern Sudanese military and political leader during the first phase of the Sudanese civil war, and the man who negotiated the 1972 accord. **Africa Now** reported: "Lagu has been pushing the idea of division for over a year now, arguing that regionalism and a division into the three provinces would serve the interests of the smaller ethnic groups; it would also help to break what Lagu sees as the political hegemony of the largest single group in the South, the Dinka".<sup>593</sup> In April 1982 elections to the Southern Regional Assembly saw the return of Equatorial representatives who were overwhelmingly "divisionist".

The ability of partisan commentators to have their views on Sudan and related issues as somehow academically credible has been noted by American journalists. Trudy Lieberman's study **Slanting the Story: The Forces that Shape the News** has touched on the ability of conservative groups, many of which have made up the anti-Sudan lobby, to get its message across:

Right-wing groups have cast themselves as neutral observers more akin to professors in academic institutions that 'educate' rather than to organisations that 'lobby'....The cloak of the academy and the nonpartisan label help disguise the group's agenda as well as their benefactors. This makes it easier to get the attention of editors and writers who may be more likely to use material from an 'objective third party.' The trappings of academe lend credibility to their work. Such trappings connote stature, impartiality, and scientific rigor, and they convey a sense of knowledge rather than ideology that makes it easier for the media to embrace these ideas. Think tank rosters are replete with visiting scholars, senior scholars, junior scholars, visiting

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<sup>592</sup> Prendergast, op. cit., p.13.

<sup>593</sup> "Southern Sudan Division Still an Election Issue", **Africa Now**, April 1982, pp.53-54

fellows, adjunct scholars, research fellows, senior fellows, and distinguished fellows that further the notion of objectivity, scholarly research, and impartiality.<sup>594</sup>

One example of this is Yossef Bodansky, the Director of the “Republican Congressional on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare” responsible for several discredited claims about Sudan and weapons of mass destruction. Bodansky has been a visiting scholar in the Security Studies Program of John Hopkins University. He is a Special Consultant on International Terrorism at the Freeman Center for Strategic Studies, and is the director of research of the International Strategic Studies Association.<sup>595</sup>

The Task Force’s work has also been described as the “product of extremists who care nothing for serious research, responsible intelligence assessment, or accurate analysis” and simply “garbage” by Barry Rubin, the editor of **The Middle East Review of International Affairs**.<sup>596</sup> Daniel Pipes, editor of **Middle East Quarterly**, has also described the work as “alarmist and unreliable”.<sup>597</sup>

The Federation of American Scientists has said of Bodansky’s “Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare” that “This source appears to include considerable material inspired by Israeli intelligence services, and consequently material produced by this Task Force has historically consisted of an uneven admixture of unusually detailed information and blatantly incredible fabrications”.<sup>598</sup> Michael Massing, a contributing editor of the **Columbia Journalism Review**, has also reported that the reports of the Task Force “are so inflammatory that each carries a disclaimer: “This paper may not necessarily reflect the views of all of the Members of the Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. It is intended to provoke discussion and debate.” Massing observed that the Task Force is “a

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<sup>594</sup> Trudy Lieberman, **Slanting the Story: The Forces that Shape the News**, The New Press, New York, 2000, p.25-26.

<sup>595</sup> Bodansky is also a contributing editor of **Defence and Foreign Affairs** and **Strategic Policy**. He is the author of books such as **Target America, Terror**, and **Some Call it Peace**. His articles have appeared in **Global Affairs** and **Jane’s Defense Weekly**. Bodansky was a senior consultant for the Department of Defense and the Department of State in the 1980s.

<sup>596</sup> See **Metro West Jewish News**, 6 February 1997, and “Arab Nations are Planning War, Says U.S. Congressional Report”, **Jewish Bulletin of Northern California**, 7 February 1997. Rubin is also senior resident scholar at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies of Bar-Ilan University.

<sup>597</sup> “Arab Nations are Planning War, Says U.S. Congressional Report”, **Jewish Bulletin of Northern California**, 7 February 1997.

<sup>598</sup> See, Federation of American Scientists website: [www.fas.org/nuke/guide/sudan/missile/](http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/sudan/missile/).

very slender reed on which to support...sweeping assertions”.<sup>599</sup> **The Financial Times**’ Mark Huband has also noted: “assessments of writers such as Bodansky have a tendency to make neat connections between all the enemies of the United States in a manner that is often belied by the facts on the ground and thus likely to inspire responses derived more from paranoia and grand conspiracy theories than rational assessments of what is likely in reality.”<sup>600</sup>

### “Africa Confidential”

Lumped vaguely, and undeservedly, in amongst “academic” analysts of events in Sudan are newsletters such as **Africa Confidential** and **Sudan Update**, with Sudan “specialists” such as Gill Lusk and Peter Verney, deputy-editor and editor respectively of those publications.<sup>601</sup> Both of these publications present themselves as independent, but their coverage and analysis of Sudanese affairs has been very far from independent. Both Verney and Lusk lived and worked in Sudan for many years during the Nimeiri and Sadiq al-Mahdi regimes. Both are bitter political opponents of the government that has ruled Sudan since 1989, and this is clearly reflected in their work on Sudan.<sup>602</sup> Their analysis has been questionable, based on a combination of wishful thinking and the repetition of disinformation.

Ms Lusk, for example, has been forecasting the end of the al-Bashir government for a number of years. As early as July 1991, she confidently predicted that Bashir’s government “seems unlikely to complete a third year in power”.<sup>603</sup> In January 1997 **Africa Confidential** published an article on Sudan somewhat optimistically entitled “The Countdown Begins”.<sup>604</sup> In August that year, Lusk equally confidently predicted that the present Sudanese government would fall by the end of that year or in early 1998: “The opposition expects to overthrow the government by the end of the year or the first half of next year. Previously cautious Western officials agree. It’s a matter of time”.<sup>605</sup> In 1998,

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<sup>599</sup> “Evil Money”, **The New York Review of Books**, 4 March 1993.

<sup>600</sup> Mark Huband, **The Skull Beneath the Skin. Africa After the Cold War**, Westview Press, Boulder, 2001, p.261.

<sup>601</sup> A previous editor of **Africa Confidential**, Stephen Ellis, for example, went on to teach African politics at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

<sup>602</sup> Lusk’s involvement in Sudan-related activism is touched upon in Deborah Scroggins, **Emma’s War: An Aid Worker, A Warlord, Radical Islam, and the Politics of Oil – A True Story of Love and Death in Sudan**, Pantheon Books, New York, 2002, p.127.

<sup>603</sup> “Sudan: The Islamic Front in Power”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 32, No 14, 12 July 1991.

<sup>604</sup> “The Countdown Begins”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 38, No 3, 31 January 1997.

<sup>605</sup> **Newsweek**, 18 August 1997, p.18.

the newsletter published an article entitled “Next Year in Kadugli”, implying the fall of the government-held capital of the Nuba Mountains.<sup>606</sup> **Africa Confidential** has also repeated several disinformation stories about Sudan, regurgitating, for example, subsequently discredited early 1990s claims about the alleged presence of two thousand Iranian “military trainers” in Sudan.<sup>607</sup> The newsletter also saw fit to repeat equally untrue claims about the involvement of Sudanese doctors in the mistreatment of patients.<sup>608</sup> It devoted two articles to the fact that these claims were being judicially investigated in Scotland but then never reported the fact the investigation came to nothing. **Africa Confidential** also repeated claims that the Sudanese government had used chemical weapons, claims which “raised fears that chemical weapons are in use”.<sup>609</sup> Both of these allegations have been exhaustively discredited. All in all, this would seem to indicate **Africa Confidential**’s reliance on partisan and questionable sources, and wishful thinking, for many of its articles on Sudan.<sup>610</sup>

**Africa Confidential** states that it has always “maintained its independence and sought to print only the truth”, and that it “is trusted and compulsory reading”.<sup>611</sup> Far from independently reporting events in Sudan, or printing only the truth, **Africa Confidential** appears to be unable to resist repeating any item of gossip hostile to the government of Sudan.

While repeating stale disinformation, **Africa Confidential** has also displayed a surprising disinclination or inability to keep up with even basic changes within Sudan. In an in-depth, 3-page piece on Sudan, including a detailed profile of “Who’s who” within the Sudanese government, published in February 2002, the newsletter managed to get the portfolios of key Sudanese ministers wrong.<sup>612</sup> The Ministers concerned were Dr Ghazi Salehuddin Atabani,

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<sup>606</sup> “Next Year in Kadugli”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 39, No 1, 9 January 1998.

<sup>607</sup> “Sudan: Turabi’s Unconvincing Transition”, **Africa Confidential** (London) Vol 34, No 21, 22 October 1993.

<sup>608</sup> “Torture Charge”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 38, No 19, 26 September 1997, and “The Long Arm”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 40, No 1, 8 January 1999.

<sup>609</sup> See, “Gas Mask”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 40, No 17, 27 August 1999.

<sup>610</sup> **Africa Confidential**’s regular predictions of the demise of the al-Bashir government is somewhat reminiscent of the coverage by **The New York Times** of the early years of the Soviet government. A 1920 content analysis study of **New York Times** coverage showed that the newspaper had predicted the fall or imminent fall of the government in Moscow on 91 occasions – Charles Merz and Walter Lippmann, “A Test of the News”, **A Supplement to The New Republic**, 4 August 1920, p.10.

