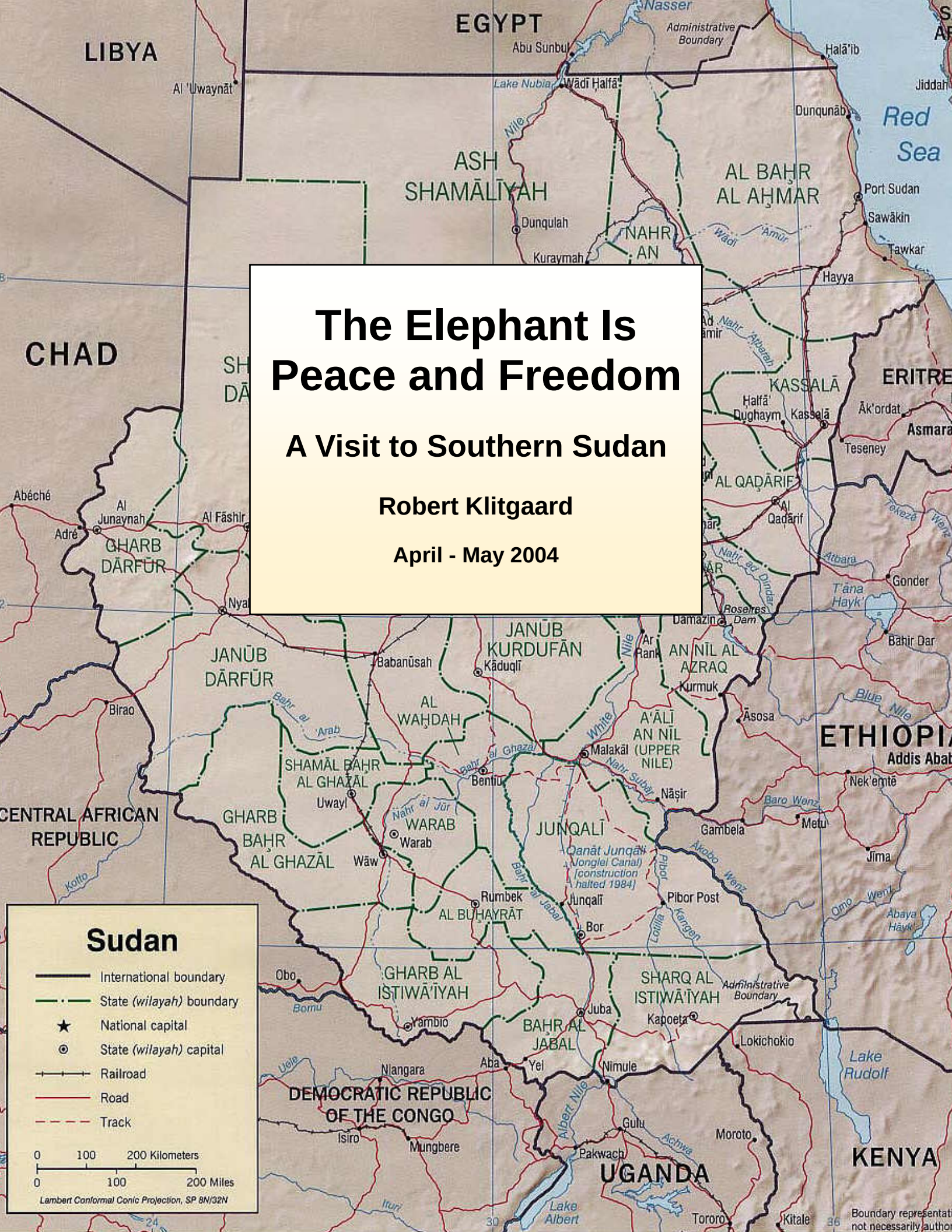

The Elephant Is Peace and Freedom

A Visit to Southern Sudan

Robert Klitgaard

April - May 2004

Apology

How do we know what's going on in a place like Southern Sudan?

George Bernard Shaw once talked about a similar problem: how could anyone in Britain in 1921 know what was going on in Egypt?

