

Why Sudan rejects UN troops

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U.S. efforts at re-establishing occupation and colonial domination suffered a new setback on Sept. 4. The government of Sudan refused to allow United Nations forces to be stationed in its western region of Darfur.

On Sept. 1, the U.S. and Britain had rammed Resolution 1701 through the UN Security Council. It called for sending more than 20,000 UN troops to Sudan to take over from 7,000 African Union forces.

Presidential adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail responded that the Sudanese government rejected the transition from African Union forces, which it had accepted, to a larger UN presence, because the goal of the UN mandate is "regime change." (Reuters, Sept. 4)

The U.S. has maintained that it is essential that UN forces replace the African Union troops because the latter are underfunded, understaffed and under-equipped for the "peacekeeping" role they were assigned to play. However, it is NATO, dominated by the U.S., which was supposed to provide logistics, airlifts, equipment and supplies for the African Union force.

Russia, China and Qatar abstained from the UN Security Council vote and criticized it, although neither China nor Russia exercised their veto. The resolution does stipulate that the deployment would take place "on the basis of the acceptance of the [Sudanese] government." A campaign of international pressure to force Sudan to accept outside forces is being organized by the U.S.

Sudan has good reason to be suspicious of any resolution pushed by the U.S. and Britain. Britain is the brutal former colonial ruler of Sudan. It has always opposed sovereignty for Sudan.

As for Washington, regime change—the overthrow of the government—in Sudan has been on the agendas of both the Republican and Democratic parties. U.S. sanctions and bars to investment, trade, credits and loans have been in place for more than a decade. In 1998, during the Clinton administration, 17 U.S. cruise missiles destroyed the El Shifa paramedical plant, Sudan's major source of desperately needed basic medicines.

Sudan is well aware of how the U.S. used a 1990 UN resolution to justify bombing attacks that destroyed Iraq's infrastructure. The 13 years of UN sanctions on Iraq, which Washington had demanded, resulted in the deaths of more than 1.5 million Iraqis.

The U.S. has occupied South Korea for more than 50 years under a UN Security Council resolution. More than 4 million Koreans died in the 1950-53 Korean War, which was fought under a UN flag. UN forces in Yugoslavia, Congo and Haiti have been a cover for U.S. and

European intervention and occupation. They have never been a force for peace or reconciliation.

Despite the wording of the UN resolution, senior U.S. State Department officials have insisted that the text of the resolution allows UN troops to move into Darfur, even without Sudan's agreement. But diplomats concede it is unlikely that other countries would contribute troops to a mission the Sudanese government opposes. Sudan has vowed to attack any forces that enter the country uninvited. (French Press Agency [AFP], Sept. 1)

Every country in the UN knows the Pentagon has the ability to land forces anywhere on the planet. They know that using overwhelming firepower and "shock and awe" tactics it can occupy a country. But the whole world also knows that in Iraq, Afghanistan and now Lebanon, determined grassroots resistance cannot be so easily overcome.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa—as big as all of Western Europe. The western region of Darfur is larger than Iraq. If 150,000 U.S. troops cannot subdue Iraq, 20,000 UN troops in Darfur could face sustained opposition in a region known for its long anti-colonial sentiment.

Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Taha vowed his country would maintain its opposition to a UN force for Darfur and hailed Hezbollah as a model of resistance. "We have options and plans for confronting the international intervention," he said. (AFP, Sept. 1)

The 'Save Darfur' campaign

The international campaign to pressure Sudan has among its sponsors the very political forces who were the strongest supporters of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

A well-funded rally to "Save Darfur" is being organized for Sept. 17 in New York's Central Park to demand that UN forces be sent to Sudan. The rally will feature celebrities, headline music groups and major U.S. politicians—both Republicans and Democrats.

The rally is a conscious attempt to divide the movement against the U.S. war in Iraq, further demonize Arab and Muslim people, and to try to sell a new war as a humanitarian effort.

Some of the groups expressing great concern for refugees in Darfur were silent or were active supporters of the Israeli bombing of Lebanon that created over 1 million refugees. They were among the strongest supporters of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. President George W. Bush met with Save Darfur Campaign organizers at the White House and praised their efforts.

Although the Save Darfur Campaign lists many religious and civil rights endorsers, the campaign is an initiative of the most right-wing evangelical Christians and major Zionist organizations.

The Jerusalem Post of April 27, in an article entitled "U.S. Jews Leading Darfur Rally Planning," described the role of prominent Zionist organizations in a similar "Save Darfur" rally in Washington, D.C., on April 30.

The National Association of Evangelicals, the World Evangelical Alliance and other religious groups that strongly support Bush are the other major force in the coalition for Darfur.

The claim of genocide in Darfur was first raised by Gen. Colin Powell in 2004, when he was secretary of state. Sudan was on the U.S. hit list for “regime change” during both the Clinton and Bush administrations.

Despite crass efforts by the corporate media to simplify the conflict as a struggle of Arab “Janjaweed” invaders against African peoples, it is important to know that all the contending groups are African, all are indigenous or local to region, and all the contending groups are Sunni Muslim. Arabic is the common language, along with hundreds of local dialects. Sudan has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world. Over 400 ethnic groups have their own language or dialect.

A famine is raging in the area due to a decade-long drought across Northern Africa. The struggle for scarce water supplies has pitted subsistence peasant farmers against subsistence nomadic herders.

There’s one topic that all the forces claiming concern for the people of Sudan never mention: the role of imperialism in keeping Sudan poor and underdeveloped. Sudan has vast resources and mineral wealth. Washington’s policy toward Sudan has revolved around inflaming national and regional antagonisms in both the south and the west so U.S. corporations could take control of developing the rich oil, gold, uranium and copper deposits that could make Sudan prosperous.

The U.S. government may have secured a UN resolution in its latest attempt to bully Sudan. But the real problem is that the U.S. empire is overextended and unable to succeed in any of the wars it has unleashed to dominate the globe.

Bush’s use of the bigoted term “Islamofascism” and his declaration of an endless World War III against countries struggling to defend their national sovereignty has met resistance from Iraq to Afghanistan to Lebanon. His new threats against Syria, Iran, Somalia and Sudan will make more countries think twice before signing on to be boots on the ground for U.S. corporate domination.

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