<sup>611</sup> See **Africa Confidential** website at [www.africa-confidential.com](http://www.africa-confidential.com)

<sup>612</sup> See “Unconstructive Engagement”, **Africa Confidential** (London), Vol 43, No 4, 22 February 2002. Mahdi Ibrahim, named in this article, was subsequently identified by **Africa Confidential** as

incorrectly said to be the Minister of Culture and Information; he is in fact the Presidential Adviser on Peace Affairs; Dr Nafi'e Ali Nafi'e was incorrectly said to be the Presidential Adviser on Peace Affairs when he is the Minister for Federal Government (**Africa Confidential** continued to get Dr Nafi'e's job wrong, referring to him as the minister for local government). **Africa Confidential** was eight months out of date with governmental changes amongst perhaps the most important ministries in Sudan<sup>613</sup>, at about the most significant time in Sudan from the point of view of Sudanese peace process. It was Dr Atabani's appointment as Presidential Peace Adviser that resulted in the Machakos peace agreement.

Ms Lusk's inability to move beyond her personal prejudices regarding the Sudanese government is clear. Despite considerable, documented, reforms and changes within Sudan, she remains wedded to dated stereotypes. When interviewed, for example, in April 2002, she denied that there were any moderates within the Sudanese government, and that its ideology and commitments have not changed.<sup>614</sup> Yet, only a few months later, somewhat more objective and independent reporting by Associated Press stated that "Sudan has come a long way since its militant heyday in the 1990s...the changes in this country...are too sweeping and popular to be rolled back. Human Rights and civil society groups operate openly. Press censorship has been lifted and independent newspapers freely criticize government policies."<sup>615</sup>

Should the Associated Press article be seen as a one off? Seasoned BBC reporter Barbara Plett, reporting from Sudan four years earlier, in 1998, observed: "What was I to make of signs that Sudan is liberalising? Was this the beginning of glasnost in Africa's largest state? The IMF seems to think so...This year it congratulated Khartoum for carrying out economic reforms and took it off the blacklist...And political debate is open and fierce. The growing number of private newspapers freely criticise the government...We have more political freedoms than almost any other country in Africa, one university professor told me. The change in atmosphere from previous visits is

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the Minister of Culture and Information – a portfolio incorrectly ascribed to Dr Ghazi (Vol 43, No 5). He is, however, the Minister of Information and Communications, the ministry having been restructured and renamed in June 2001.

<sup>613</sup> For the changes, see "Sudan Names New Peace, Information Ministers", News Article by Reuters, 15 June 2001.

<sup>614</sup> "Sudan Analysis", News Article by Voice of America, 14 April 2002.

<sup>615</sup> "Seeking Friends in the West, Sudan Tempers its Islamic Zeal", News Article by Associated Press, 13 July 2002.

truly remarkable.”<sup>616</sup> Ms Lusk appears not to have noticed this change, writing as she does without having visited the country in a decade and a half. Indeed any positive news coming out of Sudan is dismissed variously, over the years, as “manipulation”, “arch manipulation”, “a charm offensive”, “whitewashing reality” and a “hall of mirrors”. Sudan is said to have pulled the wool over the eyes of, amongst others, the American government, the British government, the European Union, the United Nations and the Arabs.

**Africa Confidential** has also shown blatant partisanship in covering the Sudanese conflict. In an article mentioning the deaths of Yousif Kuwa Mekki, a senior SPLA commander, and the Sudanese minister of state for defence, General Ibrahim Shams el-Din, **Africa Confidential** described them as “one much loved and respected and one widely hated and feared”, while also referring to SPLA “liberated areas” in Sudan.<sup>617</sup> It is also interesting that the newsletter chose not to report on the Clinton Administration’s cruise missile attack on the al-Shifa medicine factory in Khartoum. It is surprising that an Africa information and intelligence newsletter such as **Africa Confidential**, a newsletter that has focused extensively on Sudan, chose to ignore this, the first ever, cruise missile attack on an African state, an attack that was virtually an act of war on Sudan. This would perhaps have been for one or two reasons. Firstly, Ms Lusk may have realised that the American action was a disastrous mistake and that to admit so, as everyone else did or subsequently would, would cast the Sudanese government in a positive light. And secondly, to admit American intelligence failure with regard to al-Shifa and its non-existent links to Osama bin-Laden and “international terrorism” would greatly undermine claims about Sudan and terrorism in general. Rather than concede either point, **Africa Confidential** ignored an unprecedented attack on an African country – a somewhat transparent case of partisanship if ever there was one.

There can be no doubt that the sort of skewed analysis of Sudan and Sudanese affairs, based upon wishful thinking and personal prejudice, provided by **Africa Confidential** has distorted how Sudan has been seen internationally – certainly amongst those companies, non-governmental organisations and embassies that subscribe to the newsletter in the hope of clear reporting on Sudan.<sup>618</sup> Lusk also

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<sup>616</sup> Barbara Plett, “From Our Own Correspondent”, Broadcast by the BBC, 25 April 1998.

<sup>617</sup> “Death Knocks Twice”, **Africa Confidential**, Vol 42, No 7, 6 April 2001.

<sup>618</sup> **Africa Confidential**’s inability to get other details on Africa correct is also clear. In one of its shorter “Pointer” pieces touching on Sudan, the newsletter even managed to claim that the former apartheid statelet of Bophutaswana was the Zulu homeland when it is KwaZulu. This is the equivalent of claiming that Yorkshire is the Welsh homeland, somewhat surprising for a publication presenting itself as a fount of African information.

interfaces with academia and business, speaking, for example, at meetings at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.<sup>619</sup> Either Ms Lusk's analytical skills are surprisingly deficient, her common sense missing, or she is remarkably biased in what she wishes to project about Sudan. It is for the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

### “Sudan Update”

Peter Verney, the editor of **Sudan Update**, is a similar case in point. **Sudan Update** presents itself as “an independent media review” which operates “on an independent, non-partisan basis”.<sup>620</sup> It claims to provide “an information and referral service for individuals and organisations seeking a politically non-aligned briefing on the situation in Sudan” and that it “conducts research and liaison work for the media, non-governmental organisations, lawyers, parliamentarians, academics and human rights bodies.”<sup>621</sup> Verney has spoken about Sudan at conferences throughout western Europe.

Verney worked in Sudan until shortly after the 1989 *coup d'état*. For some time he was a staff writer with **Sudanow**, a publication of the Ministry of Culture and Information. He also worked as a teacher and for an aid agency. And as with Lusk, Verney has been a bitter, public opponent of the present Sudanese government since 1989, signing anti-government statements, along with Lusk, as early as March 1990.<sup>622</sup> Verney's opposition to Islamic government may well stem from the fact that he was punished for breaking Islamic law in Sudan prohibiting the possession and drinking of alcohol.

Despite claims on the **Sudan Update** website that the publication is required “to maintain an objective, non-partisan stance” and that it cannot “promote...particular political, religious or other ideological viewpoints”<sup>623</sup>, **Sudan Update** has nevertheless forwarded rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army press releases<sup>624</sup> and the rebel National Democratic Alliance<sup>625</sup> as well as

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<sup>619</sup> Lusk spoke at a meeting of the Africa Business Group, run by the Centre of African Studies at SOAS, in association with **Africa Confidential**, on 17 October 2000. Interestingly, the title of her speech was “Newspeak: Where Words Mean Their Opposite”.

<sup>620</sup> See, “About Sudan Update”, **Sudan Update** website, available at [www.sudanupdate.org](http://www.sudanupdate.org)

<sup>621</sup> See, “About Sudan Update”, **Sudan Update** website, available at [www.sudanupdate.org](http://www.sudanupdate.org)

<sup>622</sup> See, “In Sudanese Jails”, **The New York Review of Books**, 15 March 1990. The then editor of **Africa Confidential**, Peter Moszynski, also signed this statement.

<sup>623</sup> See, “About Sudan Update”, **Sudan Update** website, available at [www.sudanupdate.org](http://www.sudanupdate.org)

<sup>624</sup> See, for example, **Sudan Update** posting on Sudan internet discussion group SUDANESE@LIST.MSU.EDU, 2 May 2000.

statements by anti-government groups such as the New Sudan Council of Churches<sup>626</sup> and Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad.<sup>627</sup> In February 2002 **Sudan Update** “urgently” circulated details of a protest against the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation – the company being involved in the Sudanese oil industry.<sup>628</sup> This hardly constitutes a “politically non-aligned” stance.

**Sudan Update**’s claim to be independent is also difficult to sustain given that it was set up as an anti-government publication by Emma McCune, the British aid worker previously referred to who subsequently married a rebel SPLA leader.<sup>629</sup> In her biography of her daughter, Maggie McCune states that Emma and others “set up a four-page newsletter called ‘Sudan Update’ which attempted to disseminate information coming from the front lines, and whose sympathies ran counter to the official government in Khartoum...‘Sudan Update’ survives to this day.”<sup>630</sup>

In any event Verney has constantly projected questionable images of Sudan.<sup>631</sup> In July 2000, Verney as editor of **Sudan Update**, referred to the Sudanese government as “an illegitimate and murderous regime”.<sup>632</sup> In 2001, Verney pledged his “strong support” for a statement which spoke about the government’s “terrorist rule” and the “very non-civilized nature” of the regime. The statement also spoke of the “savage nature and practice of the NIF rulers and ideologues.”<sup>633</sup> Verney has also described Sudan as “a

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<sup>625</sup> See, for example, **Sudan Update** posting on Sudan internet discussion group SUDANESE@LIST. MSU.EDU, 8 November 2000. The NDA is a coalition of Sudanese rebel movements.