"We receive extremely conflicting accounts," he noted. "We receive official accounts, we receive popular accounts, and we receive, rather more rarely, accounts from the people who really know… If you want to know anything about Egypt, the only means you have of knowing anything about Egypt, or Ireland, is to read the newspapers…"

But Shaw thought newspapers had become almost worthless sources of information. He lamented the replacement of serious papers by those that "gave you little bits of news about an 'Accident to a Cyclist at Clapham,' police intelligence, news and scraps, and things of that sort… about the 'Actress who Poisoned Herself with Cocaine,' and about the 'deliriously joyful life lived by the adventurous young gentleman who purchased the cocaine for her'…"

> So, I think, if we want really to find out something about Egypt—and, as I say, the official sources are somewhat biased, there is a conflict of opinion—the only thing to do is what some of us on this platform are going to do—go out and see for ourselves. [*Loud applause.*]
>
> It is very important, you know, because you must remember that it is no use going to a man who lives in Egypt. He never knows anything about it. [*Laughter.*] To refer once more to Palmerston, Palmerston said a very true thing; he said, "If you want to be thoroughly misled on a subject, go and consult the man who has lived there for twenty years and speaks the language like a native." [*Renewed laughter.*] You really want to have a stranger who knows nothing about it, and you want to get the sort of impression that he gets in the first week… You must have men who come fresh to it…[1]

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[1] George Bernard Shaw, "British Democracy and Egypt," opening remarks as Chairman of a Public Meeting under the auspices of the Egypt Parliamentary Committee at Mortimer Halls, London, 12 September 1921; reprinted in *Platform and Pulpit*, ed. Dan H. Laurence. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961, pp. 165-7

Transplanting Shaw's insight to 2004 and Sudan, I suppose the hope in sharing notes like these is that someone "coming fresh to it" may get some "sort of impression" that adds value. That said, after only a couple of weeks in the region I confess I don't pretend to know what's going on in Southern Sudan.

Most photographs on full pages and some in the text are from the camera of Tom Epley. Others photos and the maps have been downloaded from the web. I should add that these notes have been prepared on nights and weekends and are not an official product of RAND or of the U.S. government, which sponsored my visit. The views and impressions are all too tentative and subjective to lay them on anyone else.

Robert Klitgaard, June 2004

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An Invitation

It's about a week into my visit to Southern Sudan, and I'm in a village called Lueri in the Nuba Mountains. It's four thirty in the afternoon, and before the acting governor's dinner guests arrive, there is a welcome moment for reflection.

I'm writing down questions like "What do they want? Given the twenty-one years of war, their education, and their land, what's the most they could have, say in fifteen years? What models of governance can they follow?" when my traveling companion Tom Epley comes over and says that about seventy-five feet to the left, you can stand and the valley forms a kind of natural amphitheater of sound. He's right. I move my chair to the shade near that spot and spend about an hour watching and listening to village life. (By doing so, I can evade for now the questions I just wrote.)

Imagine you're by my side. The freaky acoustics enable you to hear many things at once, as if they were close by. On the left, you can hear two men arguing. Below, children are laughing. Straight ahead, from pretty far away, you hear a hubbub that sounds like many people talking at once. There is

music from that way, as well. From a group of men walking by, you hear animated conversation and laughter. And throughout, you are bombarded with animal sounds. The ever-present insect zzzzz. A cock-a-doodle-doo or two. A donkey's urgent blast and then his gasping eee-ooor-eee-ooor. The bleating of goats. The songs of birds. Chickens clucking and dogs barking. All these sounds bounce around the valley and end up just where you're sitting.

The view of the amphitheatre in front of you is notable for the terraces that ascend through rocks and trees to the tops of the hills maybe a thousand feet above. The leaves are green on the trees and on many of the bushes, even though the land is so dry with parched grasses and dusty brown soil. Two small fires are burning, as people prepare some terraces for planting after the rains. The festive hubbub is coming from one large compound. I examine it with my binoculars. Maybe twenty people are there dressed up; the compound has two big green plastic sheets hanging for some reason. Later I learn this is the house of an important lieutenant colonel, that the event is probably a wedding.