<sup>626</sup> **Sudan Update** posting on Sudan internet discussion group SUDANESE@LIST. MSU.EDU, 4 May 2000.

<sup>627</sup> **Sudan Update** posting on Sudan internet discussion group Sudan-L@LISTSERV.CC.EMORY.EDU, 10 May 2000.

<sup>628</sup> Peter Verney/Sudan Update, “Protest in London at PetroChina 18th February”, Posted on New Sudan Mailing-Discussion List, 13 February 2002.

<sup>629</sup> Riek Machar and two other SPLA commanders subsequently left the SPLA and formed other rebel movements in Sudan.

<sup>630</sup> Maggie McCune, **Till The Sun Grows Cold**, Headline, London, 1999, p.146. The genesis of Sudan Update was also outlined in Deborah Scroggins, **Emma’s War: An Aid Worker, A Warlord, Radical Islam, and the Politics of Oil - A True Story of Love and Death in Sudan**, Pantheon Books, New York, 2002, p.134.

<sup>631</sup> See, “In Sudanese Jails”, **The New York Review of Books**, 15 March 1990. The then editor of **Africa Confidential**, Peter Moszynski, also signed this statement.

<sup>632</sup> **Sudan Update** posting on Sudan internet discussion group SUDANESE@LIST. MSU.EDU, 27 July 2000.

<sup>633</sup> “Letter of Solidarity”, Sudan Human Rights Organization, Cairo, 16 April 2001.

totalitarian...society”.<sup>634</sup> One can compare his views to the Associated Press article or Barbara Plett’s observations mentioned above. The divergence is clear.

**Sudan Update** has also focused on the Sudanese oil industry, publishing, for example, **Raising the Stakes: Oil and Conflict in Sudan**. This report was hostile to the oil project, citing, amongst other things, claims that there was massive forced displacement of civilians from Sudan's oil regions.<sup>635</sup> In a section titled “Human Casualties”, it published claims that six thousand homes were burned in one attack alone. The source cited was an article by Damien Lewis, the accuracy of whose claims about Sudan has been examined in previous chapters.<sup>636</sup> As we have also seen these sorts of claims were fundamentally undermined by British satellite analysis of the areas concerned which stated “there is no evidence of appreciable human migration from any of the seven sites examined.”<sup>637</sup>

**Sudan Update** has also repeated a wide variety of other subsequently discredited claims about Sudan, including allegations that Iraq had moved weapons of mass destruction technology to Sudan<sup>638</sup>, that black southern children were being drained of their blood in return for sweet lemon juice, that the Sudanese President kept four slaves in his household<sup>639</sup>, and that Osama bin-Laden was using Ugandan child slaves as labour in his marijuana plantations in Sudan.<sup>640</sup> Verney has also alluded to Sudanese government involvement in the first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993.<sup>641</sup>

**Sudan Update** has also claimed, for example, that the Sudanese government is hostile to music and stated that Mohammed Wardi, the famous Sudanese singer, and an opponent of the government, would probably be arrested if he returned home.<sup>642</sup> Wardi did return home.<sup>643</sup> Not only was he not arrested, but, as Associated Press reported, Cabinet members attended his sold-out concerts.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> See, “Reports: Music in Sudan. Northern Sudan - A Crisis of Identity”, **Sudan Update** website, available at [www.sudanupdate.org](http://www.sudanupdate.org)

<sup>635</sup> **Raising the Stakes: Oil and Conflict in Sudan**, **Sudan Update**, 2000.

<sup>636</sup> See Chapter 4, “Disinformation within the Sudanese Conflict”, pp. 87-89.

<sup>637</sup> See Chapter 1, “Sudan and State-Sponsored Propaganda”, p.35.

<sup>638</sup> **Sudan Update**, Vol 9, No.. 4, 28 February 1998.

<sup>639</sup> **Sudan Update**, Vol 6, No.. 7, 15 May 1995.

<sup>640</sup> **Sudan Update**, Vol 10, No. 7, 14 April 1999.

<sup>641</sup> **Sudan Update** posting on Sudan internet discussion group Sudan-L@LISTSERV.CC.EMORY.EDU, 19 August 2002.

<sup>642</sup> See, “Reports: Music in Sudan. Kafka by the Nile”, **Sudan Update** website, available at [www.sudanupdate.org](http://www.sudanupdate.org)

A further insight into the bias that has marred the “reporting” of Lusk and Verney on Sudan emerged in the days following the announcement in July 2002 of the landmark Machakos peace protocol for Sudan. Although hailed by rebels, the government and the rest of the international community, Lusk dismissed the protocol stating that it did not address “the main issues”.<sup>645</sup> **Africa Confidential** referred to the Sudanese government’s “arch manipulation of American and British peacemakers”.<sup>646</sup> Verney also criticised the provisional peace agreement.<sup>647</sup> From their comfortable offices in England, it appears that the international community, United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Sudanese rebels and opposition and Sudanese government are wrong on this key Sudanese issue, and that **Africa Confidential** and Verney, despite their track record, are right. It is for the reader to judge.

Despite the obvious divergence between the reality of events within Sudan and the views held by Verney and reflected in **Sudan Update**, it is worth noting that **Sudan Update** claims that it “has become the first point of reference for a broad variety of inquiries relating to Sudan from all over the world.” Verney also states that the newsletter is sent to Australia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Thailand, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe. There can be little doubt that it is the sort of skewed perspective of events within Sudan offered by Verney and **Sudan Update** that has led to distorted pictures of Sudanese affairs.

Events in Sudan appear to have overtaken Peter Verney and **Sudan Update** quite some time ago. His is a reactionary perspective on Sudan that is out of keeping with political and constitutional developments in that country.

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<sup>643</sup> See, “Sudanese Singer Returns From Exile to Tumultuous Welcome”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 May 2002.

<sup>644</sup> See, “Seeking Friends in the West, Sudan Tempers its Islamic Zeal”, News Article by Associated Press, 13 July 2002.

<sup>645</sup> “Rebels Welcome Sudan Peace Plan”, News Article by BBC News, 5 July 2001. See, also, “Sudan Opposition Welcomes Deal”, News Article by Associated Press, 21 July 2002; “US Says Deal Between Sudan, Rebels is ‘Significant Step’ Towards Peace”, News Article by Agence France Presse, 22 July 2002; “Sudanese Joy Over Peace Between Government and Rebels”, News Article by Deutsche Press Agentur, 22 July 2002; “Sudan Truce Monitors Optimistic on Peace Prospects”, News Article by Reuters, 23 July 2002.

<sup>646</sup> “Calling the Shots at Machakos”, **Africa Confidential**, Vol 43, No 15, 26 July 2002.

<sup>647</sup> See, for example, “Sudan’s Shaky Deal”, News Article by Radio Netherlands World Service, 22 July 2002.

## Chapter 6

### *The Consequences of Misrepresentation*

The propaganda war that has been waged against Sudan has had clear consequences for both Sudan and the United States. It has damaged the reputations of both countries. The most obvious result has been that the Sudanese people, described by a former American ambassador to Sudan “as the nicest people in the eastern half of the African continent”, were at the same time ruthlessly and systematically portrayed as an evil, fundamentalist, terrorist nation. It was also a campaign that would come to damage both the image and credibility of the United States.

This campaign enflamed public opinion amongst powerful constituencies, especially within the United States. Some of these constituencies are inherently anti-Islamic and the anti-Sudan campaign served to fuel crude stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims. False or questionable images of Sudan doubtlessly succeeded in prolonging the Sudanese civil war by several years. Former President Carter has stated on record that the Clinton Administration’s Sudan policy artificially lengthened the Sudanese civil war. There can be little doubt that the rebels were greatly encouraged to continue the war in Sudan, irrespective of what was on offer by way of a negotiated settlement. This was aided by developments such as the “Sudan Peace Act”, itself largely the product of a picture of Sudan distorted by disinformation and misinformation, and one of the most poorly drafted pieces of legislation ever produced by the United States Congress. The basis for a negotiated settlement of the conflict as outlined during the 2002/2003 Machakos peace talks is broadly the same as that available and offered by the Sudanese government in 1997. The only difference is that the Sudanese rebels are now being actively encouraged by Washington to negotiate peace rather than wage war. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese civilians have died in the meantime as a result of the intransigence of the Clinton Administration and naivety of American legislators.

Additionally, the Clinton Administration’s systemic misrepresentation of Sudan affected Sudanese civilians in a very direct way with the attack on the al-Shifa medicine factory in Khartoum. Al-Shifa had been Sudan’s largest producer of affordable medicines against malaria and TB. It has been estimated that tens of

thousands of Sudanese civilians may have died as a consequence of this attack.<sup>648</sup>

The propaganda war has also impeded Sudan's economic and social development. While Third World countries may have resources, they will often need outside support, expertise and capital to exploit and develop them. With regard to Sudan, there have been unambiguous propaganda efforts aimed at denying Sudan the capacity to develop its own resources, especially in the energy sector, as effectively as possible. Poorly informed and inflexible American academics have campaigned to destroy Sudan's ability to modernise its economy. There is no doubt that the propaganda war, in seeking to discourage international investment in Sudan, has had a negative effect on Sudan's resources.

There has, nonetheless, been growing skepticism about many widely-stated accusations concerning Sudan. Several of them have dissipated on their own accord. Whereas in 1996 Sudan had its back against the wall, internationally isolated by American policy, in part because of generally accepted propaganda claims, by 2000 it was Washington that found itself isolated on its Sudan policy, many of the Clinton Administration's claims having unravelled. Those who live by the media always risk ultimately being held to account by the media. The Clinton Administration's attempts to justify its cruise missile attack on the al-Shifa medicine factory disintegrated in the face of close media scrutiny. The media has also clearly shown that the Clinton Administration passed up both on Sudanese offers in 1996 to extradite Osama bin-Laden, as well as repeated offers by Khartoum since 1996 to share intelligence on the al-Qaeda network. First-rate reporting has also exposed the systemic fraud at the heart of allegations of "slave redemption", a process itself presented as "proof" for the existence of slavery in Sudan. And those reporters who have actually

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<sup>648</sup> See, for example, Dr Werner Daum, "Universalism and the West: An Agenda for Understanding", **Harvard International Review**, Vol. XXII, No. 2, Harvard University, Summer 2001. Dr Daum stated that "several tens of thousands" of Sudanese may have died as a result of the destruction of the factory and the subsequent loss of vital medicines. Dr Daum was the German ambassador to Sudan from 1996-2000 and was well placed to have observed the consequences. Before that he represented Germany in the various human rights bodies of the United Nations in Geneva. He was a Fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University 2000-2001. Jonathan Belke, regional program manager for the Near East Foundation, has estimated that "tens of thousands of people – many of them children – have suffered and died from malaria, tuberculosis, and other treatable diseases", **The Boston Globe**, 22 August 1999. "US Bombing Accelerates Health Crisis, says Sudan", **Electronic Mail & Guardian** (Johannesburg), 25 August 1998; "Sudanese Aid Workers Count Cost of Drug Factory Attack", News Article by Agence France Presse, 25 August 1998

visited the capital and other parts of Sudan have painted a picture markedly different from that recycled by some of the international media.

There has been both institutional irresponsibility and human weakness at the heart of the propaganda war against Sudan.

The media does not come out of this anti-Sudan campaign particularly well. Generally speaking, it has been professionally irresponsible in its coverage of Sudan. This is partly First World arrogance in not applying standards in reporting from Africa that it would see as obligatory for reporting North American and European issues. It has also been exacerbated by lazy journalism and prejudice. As we have seen, questionable journalism appears to have been rewarded with prestigious prizes and nominations for such prizes. **The Baltimore Sun** was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in the category of “explanatory journalism” in 1997 for its “slave redemption” articles. American radio presenter Joe Madison together with news reporter Del Walters, received a National Association of Black Journalists award for similarly unfounded “slave redemption” stories. A reporter responsible for a major libel and other spurious articles on Sudan won the best foreign reporter award at the 2002 British Press Awards. And Damien Lewis’s very questionable documentary claiming “chemical weapons” use in Sudan was a 2000 Rory Peck Awards finalist.

### **Consequences for the United States**

The attempts to misrepresent Sudan have also had clear consequences for the United States. Another former American ambassador to Sudan attributed the farcical attack on the al-Shifa factory to “bad intelligence...faulty accusations, as well as weak political analysis”. Much the same can be said of the American approach in general to Sudan. One of the most serious effects of the anti-Sudan campaign was that, given Congressional involvement in the propaganda war, there was no meaningful Congressional oversight on the Clinton Administration’s Sudan policy. This in turn had two significant consequences. Firstly, it meant that the United States continued to be presented with a skewed image of political Islam. Mark Huband has noted: “Trapped by a mixture of poor intelligence gathering and personal prejudice, U.S. policy in the Islamic world broadly – and in Sudan as one stark example – has failed to respond to a relatively rapid evolution that has taken place within political Islam.”<sup>649</sup> There

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<sup>649</sup> Mark Huband, **The Skull Beneath the Skin: Africa After the Cold War**, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 2001, p.265.

is a world of difference between Sudan's Islamic model and that of Iran or that which temporarily held sway under the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Secondly, there was no Congressional restraint upon the Clinton Administration's systematic "politicisation" of "intelligence" for short-term policy reasons. This was clearly endemic and an indicator of the decline of American intelligence community during the Clinton years. The evidence of this decline can be found in the listing of Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism for political reasons without any evidence – as former President Carter has stated. It was also highlighted by CIA's acceptance of over one hundred reports alleging Sudanese involvement in terrorism that were subsequently shown to have been fabricated, and also be the attack on the al-Shifa factory. All this passed without challenge by American legislators. This has undoubtedly undermined the credibility of American intelligence agencies, and subsequently damaged Washington's post-11 September "War on Terrorism".

The al-Shifa debacle, for example, provided many of those opposed to American foreign policy, both internationally and within the United States, with the means of criticising the current American "War on Terrorism".<sup>650</sup> Noted left-wing American foreign policy commentator and academic Professor Noam Chomsky, for example, has observed that the "horrendous crime" committed on September 11 with "wickedness and awesome cruelty" may be comparable to the consequences of the Clinton Administration's bombing of the al-Shifa factory.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> In Britain, for example, American ally Prime Minister Tony Blair had the al-Shifa incident cited in a pivotal BBC interview about British support for the war on Iraq (See "Transcript of Blair's Iraq Interview", BBC Newsnight, 6 February 2003).

<sup>651</sup> Noam Chomsky is Institute professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the National Academy of Sciences. He is the author or co-author of numerous books, including **9-11, The New Military Humanism: Lessons of Kosovo, American Power and the New Mandarins, Reflections on Propaganda**. The Sudanese comparison has led to considerable debate within the United States. See, for example, Adam Shatz, "The Left and 9/11", **The Nation**, 23 September 2002, Christopher Hitchens, "A Rejoinder to Noam Chomsky", **The Nation**, 4 October 2001, Christopher Hitchens, "Against Rationalization", **The Nation**, 8 October 2001, Noam Chomsky, "Reply to Hitchens", **The Nation**, 15 October 2001, Noam Chomsky, "Reply to Hitchens's Rejoinder", **The Nation**, 15 October 2001 Leo Casey, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Chomsky's Arguments: Psychological Projection and the Erasure of African Victims in Chomsky's 'Reply' to Hitchens", 2 October 2001, at [www.Zmag.org/casey.htm](http://www.Zmag.org/casey.htm), "Noam Chomsky Replies to 'The Unbearable Whiteness of Chomsky's Arguments'", at [www.Zmag.org/chomreply.htm](http://www.Zmag.org/chomreply.htm). See, also, Suzy Hansen, "Noam Chomsky", **Salon**, 16 January 2002, and "Noam Chomsky Replies", 29 January 2002, at [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com).

It can also be said that the al-Shifa debacle was the turning point of the Clinton Administration's propaganda war against Sudan. Up until the attack, the international community broadly accepted many of Washington's claims about Sudan.<sup>652</sup> Washington's subsequent repeated blocking of repeated Sudanese requests for an international examination of the al-Shifa factory, and the refusal of the American government to apologise for the incident, or even acknowledge any error, discredited American claims about Sudan in particular and terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in general. This was summed up by a Sudanese diplomat at the United Nations interviewed by **The Washington Post**: "You guys bombed Iraq because it blocked U.N. weapons inspectors. We're begging for a U.N. inspection and you're blocking it."<sup>653</sup> This contradiction did not go unnoticed within the international community.

By far the most dramatic result of the Clinton Administration repeatedly putting short-term propaganda advantage and "personal prejudice" before national security was that it turned down the opportunity of arresting Osama bin Laden in 1996 and repeatedly rebuffed or ignored Sudanese offers of sharing intelligence and counter-terrorist co-operation – something which would have prevented, amongst other things, the murderous attacks of 11 September 2001. As much has been admitted by former President Clinton. It is ironic that Sudan remains labelled as an "extraordinary and unusual" threat to American national

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<sup>652</sup> The attack provoked an unprecedented international outcry. See, for example, "U.S. Strikes Hurt International Consensus", News Article by Reuters on 21 August 1998; "World Judges Impact of 'Monica Missiles'", **San Francisco Examiner**, 21 August 1998; "Arab League Denounces U.S. Attack - Air strike on Sudan is Called Violation of International Law", **San Francisco Chronicle**, 22 August 1998; "Organisation of Islamic Conference Condemns US Attacks", News Article by Agence France Presse, 23 August 1998; "League of Arab States Supporting Sudan", News Article by XINHUA, 23 August 1998; "OAU Backs Fact-Finding Mission to Sudan", News Article by Agence France Presse, 29 August 1998; "Non-aligned Delegates Condemn 'US Aggression' Against Sudan", News Article by Agence France Presse, 30 August 1998; "China Says Deeply Disturbed by Attack on Sudan", News Article by Reuters, 31 August 1998; "Russia Against U.S. Use of Force in International Affairs", News Article by XINHUA, 2 September 1998; "IGAD Backs Sudan Request for UN Inquiry into US Bombing", News Article by Agence France Presse, 5 September 1998; "OAU Demands UN Inquiry into US Bombing in Sudan", News Article by Agence France Presse, 21 September 1998.

<sup>653</sup> "Absent at Conference, Sudan is Still Talking With U.S.", **The Washington Post**, 17 March 2000. See, for example, "Sudan Invites UN to Inspect Factory", **The Independent** (London), 24 August 1998; "White House Rejects Call for Investigation of Sudan Attack", News Article by Associated Press, 18 September 1998, "Sudan's Plea for Inquiry is Spurned", **The Financial Times** (London), August 25, 1998 and "No International Probe Needed for Sudan Bombing: Richardson", News Article by Agence France Presse, 30 August 1998 (Bill Richardson was the Clinton Administration's UN Ambassador).

security when, in the light of the above bungling, this terminology could perhaps more accurately have been applied to the Clinton Administration.