The hillsides are dotted with compounds of two or three huts and a thatch fence. The thatch on the roofs of the huts changes color with age, ranging from the yellow of new straw to the usual color of weathered dun brown. One compound at the top left of your view is all new yellow straw, including the walls and the fences—most walls are of brick or stone. I think of the Big Bad Wolf huffing and puffing and blowing the house down, and this reminds me of six-year-old Kristen at home, and then of the rest of the family I miss so much.

Kristen

During the next 45 minutes or so you can see on the narrow dirt road below:

- a woman carrying water on her head,
- four men with bags on their heads,

- five young men and two young boys laughing together as they stroll along
- a man with a satchel,
- and many more women walking erect bearing on their heads bags or containers of water. Some are wearing work clothes; others sport bright-colored, wraparound dresses.

If you turn your head to the left, you can see a higher hillock than where you're sitting. It is framed by a steep mountainside of charcoal-and-ash-colored cliffs and boulders. There is a compound on this hillock. A man sits on a wall there, buttocks by heels. He has been perched there just as long as you have. He is gazing out on the same scene, seemingly as absorbed as you are in the sounds and motion of village life.

How This Trip Began

On January 5, 2004, Allan Reed wrote me an email. Here is an excerpt:

> It was good seeing you in Washington at the USAID Africa Bureau Mission Directors' conference in October, and while I enjoyed the chance of speaking with you about the Zambian anti-corruption campaign, I would like to propose your involvement in a different challenge in Sudan.
>
> I'm ensconced in my new position as USAID Representative to Sudan and Director of the Sudan Field Office (equivalent to a USAID Mission if we were actually in Sudan), currently based in Nairobi. As there is significant progress in the peace negotiations between the GOS [the government in the north, capital Khartoum, heavily Arab and Islamic] and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) [located in the south, all Black, heavily Christian], an agreement to end the war is imminent, based on the Machakos Protocol signed in 2002 which recognized the right of Southern Sudanese to self-determination in a referendum, allowing the choice of remaining part of Sudan or opting for independence, to be held six years after the peace agreement is signed. The six-year interim period will see the establishment of a Government of Southern Sudan and one of the major challenges we would like to assist with is the transition of the SPLM to the new GOSS [Government of Southern Sudan]. This current conflict has raged on for over 20 years, and was preceded by an 11 year interim of peace which temporarily ended the first civil war that had gone on for 17 years prior to that. Since

> 1983, the SPLM has waged a liberation struggle that has reached the threshold of a negotiated settlement. They now face the daunting task of becoming a legitimate government, with all the issues of capacity building, public administration, and democratic governance that entails.
>
> There is international support for the peace process and the reconstruction that will then take place. In preparation for a donor conference to be held as early as March this year, assuming the peace agreement is signed, the World Bank and the UN will field Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs) with both North (which was also affected by the war) and South Sudan in seven technical areas to assess the scope of needs, from late January to early March. Donors will participate in these assessments, and USAID will play a significant role. One of the technical areas is Governance, which will have to address issues of accountability and corruption to be effective.
>
> The leadership of the SPLM is committed to accountable government and wants to put measures in place which will prevent corruption from taking root. This will be a challenge because the nature of the liberation movement sometimes sidestepped accountability issues in the fog of war.
>
> I'm asking you if you would be interested in bringing your recognized expertise on these serious issues to bear in the JAM process. This is a rare opportunity to help the Southern Sudanese to "get it right" as they grapple with a huge role reversal.

But then the peace process stalled, and the Joint Assessment Missions were postponed. Allan and I started communicating via email about other kinds of contributions I might be able to make, perhaps in a two-week visit beginning in late April. On February 23 he wrote:

> We would be interested in you presenting to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Leadership Council something on the order of what you had sent us as an example of your work with East Timor on governance and accountability issues, but tailored to the risks and opportunities that the Sudanese face in their momentous transition. There would also be sessions with appropriate fledgling GOSS ministries who may have to hold on tight for the roller coaster ride that will be presented as they face organizational challenges, incredible anticipated demands, and resource flows from oil revenues that, during the 6-month pre-interim period may reach an estimated $500 million, exponentially

more than they ever dreamed of managing.

We would also be very interested in session(s) with the USAID Sudan Field Office to sensitize us to how to manage our USG resources ($200 million+ this fiscal year, maybe $400 million + next fiscal year) in the way that will do "no harm" as we try to support the Sudanese. I also believe that there will be other donor partners keenly interested in this same issue.

What sort of place is Southern Sudan? The area of Southern Sudan is larger than Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi combined. Population estimates run from seven and a half million to twelve million, I suppose depending on how one counts about four million refugees. Because the war has killed off so many men, over sixty percent of the population is female. The enrollment rate in schools of about twenty percent of the age group is said to be the lowest in the world. A girl born in Southern Sudan is more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than she is to complete primary school: one in nine women die in pregnancy or childbirth while only one in a hundred girls finishes primary school. Something like eighty percent of the people say they have never received "hygiene/sanitation awareness or health education messages"—presumably that ugly phrase is not indigenous. Only 30 percent

have clean water. The bottom line: "Despite the discovery of large reserves of oil in New Sudan which has so far been exclusively exploited by the North, New Sudan continues to be arguably the least developed inhabited area of the world."[2]

But the potential is exciting. As the SPLM puts it, "The New Sudan is endowed with fertile agricultural land, livestock, natural and plantation forests (about 80,000 hectares are covered by teak), fisheries, water, wildlife and minerals, including fossil oil and gold."[3] When peace arrives—or should I say, if it arrives—foreign aid will flow. If Southern Sudan can then create a viable, effective government, the hope is that one of the most backward and battered places on the planet can move ahead.

And so I said yes to Allan Reed. Tom Epley also said yes. Tom is one of America's premier "turnaround artists." He has taken over the reins of a dozen companies in trouble and led them back from the brink. He has recently completed a book-length manuscript called "Rescue Inc." It describes the lessons he's learned along the way.

On January 24, at a birthday party in a club in Westwood, I was telling Tom and his wife Linnae about the invitation to Sudan. They were fascinated. And so I said, "Tom, you say you've finished with this part of your life, where you've been turning around companies. Now, what about turning around countries? Why don't you come along with me to Sudan?"

Tom later joked that he answered "yes" before I finished the last question.

A few days later he changed his mind, after his daughter Kirstin Chickering, a public health specialist, lectured him about all the diseases in Sudan. (And she's right: see the excerpt below from AP story dated February 3, 2004.) But later in February, Tom changed his mind once again and said he was in. I wrote to Allan Reed, telling him that Tom would pay his own way if he could come along. Allan was delighted with the idea. He said that Tom's private-sector perspective is badly needed in Sudan.

And so it is that Tom and I meet in the departure lounge at Los Angeles International Airport on Friday afternoon, April 23, ready for our flight to