Sudan may in large part have been the subject of human failing by way of poor journalism or lacklustre academic coverage. This is easier to forgive than the deliberately orchestrated and carefully planned propaganda deployed against the Sudanese government and people by the Clinton Administration. For some it was a job: anonymous men and women in various U.S. and European government agencies who briefed against Sudan on a daily basis, cynically placing disinformation in the media across the world, and when and where necessary claiming, for example, Sudanese involvement in acts of terrorism such as the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 while knowing all too well it was untrue. The Clinton White House bears direct responsibility for the propaganda campaign that has distorted media coverage and adversely affected how the Sudanese situation was seen and acted upon. It is now time for the Bush Administration to differentiate between propaganda and reality, drop its economic sanctions against Sudan, remove Khartoum from the list of “state sponsors of terrorism” that it should never have been on in the first place, and assist rather than hinder the peace process. There are signs that this may eventually be happening.

## *Appendix One*

### **“The Secret Bin Laden Files. The Al-Qaeda Intelligence the U.S. Ignored”, *Vanity Fair*, January 2002, No 97.**

By David Rose

The Osama Files. September 11 might have been prevented if the U.S. had accepted Sudan's offers to share its intelligence files on Osama bin Laden and the growing al-Qaeda threat. Recently unearthed documents reveal that the Clinton administration repeatedly rejected the help of a country it unwisely perceived as an enemy.

In a squat, red-brick building next to Khartoum's presidential palace, the agents who serve the Mukhabarat, Sudan's intelligence division, keep their secrets in pale manila files. “Those guys know what they're doing,” says a retired longtime C.I.A. Africa specialist. “They tend to be thorough, Their stuff is pretty reliable.”

And sometimes very important. Sudan's Mukhabarat spent the early to mid-1990s amassing copious intelligence on Osama bin Laden and his leading cohorts at the heart of the al-Qaeda terrorist network – when they were still little known, and their activities were relatively limited. Some of the files at Mukhabarat headquarters identify individuals who played central roles in the suicide bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in August 1998; others chart the backgrounds and movements of al-Qaeda operatives who are said to be linked directly to the atrocities of September 11. In the wake of those attacks, President Bush and the F.B.I. issued a list of the world's 22 most wanted terrorists. Sudan has kept files on many of them for years.

From the autumn of 1996 until just weeks before the 2001 attacks, the Sudanese government made numerous efforts to share this information with the United States – all of which were rebuffed. On several occasions, senior agents at the F.B.I. wished to accept these offers, but were apparently overruled by President Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and her assistant secretary for Africa, Susan Rice, both of whom would not comment for this story after repeated requests for interviews. *Vanity Fair* has obtained letters and secret memorandums that document these approaches. They were made directly to the State Department and the F.B.I., and also via a series of well-connected U.S. citizens who tried to warn America that the Sudanese offers were serious and significant.

By definition, September 11 was an intelligence failure. As the C.I.A. man puts it, “We didn't know it was going to happen.” Some of the reasons for that failure were structural, systemic: the shortage of Arabic-speaking agents, the inability of C.I.A. officers to go underground in Afghanistan .

This one was more specific. Had U.S. agencies examined the Mukhabarat files when they first had the chance in 1996, the prospects of preventing al-Qaeda's subsequent attacks would have been much greater. Tim Carney, the last U.S. ambassador to Sudan, whose posting ended in 1997, says: "The fact is, they were opening the doors, and we weren't taking them up on it. The U.S. failed to reciprocate Sudan's willingness to engage us on serious questions of terrorism. We can speculate that this failure had serious implications – at the least for what happened at the U.S. Embassies in 1998. In any case, the U.S. lost access to a mine of material on bin Laden and his organization."

How could this have happened? The simple answer is that the Clinton administration had accused Sudan of sponsoring terrorism, and refused to believe that anything it did to prove its bona fides could be genuine. At the same time, perceptions in Washington were influenced by C.I.A. reports that were wildly inaccurate, some the result of deliberate disinformation. The problem, Carney says, was "inadequate vetting and analysis by the C.I.A. of its own product." That, in turn, was being conditioned by the Clinton administration's hostility to Sudan's Islamic regime: "Despite dissent from the State Department's own Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. intelligence failed because it became politicized."

Osama bin Laden, his four wives, his children, and numerous "Afghan Arab" followers who had helped drive the Soviets from Afghanistan went to Sudan from Saudi Arabia early in 1991. They chose Sudan for two main reasons. First, the restless, radicalised veterans of the Afghan war were unwelcome in most Arab countries, but Sudan left its doors open. Second, bin Laden liked Sudan's politics. The Islamic radicalism of the government's then ideological leader, the philosopher Hassan al-Turabi, who had come to power in a coup d'état in 1989, was at its bracing zenith. The Sudanese, in turn, welcomed bin Laden as an investor. His family had built most of Saudi Arabia's infrastructure, and they saw his wealth and experience as an engineer as valuable resources in developing Sudan.

Al-Qaeda, with its secretive structure and oath of allegiance to bin Laden, had been founded two years earlier. In Sudan, however, much of bin Laden's energy went into business: a contract, funded by the Saudis, to build the airport at Port Sudan; agricultural projects; and al-Hijra, a joint venture with the Sudan government to build a 185-mile road northward from Khartoum. Abu Ibrahim, the Iraqi engineer who became al-Hijra's C.E.O., says bin Laden took a strong interest in the project's technical details. In bin Laden's large house in an affluent part of Khartoum, they spent hours together, discussing which diggers, graders, and other items the firm ought to buy. On his visits to the site, Ibrahim says, bin Laden showed "he knew how to drive every piece of machinery." Ibrahim had known bin Laden during the Afghan war. "When we were in Afghanistan, everything was jihad, jihad, jihad," he says. "Here in Sudan we saw his many other aspects – construction, family life. He was settling down."

However, bin Laden also found time to begin a fierce propaganda campaign against the Saudi government, furious that it had allowed the U.S. military to build bases on Saudi

soil. By 1994 that campaign had led to the removal of his Saudi citizenship. He was also fostering contacts with other Muslim extremists some of whom were very dangerous indeed. As we sat on gray-green leather sofas in his office, Yahia Hussien Babiker, the Mukhabarat's deputy chief since 1998, disclosed a nugget from 1992. In that year, the Mukhabarat learned that bin Laden had played host for a lengthy visit by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the founder of Egyptian Islamic had – a fundamentalist group behind many armed attacks on Egyptian government ministers and officials, including the 1981 assassination of President Anwar el-Sadat.

The Mukhabarat had monitored Egyptian Islamic Jihad for years. "If anyone in the world understands the Egyptian side of this network, it's Sudan," the C.I.A. source says. Events have served to demonstrate the significance of that meeting in 1992: Egyptian Islamic Jihad has effectively merged with al-Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri, now No.2 on the F.B.I.'s "most wanted" list, serves as bin Laden's doctor and adviser in Afghanistan. Other Egyptians occupy core positions within the al-Qaeda network, many of them known to the Mukhabarat since the 1980s. "These files on the Egyptians could have been of great value to U.S. intelligence," Babiker says. "If we'd had communication with the U.S., we could have been on the same wavelength. We could have exchanged notes." All foreigners in Sudan were subject to some degree of surveillance. Disclosure of bin Laden's link with Egyptian Islamic Jihad led the Mukhabarat to watch him and his Afghan Arab followers more closely. Lieutenant General Gutbi al-Mahdi, Mukhabarat director general from 1997 until 2000, says the service started keeping tabs on "the entire bin Laden clique....We had a lot of information: who they are, who are their families, what is their education. We knew what they were doing in the country, what is their relationship with Osama bin Laden. And photographs of all them."

Not long into the 1990s, Sudan's Islamic fervor was already being tempered by pragmatism. Desperate for investment, especially to develop its vast reserves of oil, the government submitted to the stringent economic medicine prescribed by the World Bank, slashing inflation and privatizing state-owned industries. (Osama bin Laden himself became the Sudan agent for the British firm Hunting Surveys, which plays a large role in oil prospecting and whose military division makes about a fifth of the West's Trident nuclear missiles.) In 1994 it tried to assert its anti-terrorist credentials by assisting France in the capture of Illich Ramirez Sanchez, better known as "Carlos the Jackal," the notorious Venezuelan-born terrorist who claims to have killed 83 people, now serving a life sentence in France.

The U.S., however, remained convinced that Sudan was sponsoring terrorism. Toward the end of 1995, the then U.S. ambassador, Don Petterson, was instructed to deliver an un- signed, secret note to the spiritual leader, Hassan al-Turabi, and President Omar al-Bashir. It said the U.S. was "aware of Sudan's involvement in terrorist plots against us," and warned that if such a plot came to fruition there would be a harsh reaction. It could result in "the international isolation of Sudan, in the destruction of your economy, and in military measures that would make you pay a high price."

Yet whatever these supposed plots the C.I.A. thought it had uncovered were, they had nothing to do with bin Laden. Ambassador Petterson says, "My recollection is that when I made representations about terrorist organizations Osama bin Laden did not figure. We in Khartoum were not really concerned about him."