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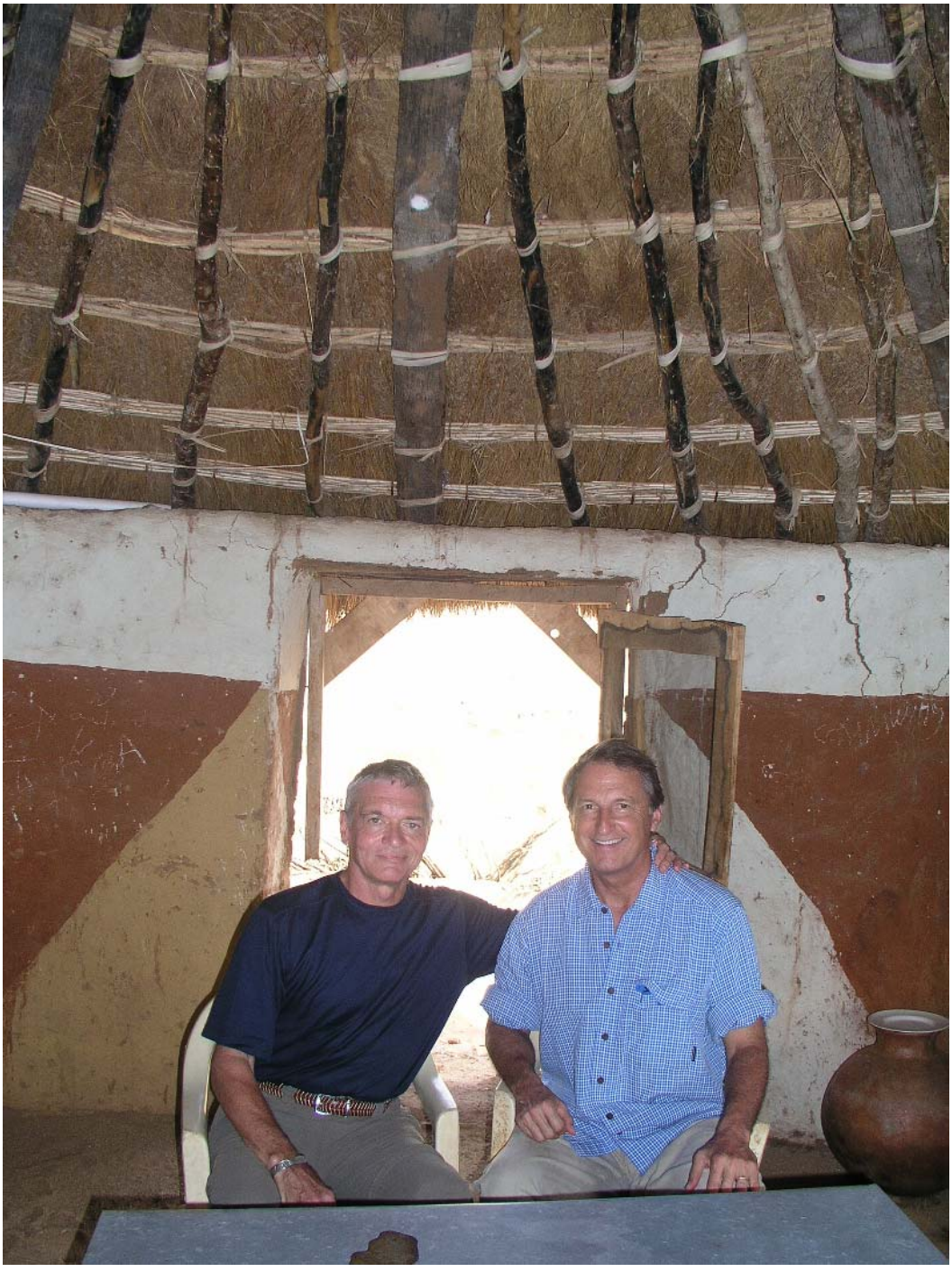
[2] Fion de Vletter, "Credit Strategies for Harnessing the Economic Potential of Returned Refugees and IDPs in South Sudan," draft report, April 2004, p. 16.

[3] *Peace Through Development: Perspectives and Prospects in the Sudan*, published by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, February 2000, p. 1.

London, and then on to Nairobi—eventual destination, Southern Sudan.

Tom Epley and Bob Klitgaard in the acting governor's hut, Nuba Mountains



Sudan: A Hotbed of Exotic Diseases

RUMBEK, Sudan, Feb. 3, 2004

(AP) It sounds like a place stricken by a biblical plague - disease after unimaginable disease, all come to rest in one pitiful region of a vast African country.

Worms oozing out of people's feet; two kinds of flies whose bites cause death in bizarre ways; a baffling syndrome that throws children into seizures and retards their development before it ultimately kills them.

While some of these devastating diseases can be found scattered around the world's poorest places, it is only in southern Sudan that they are all seen together in one country at the same time.

"This really is the forgotten front line when it comes to health," said Francois Decaillet, a public health specialist at the World Bank who has 20 years of experience in Africa.

Southern Sudan is one of the poorest and most neglected areas on Earth, with possibly the worst health situation in the world.

There is, in essence, no health care system; humanitarian groups provide nearly all the doctors and medicine. There are a total of three surgeons serving southern Sudan, which covers 80,000 square miles - 1½ times the size of Iraq. There are three proper hospitals, and in some areas there is just one doctor for about 500,000 people. Experts estimate between 6 million and 8 million people live in the region.

Situated in northeast Africa, just south of Egypt, Sudan is the largest country on the continent. It has been in and out of civil war since 1955, and while northern Sudan is about as developed as its neighbors, the south has been ignored and, even by African standards, is unusually underdeveloped…

Malaria, diarrhea, malnutrition and respiratory infections are the biggest killers here - as in most of Africa. But what's unique is that southern Sudan has the double burden of those illnesses as well as a number of ghastly tropical diseases that have been stamped out in most of the world.

The area is a hotbed of exotic diseases, from the feared Ebola virus, which was first identified here and in Zaire, to nodding syndrome, a newly discovered life-threatening condition that attacks children and appears to be unique to southern Sudan...

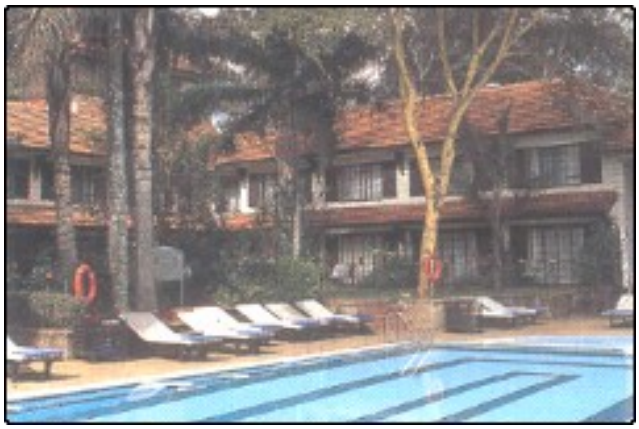
EXOTIC DISEASES OF SOUTHERN SUDAN

While malaria, diarrhea, malnutrition and respiratory infections are biggest killers in southern Sudan - as in most of Africa - the area also has unusual concentration of diseases that are rare or nonexistent elsewhere:

- **RIVER BLINDNESS**: Caused by parasite that invades body, producing severe itching, skin lesions, swelling and often blindness and genital elephantiasis. World's second leading infectious cause of blindness; afflicts about 18 million people, mostly in Africa.
- **NODDING SYNDROME**: Relatively new and baffling illness that attacks children, causing convulsions, stunted growth, mental retardation. So far only in southern Sudan. Cause unknown and can be fatal. About 300 cases recorded last two years.
- **GUINEA WORM DISEASE**: Contracted by drinking water contaminated with fleas, which carry worm larvae. Worm emerges from body year later through painful blister in skin, causing long-term suffering and sometimes crippling aftereffects. No treatment, but infection can be avoided with mesh water filter. Afflicts about 75,000 people, most in southern Sudan.
- **SLEEPING SICKNESS**: Fatal disease caused by protozoan, spread by tsetse flies. Symptoms include fever, joint pain, itching, confusion, uncontrollable sleeping, coma and death. Treatable if caught early, but most victims die before being diagnosed. In 1999, estimated 450,000 people stricken. In certain villages of Sudan, 20 percent-50 percent infected.
- **VISCERAL LEISHMANIASIS**: Most severe form of leishmaniasis, disease known since ancient times. Almost always fatal if untreated. Caused by parasite spread by sand flies. Characterized by irregular bouts of fever, substantial weight loss, swelling of spleen and liver, anemia. Of 500,000 new cases each year, 90 percent in Sudan, Bangladesh, Brazil and India.
- **BURULI ULCER**: Bacterial infection from family of bacteria that causes tuberculosis and leprosy. True prevalence unknown and mode of transmission unclear. Starts as painless swelling in skin and causes severely deforming ulcers, mostly on limbs. Complications include loss of organs such as eye and breast; amputation of limbs and other permanent disabilities. Antibiotics don't seem to work, so ulcers cut out.

Sunday, April 25

Tom and I arrive in Nairobi at six in the morning, after two overnight flights. A hotel minivan takes us to a Holiday Inn laid out like a ranch resort. Two stories high, paths through the garden with awnings overhead to protect from sun or rain, swimming pool, and an indoor-outdoor restaurant. The hotel has lots of dark wood, and so echoes a colonial time. The rooms are not fully international in standard, but the hot shower is welcome nonetheless.