A focus on the wrong enemy was not the only mistaken feature of U.S. intelligence on Sudan. In 1993 the U.S. Embassy sent home all nonessential staff, spouses, and children, because the C.I.A. claimed it had evidence that Americans were at risk of terrorist attack. One report even claimed that there was a plot to bomb a party for the children of Khartoum's American embassy workers. None of these threats were real. Petterson says, "There's no question there were mistaken reports." President Clinton's national-security adviser, Tony Lake, was uprooted with his family and kept under Secret Service guard at Blair House, the presidential guest quarters across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. The reason was another bogus C.I.A. claim that Sudanese agents were planning to murder him in Washington. Finally, at the beginning of 1996, just after Petterson had come to the end of his tour, the embassy was emptied of Americans altogether, again because of unspecified "security threats". His successor, Tim Carney, would somehow have to do his job based a thousand miles away, in Nairobi, Kenya. This was unjustified, Petterson says.

The veteran C.I.A. Africa specialist says that this inaccurate intelligence was the product of disinformation, fed by an organised ring whose motives were a mixture of malice and greed. All these reports cost the C.I.A. money. One of its members, a Tunisian, Ali bin Mustafa Homed, was convicted of espionage in Sudan last summer and given a 14-year jail sentence. Yahia Babiker, the Mukhabarat deputy chief, confirmed that feeding disinformation to foreign intelligence agencies formed one of the charges against Homed.

Sudan was aghast at these developments. However, the radical wing of the government, led by the philosopher Dr. al-Turabi, was losing ground to the pragmatist moderates, who wanted good relations with the West. (In 1998, al-Turabi was placed under arrest, where he remains.) So when, in February 1996, Carney began to convey America's demand that Sudan expel bin Laden, mainly because of his campaign against the Saudis, his audience was surprisingly receptive. Gutbi al-Mahdi, the former Mukhabat boss, who was then serving as the Sudanese president's senior adviser, says Sudan did not object on principle. The arguments he and his colleagues used were more practical. "We said, 'Here he is under control, and we know everything about him. Here in Sudan he is under our supervision.'" Once bin Laden was expelled, al-Mahdi adds, "he had absolutely no choice other than to become a full-time radical". About 300 Afghan Arabs went with him. According to an Egyptian intelligence source, "Most of them are now terrorists".

Bin Laden was expelled in May 1996. Despite this evidence of Sudan's willingness to cooperate, the U.S. appeared to have no interest in seeing what it could learn from Sudan. Mahdi Ibrahim Mohamed, now the information minister, went to Washington as

Sudan's ambassador in February 1996. A long-standing Americophile, he had been educated in Michigan and California: "I like the country, I like the people. I went as ambassador for three years, with a positive view that America was open, free, open for dialogue. What I found was a major surprise and disappointment." Mohammed spent three years trying to get a meeting with the State Department's assistant secretary for Africa, Susan Rice, only to find himself fobbed off on junior officials. He was no more successful in his efforts to see the National Security Council's Tony Lake, or his successor, Sandy Berger. The N.S.C. staff continued to accuse Sudan of harboring terrorists. Mohamed begged the officials to make a specific allegation, but they refused. "I said, 'Give me any information about any terrorists, any camps, as you believe it to be, and we will take it very seriously.' The response was 'Your government knows. You must know. We don't like to expose our sources.'"

Ambassador Mohamed conveyed an open offer: the C.I.A. and F.B.I. could send a joint investigative team, which could travel freely throughout the country. "I used to say, 'Go anywhere, take a plane from Khartoum and say where you want to go once we're in the air.'" It was not taken up. In February 1997, the offer was repeated in a letter from President Bashir to Clinton. Al-Bashir suggested "a mission tasked to investigate allegations that the government of Sudan trains or shelters terrorists," with "freedom of movement and contact and unrestricted choice of suspected terrorist sites." Clinton never replied.

It began to dawn on the Sudanese that one way of convincing America that they were serious about fighting terrorists was to offer U.S. investigators access to the Mukhabarat files on bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Frustrated in their efforts to invite America in through the front door, they resolved to try a back channel – the multimillionaire Pakistani-American businessman and fund manager Mansoor Ijaz. Then a big donor to the Democratic Party, Ijaz was on personal terms with Clinton, Berger, and Al Gore. He was also fearful of the likely result of U.S. refusal to engage with Islamic regimes, such as Sudan: "As an American Muslim, I had a terrifying vision of what could go wrong. I wanted to do whatever I could to stop that happening."

As an investor, Ijaz was interested in Sudan's oil, but he also shared "a fundamental sense of injustice" at the way the country was being treated. From July 1996 until August 1997, he made six trips to Khartoum, meeting Dr. al-Turabi, President al-Bashir, the Mukhabarat chief, Gutbi al-Mahdi, and other officials. He succeeded in convincing them that it was worth making a further effort to persuade the U.S. of Sudan's sincerity – partly by drawing America's attention to the intelligence on al-Qaeda. His initiative produced its most dramatic result in a letter dated April 5, 1997, from President al-Bashir to Lee H. Hamilton, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It stated, "We extend an offer to the F.B.I's Counter-terrorism units and any other official delegations which your government may deem appropriate, to come to the Sudan and work with our External Intelligence Department *in order to assess the data in our possession and help us counter the forces your government, and ours, seek to contain.*" (My italics.) According to Ijaz, Hamilton took the letter to both Madeleine

Albright and Sandy Berger, neither of whom replied.

Ijaz also wrote memorandums on his mission for Sandy Berger, and in a series of conversations he spelled out exactly what the Sudanese offer meant. He told Berger, "That phrase [in the letter to Hamilton], 'to assess the data in our possession,' was an explicit reference to the data on bin Laden. The reference to 'the forces we seek to contain' was an explicit reference to the attempt to stop al-Qaeda spreading." Ijaz and his family had shared their Christmas dinner in the White House with the Clintons. However good his access, he could not budge U.S. policy on Sudan.

The Sudanese did not give up. Beginning in the autumn of 1997, they made use of another private go-between, Janet McElligott, a lobbyist who had worked at the White House under George H. W. Bush. Like Ijaz before her, she assumed that rational statecraft would, in the end, prevail. In this she was mistaken. On February 5, 1998, her efforts helped produce perhaps the smokiest of all the smoking guns in this story: a letter direct from Gutbi al-Mahdi of the Mukhabarat to David Williams, chief of the F.B.I.'s Middle East and Africa desk. It read, "I would like to express my sincere desire to start contacts and cooperation between our service and the F.B.I. I would like to take this opportunity with pleasure to invite you to visit our country. Otherwise, we could meet somewhere else. Till then I remain, yours truly."

Eighteen days later, on February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden issued his blood-curdling fatwa from his hideout in Afghanistan, calling on all Muslims to kill Americans and Jews, adding that civilians were now to be regarded as targets. McElligott followed up the letter with a personal appeal: "I told them, 'You do realize bin Laden lived there and they have files on his main people?' There is simply no doubt the F.B.I. knew what was available. The guy I dealt with said, 'I'd give any- thing to go in there, but they – meaning the State Department – 'won't let us.'"

David Williams did not reply to al-Mahdi's letter for another four months. "Unfortunately," he wrote on June 24, "I am not currently in a position to accept your kind invitation." He hoped "future circumstances" might allow it, but for now the offer had to be rejected. Six weeks after that, bin Laden's al-Qaeda network succeeded in exploding two pick-up trucks at the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. They were reduced to piles of bloody rubble in which 224 people lay dead or dying.

There were still a few twists of this bitter farce to come. A few days after the bombings, as NBC first reported in 1999, Sudan arrested two suspects who had arrived in Khartoum from Kenya. They were carrying Pakistani passports and using the names Sayyid Nazir Abbass and Sayyid Iskandar Suliman. They had rented an apartment overlooking the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum and appeared to be reconnoitering it for a possible future attack. The material gathered between 1991 and 1996 led the Mukhabarat to believe that the two men were members of al-Qaeda; what is certain is that they had stayed in the Hilltop Hotel in Nairobi – the base used by other members of the embassy-bombings conspiracy. The Mukhabarat cabled the F.B.I. in Washington,

offering to extradite them. Without consulting the F.B.I., the U.S. Departments of State and Defense replied by bombing the al-Shifa factory in Khartoum, claiming – on the basis of what is now acknowledged to have been yet more faulty intelligence – that it was owned by bin Laden and was making VX nerve gas. In fact, al-Shifa had no connection to bin Laden. It made vaccines and medicine, and had contracts with the U.N.

U.S.-Sudan relations then reached their nadir. The Mukhabarat sent the suspects “Abbass” and “Suliman” to Pakistan, where they were promptly lost to view. Ambassador Mohamed was withdrawn from Washington. Just before his departure, Janet McElligott arranged a meeting at her home between him and a senior F.B.I. official. McElligott says the F.B.I. man expressed his deep regret for what had happened and said he hoped that in time the politicians would allow his agency to examine the Sudanese intelligence.

A few months later, in yet another attempt to induce a thaw, the Mukhabarat chief, Gutbi al-Mahdi, invited McElligott to Khartoum. He gave her a handwritten note, which she delivered to the office of the then F.B.I. director, Louis Freeh. It related the circumstances of the two suspects’ arrest and the offer to send them to America, adding, “The bombardment of the pharmaceutical factory blew up the link we established with the FBI and the cooperation that developed on the situation.” However, their interrogation had revealed “some information,” and, as McElligott reminded the F.B.I., the Mukhabarat al-Qaeda files still awaited inspection. Through McElligott, the F.B.I. tentatively suggested a meeting with al-Mahdi in Europe. Before it could take place, the State Department vetoed it.

In Sudan, the ongoing U.S. attitude produced bewilderment. “We felt it was an irrational attitude,” al-Mahdi says. “We were extending our hand to some-one who badly needed help, for our mutual benefit, and it was being rejected.” He goes on to echo the claim made by Ambassador Carney: “If [the F.B.I.] had taken up my offer in February 1998, they could have prevented the bombings. They had very little information at that time: they were shooting in the dark. Had they engaged with the Sudan, they could have stopped a lot of things.”

It is hard to conceive of a more serious allegation, and it appears to stand up to scrutiny. As late as the end of 1995, Osama bin Laden was not judged important enough by the C.I.A. or F.B.I. for anyone to mention him to Ambassador Petterson when he went to talk to the Sudanese about terrorism. It seems reasonable to infer that the U.S. knew little about his organization or lethal capability. Yet the Mukhabarat had all the main players taped. Besides bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, there was Muhammad Atef, said to be al-Qaeda’s military commander, the man who seems to have orchestrated the 1998 bombings and, reportedly, the September 11 attacks. (In November, Atef was reportedly killed in Afghanistan.) Every time Abu Ibrahim, bin Laden’s former C.E.O., visited his Khartoum home, Atef was there: Ibrahim also recalls seeing Atef with Osama in Afghanistan, by his side when he delivers his messages on TV.

How useful might the files on them have been? Sitting by the pool at the Khartoum Hilton, I asked a senior officer from Egyptian intelligence, who has worked closely with the Mukhabarat, and who asked not to be named. He said, “They knew all about them: who they were, where they came from. They had copies of their passports, their tickets; they knew where they went. Of course that information could have helped enormously. It is the history of those people.”

There are also some inescapable specifics. During the New York trial of the four men recently convicted of the 1998 bombings, the court heard a lot about a man called Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, who also appears on the most-wanted list. He set the embassy plot rolling by making two journeys to Nairobi in the spring of 1998 – from Khartoum, where, the Mukhabarat believed, he was working for al-Qaeda. If F.B.I. officials had accepted the offer made by al-Mahdi that February, they would have known this too, and at some point during his subsequent murderous odyssey, when he rented a villa in Kenya, gathered the bombers at the Hilltop Hotel, or helped stuff a pickup truck with TNT, they might have stepped in and smashed the conspiracy. The Mukhabarat also kept files on another wanted embassy bomber, the Egyptian Saif al-Adel, who also appears on the list of most wanted. He is believed to be in Afghanistan.

If the 1998 plot had been foiled, perhaps there would have been no September 11. In any event, Sudan had other intelligence that would have made al-Qaeda’s burgeoning growth less likely. Wadh al-Hage, bin Laden’s former private secretary, now serving life without parole after his conviction in New York for his role in the 1998 embassy bombings, was logged and photographed in Sudan. He is said to have moved among bin Laden cells across four continents. How much easier it might have been to cramp al-Qaeda’s style had his importance been grasped in 1996. Another subject of a Mukhabarat file is Mamdouh Mahmoud Salim, a Sudanese born to Iraqi parents, an Afghan-war veteran who worked for two bin Laden companies in Sudan until 1995. He provides a link with the New York suicide hijackers. From 1995 until 1998, he made frequent visits to Germany, where a Syrian trader, Mamoun Darkazanli, had signing powers over his bank account. Darkazanli has been reported to have procured electronic equipment for al-Qaeda. Both men attended the same Hamburg mosque as Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, who flew the two planes into the World Trade Center.

“In the end,” says the former ambassador to the U.S. Mahdi Ibrahim Mohammed, “when there is enough suspicion, nothing anyone says can convince you.” This is what Ambassador Carney’s phrase “politicized intelligence” means: the message from Sudan did not fit conventional wisdom at the State Department and the C.I.A., and so it was disregarded, again and again.

It was not until May 2000 that the Clinton administration responded to pressure from the U.S. intelligence community and agreed to send a joint F.B.I.-C.I.A. team to Sudan. Even then its mission was not to examine the Mukhabarat files but to ascertain whether Sudan was really sponsoring terror. In the summer of 2001 the team gave the country a

clean bill of health. There were no “training camps” or sanctuaries for murderers after all. Gutbi al-Mahdi, the former Mukhabarat chief, says that a few weeks before September 11 the American team finally asked to examine the Sudanese material on al-Qaeda. Events suggest that by then it was too late.

There are uncomfortable historical parallels. By the spring of 1941 the Soviet Union’s “Red Orchestra” spy ring had been warning Stalin for months that Nazi Germany was about to break its pact with the Soviet Union and invade. Convinced that Hitler remained his ally, he ignored them, so that when the Nazi troop trains began to roll, and the dive-bombers began their deadly blitzkrieg, they found themselves attacking an almost undefended country. Leopold Trepper, the spy ring’s leader, wrote an autobiography, published after 20 million Soviets had died in the Second World War: “He who closes his eyes sees nothing, even in the full light of day. ...The generalissimo preferred to trust his political instinct rather than the secret reports piled up on his desk.”

“He who closes his eyes sees nothing.” In the case of Sudan, 1996 through 2000, Madeleine Albright and her assistant secretary for Africa, Susan Rice, apparently preferred to trust their instincts that Sudan was America’s enemy, and so refused to countenance its assistance against the deepest threat to U.S. security since 1945. Ambassador Carney quoted Talleyrand, the 18th-century father of modern diplomacy. This saga was “*pire qu’un crime, c’était une betise.*” He provided his own translation. “It was worse than a crime. It was a fuckup.”

## *Appendix Two*

### **“Statement in Open Court”, Case No. HQ006869, In the High Court of Justice, Queen’s Bench Division, between Abdel Mahmoud al-Koronky and Dominic Lawson, Christina Lamb and The Sunday Telegraph Limited, 4 July 2002.**

My Lord, I appear on behalf of the Claimant, Abdel Mahmoud Al-Koronky, a Sudanese national living and working in London. He is and was at all material times employed as a Press Councillor by the government of the Republic of the Sudan, working at the Sudanese Embassy, and was the Chargé d’Affaires in London between September 1998 and April 2000. My friend appears on behalf of the Defendants, Dominic Lawson, the editor of The Sunday Telegraph, Christina Lamb, the author of the article that is the subject of these proceedings and The Sunday Telegraph Limited, the publisher of The Sunday Telegraph.

On 17 September 2000 the Defendants published an article under the heading “Sudan diplomat ‘kept slave girl in London home’”. The article was also published on the Defendant’s web site. In the article, the Defendants claimed that Zainab Nadir, said to be in the early 20’s, was in hiding in London receiving medical treatment as a result of her treatment by the Claimant and his family, having “escaped” from the Claimant’s house to seek political asylum. They also reported Ms Nadir’s claim to have been kept as a slave by the Claimant’s family since the age of 12.

All the defamatory claims in the article about which the Claimant complained were totally and utterly untrue and should never have been published. Ms Nadir was about 30 in 2000, not in her early 20’s, and had worked in Sudan between 1986 and about 1996 as a maid and then for about 4 years as a tea seller in a market in Khartoum. At no time during this period, or any other period of her life, was Ms Nadir a slave or kept as a slave by any member of the Claimant’s family.

Ms Nadir was then employed by the Claimant in London from 13 June to 8 September 2000, as domestic help to his wife. At no time during this short period of employment was Ms Nadir kept as a slave or in any way treated badly or improperly by the Claimant or his wife. Ms Nadir also did not “escape” from the Claimant’s home. In fact, from 30 July to 8 September, the Claimant and his family were in Sudan and Ms Nadir stayed with another family. She then left the Claimant’s home on 11 September.

It was also false that, after Ms Nadir left the Claimant’s home, she received any medical treatment or was in hiding as a result of anything done by the Claimant or his family.

The Claimant felt wounded to the heart by the Defendants allegations. He has an established political and intellectual record of fighting for freedom and justice. From his days at Khartoum University in Sudan and, thereafter throughout his career as a journalist and diplomat, he has written extensively and spoken out at demonstrations, lectures and in press interviews for political and civil liberties. Many of his articles have been published in the national press and elsewhere in Sudan. The Claimant has also appeared many times on Sudanese national television, on Arab television and BBC broadcasts to promote human rights.

The Defendants now acknowledge that they have greatly wronged the Claimant. They unreservedly withdraw the allegations complained of and sincerely apologise to the Claimant for the distress and gross hurt he has suffered as a result of the article. They also apologise to him for the additional distress their attempts to defend these proceedings have caused.

In addition to joining in this statement, as part of the terms of settlement the Defendants have undertaken not again to repeat the allegations complained of or any similar allegations of the Claimant, agreed to pay the Claimant a very substantial sum in compensation and his legal costs. With this, the Claimant feels that his reputation is vindicated by these proceedings in so far as possible, and he is prepared to bring them to an end.

Solicitor for the Defendants

My Lord, I confirm what my friend has said. The Defendants sincerely and unequivocally apologise to the Claimant for the publication of the article and for the distress and gross hurt it caused him. They also similarly apologise for the subsequent distress they have caused him through their attempts to defend this action.

Solicitor for the Claimant

My Lord, it only remains for me to ask for leave for the record to be withdrawn.

## *Appendix Two*

### **United States Bombing in Afghanistan**

There are two things which must be noted about the United States bombing in Afghanistan. Firstly, Washington emphasised on several occasions that it would be taking every possible care not to accidentally kill civilians.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, they have also emphasised the use of high tech weaponry. Nonetheless hundreds of civilians have died.

On 9 October 2001 American airplanes bombed the United Nations de-mining office in Kabul, killing 4 UN workers. **The Washington Post** stated that: "Pentagon briefers have emphasized their careful target selection. But 'on occasion,' Defense Secretary Rumsfeld said... 'there will be people hurt that one wished had not been. I don't think there is any way in the world to avoid that...'"<sup>2</sup> It was reported that: "After the death of four UN employees in Kabul, American target-pickers are under pressure to avoid sites close to civilian homes or other buildings. The United Nations Afghanistan coordinator for humanitarian aid Mike Sackett stated that: "People need to distinguish between combatants and those innocent civilians who do not bear arms."<sup>3</sup> On 11 October the Taliban claimed that American bombs had killed 100 people in a village near Jalalabad. A Time.com article confirmed that American warplanes had struck the village of Khrum, some 20 miles away from Jalalabad. The **Time** journalist calculated that around 100 civilians were killed, and the whole village was "razed to the ground" by mistake.<sup>4</sup> Fifteen people were said to have been killed in an attack on a mosque in Jalalabad and ten civilians east of Kabul; a hospital was bombed, killing four dead and 13 civilians died in bombing in Kandahar; on 19 October two buses carrying refugees and a hospital were hit by American bombs. A hospital in Herat was also bombed killing patients and staff, and on 30/31 October a Red Crescent hospital was also bombed in Kandahar, killing 15 civilians.<sup>5</sup> US warplanes were said to have bombed a Red Crescent hospital near Kandahar, killing 15 people and severely injuring 25 others.<sup>6</sup> The Pentagon also admitted that American warplanes had dropped a 1,000 pound bomb on an old people's home near the western Afghan city of Herat.<sup>7</sup>

The BBC reported that "US military warplanes 'inadvertently dropped bombs' on Red Cross warehouses and on a nearby residential area in the Afghan capital Kabul, the US Defence Department said on Friday. US Navy fighters and B-52 bombers mistakenly bombed six warehouses used by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), destroying vital stocks. This is the second time ICRC buildings have been hit since US air strikes began on 7 October. Two of the warehouses hit this time were struck last time around". A Red Cross spokesman stated that all Red Cross installations were clearly marked and all parties in the conflict had been told their locations: he added that the bombing took place in good visibility.<sup>8</sup>

On 22 October US warplanes bombed the village of Chowkar-Karez. The Taliban claimed that up to 100 civilians, almost the entire population of the village, were killed. A Human Rights Watch group and western journalists were able to visit the area. They were able to confirm that villagers had died in the attack. The Canadian newspaper **The Globe and Mail** reported that the bombing of the village “has become the best documented bombing of the four-week-old war. It has also become something of a touchstone in the battle for credibility, and the Pentagon’s handling of the information that has emerged has led some observers to wonder whether Washington really knows what is going on in the field...‘It begins to make you question not only the credibility of the information that’s coming back to us as members of the public but also the kind of information and intelligence that’s going into the selection of targets,’ said Sidney Jones, the director of the Asian division of Human Rights Watch...Witnessed talked to by the Western reporters claimed there were no Taliban troops in the village and that U.S. planes opened fire on people as they attempted to flee the bombs.”<sup>9</sup> **The Globe and Mail** reported that American Defence Secretary Rumsfeld “professed ignorance” about the attack, stating “I cannot deal with that particular village”. On 1 November 2001, Human Rights Watch issued a press release entitled “Pentagon Should Explain Civilian Deaths in Chowkar”. **The Times** published an account of the bombing of the village entitled: “Death Falls From Sky on Village of Innocents”, which documented bombing and strafing attacks on the village, reporting that thirty-five civilians were killed and others injured. Eighteen members of one family, five of them children, were said to have been machine-gunned by American gunships.<sup>10</sup>

On 22 October 2001, Defence Secretary Rumsfeld, denied that there was evidence that American warplanes had bombed a hospital in Herat: “We have absolutely no evidence at all that would suggest that that allegation...is correct. I’m sure it’s not.” It was alleged that over one hundred civilians had died in the attack<sup>11</sup> On 25 October the Pentagon admitted that American warplanes may well have hit the hospital in Herat with a 1,000 pound bomb.<sup>12</sup>

In an article entitled “Bombing Errors Prove Major Test for US Resolve”, **The Independent** newspaper reported on 29 October that: “There have been four separate reports of accidental US strikes on civilian targets in Afghanistan in the past 48 hours, including the bombing of a village in the area controlled by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.” One of these attacks had resulted in the deaths of seven children in their Kabul home.<sup>13</sup> Reuters reported on 26 October that seven civilians had died in American overnight bombing in Kabul.<sup>14</sup> On the same day Agence France Presse reported that American cluster bombs had killed eight civilians in the west of Afghanistan. The Taliban regime also claimed that 36 civilians had died when a bus was hit by American missiles. The ICRC stated that civilian deaths were mounting.<sup>15</sup> Reuters reported that a US bombs had killed twelve civilians in attacks in Kabul as well as other civilians in an attack on a minibus. Reuters also claimed that several villagers were killed or injured when American warplanes mistakenly bombed the Northern-alliance held village of Ghanikhel.<sup>16</sup> Four children were killed in an attack on a civilian area of Kabul.<sup>17</sup>

On 21 November, **The Daily Telegraph**, a noted pro-American British newspaper, published an article entitled “Village of Death Casts Doubts Over US Intelligence”. The article reported that American warplanes had hit the same village on two occasions, killing first seven and then four villagers, mostly women and children. A village elder asked the reporter: “Please tell the Americans they are bombing their allies...This is the third time in two days that our village has been bombed.”<sup>18</sup> **The Times** of London published a number of articles with headlines such as: “Bombing Victim Tells How US Raid Hit Village”, an attack in which it was claimed that 200 civilians had been killed<sup>19</sup>; “He is burying his wife bit by bit as he digs her out of the rubble”, reporting that a village had been hit by US bombs, killing a number of civilians, and concluding that a “horrible mistake” had been made.<sup>20</sup>

### **NATO Bombing in Kosovo**

Amnesty International stated that NATO forces had violated international law and committed war crimes by targeting and killing civilians during the Kosovo conflict. Amnesty cited nine incidents during the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia and alleged that NATO had failed to properly select methods and targets to avoid civilian deaths. An Amnesty International spokesman stated: “NATO set itself up as upholding humanitarian standards, which it has not done. [We] think they have to answer for that.” Among Amnesty’s accusations were the following accusations: NATO’s bombing of the Serbian TV headquarters, which killed 16 civilians; NATO’s bombing of a bridge while a passenger train was crossing, hitting the train and killing civilians on board; NATO’s attacks on convoys that included displaced civilians; NATO’s decision not to suspend bombing of targets even after it was clear that civilians had been hit; NATO’s bombing from 15,000 feet which was not adequate to ensure that civilians were not killed. Serbia claimed that 600 civilians had been killed in the bombings.<sup>21</sup> NATO spokesman Jamie Shea admitted mistakes were made: “We were attacking purely military targets. Where accidents occurred they occurred as a result of tragedies, failures of technology, of human error that always accompany military operations.”<sup>22</sup> The ABC news channel also provided examples of NATO bombings of civilians. These included the 12 April 2000 bombing of a passenger train south of Belgrade which killed 30 people (NATO apologised for an “uncanny accident”); a 14 April bombing of a convoy of ethnic Albanian civilians which killed 64 people; a 27 April 2000 bombing of a housing estate which killed 20 civilians; 1 May 2000 bombing of a bus which killed 39 people; a 3 May 2000 bombing of a bus, killing 20 civilians; the 7 May bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in which three Chinese journalists were killed; the 13 May bombing of the Kosovo village of Korisa which resulted in the deaths of 87 ethnic Albania civilians (NATO accused the Serbians of using villagers as human shields); a 20 May 2000 bombing of a hospital in Belgrade which killed several patients and injured others (the residences of the Spanish and Swedish ambassadors were also hit); a 30 May 2000 air attack on a crowded bridge in central Serbia, killing nine civilians and injuring 17 others. There were many other mistakes.<sup>23</sup> On 20 April 2000 the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, Mrs Mary Robinson, criticised NATO for killing “large

numbers of civilians”. On 28 April 2000, NATO airplanes bombed Bulgaria by mistake for the third time. On 1 June NATO aircraft bombed Albania by mistake.

- <sup>1</sup> See, for example, “Smart Bombs can be Stupid”, **The Times** (London), 25 October 2001.
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- <sup>3</sup> “Bombings That Hit Wrong Targets in Afghanistan”, News Article by Reuters, 23 October 2001.
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- <sup>5</sup> Special Reports, “Attack on Afghanistan: US Response”, **The Guardian** Interactive Guide at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/subsection/0,1361,567573,00.html>
- <sup>6</sup> “Afghan Hospital Strike ‘Kills 15’”, News Article by Associated Press, 31 October 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> See “Pentagon Admits US Jets Bombed Old People’s Home in Afghan City”, **The Independent** (London), 24 October 2001.
- <sup>8</sup> “US Admits Second Bombing Error”, News Article by BBC, 27 October 2001.
- <sup>9</sup> “Bombing of Farming Village Undermines U.S. Credibility”, **The Globe and Mail** (Toronto), 3 November 2001.
- <sup>10</sup> “Death Falls From Sky on Village of Innocents”, **The Times** (London), 2 November 2001.
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- <sup>20</sup> “He is burying his wife bit by bit as he digs her out of the rubble”, **The Times** (London), 15 October 2001.
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- <sup>22</sup> “Harsh Allegations: NATO Denies it Committed War Crimes in Kosovo Conflict”, News Article by ABC News, 7 June 2000.
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