At eleven, we meet Allan Reed, Brian D'Silva, the USAID person deputed by the National Security Council to help the negotiations between the Government of Sudan in the north and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement in the south, and Cheryl Anderson, number two in the USAID office for Sudan.

They lay out our trip for us.

After a night in Lokichoggio in northern Kenya, we'll fly the next day to Yei, a commercial center in Western Equatoria in Sudan, near the borders of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The next day we'll go to Rumbek, where we'll look at a project to improve the courts. Then we'll fly to the Nuba Mountains, in the middle of Sudan. We'll spend three days and two nights in this "transition area" that is technically in the north but has many groups loyal to the south. This is the frontline of peace, where the peace is said to be fairly well maintained since the signing of the truce in 2002.

Then we'll fly back to Rumbek to prepare for a two-day workshop on good governance and anti-corruption. A week from Wednesday, we'll return to Nairobi. On Thursday, we'll have a one-day workshop in Naivasha with the Southern Sudanese leaders negotiating the peace. Then on Friday, a workshop with the donors.

After this overview, Allan, Cheryl, Tom, and I are driven to Lake Naivasha for lunch. It's a ninety-minute trip in a bulletproof sport-utility vehicle. We

pass miles of fertile country with farms and hedges and trees and hills. It's a high plateau so even though we're close to the equator, the weather is temperate.

En route we pass a point over nine thousand feet high; Nairobi itself is at about six thousand feet. Arriving at the edge of the Rift Valley affords a spectacular vista down onto clouds and the green floor below. It begins to rain, hard. We descend to the valley and make our way through the rain to a lakeside resort. The peace talks between the GOS and the SPLM have been taking place nearby. A treaty was supposed to be signed in December, but the process is dragging to the point that no one knows when it will be completed. Today the Vice President of GOS is returning to Kenya from Khartoum, where he's been consulting with the President; this is apparently good news.

We have lunch with three members of the SPLM leadership council, who are involved in the negotiations. Governor Deng Alor, of Bahr el Ghazal Province, is a slender 6'6" and looks young, maybe forty. Governor (and Commander) Malek Agar Ayre, of Southern Blue Nile Province, is about 6'2" and as boulder-like as a defensive tackle. When Chairman John Garang is absent, he is the SPLM's chief negotiator. Commander Pagan (accent on the second syllable) Amom is about 5'8" and on the squat side. With all their diversity in body types, the three men have in common the very dark skin of Southern Sudanese.

After the courtesies, Deng grills me about good governance. What can be done about corruption? Has any African country ever made progress against corruption? What are the principles behind successful efforts? He comments on my answers, apparently approvingly.

Then Pagan offers a trenchant analysis of soon-to-be-faced risks. "We are poised for a disaster," he says. "We will have a new government with no experience at governing. Our institutions are weak or absent. There will be high expectations. Hundreds of millions of dollars of oil money will be coming our way, as well as inflows of foreign aid. It's a recipe for corruption."

The other two chime in, often brilliantly. Malek emphasizes the importance of institutions to provide law and order, even before some of the development efforts. Deng talks about corruption in procurement. Pagan points out that the private sector is often the driver of corruption—what to do about that?

At one point Deng says, "We have a chance to do something remarkable here, to make something new. This isn't about getting power, it's about changing things."

"One hundred and eighty degrees," Malek adds.

We leave delighted by their suspiciousness of authority, analytical acuteness, and passion to help their people. On the rainy drive home I doze between snatches of conversation.

Monday, April 26

In the morning we get "visas" for Southern Sudan and attend a meeting at USAID. Then Allan, Tom, and I go with Jim Walsh of USAID on a minivan trip to the airport. For security, the cargo area of the minivan is caged on the front and sides. This is useful, unless of course for some reason the back door of the minivan will not open. This is precisely what happens at the airport. Our flight departs in half an hour. The driver and three other men try to open the back door. Screwdrivers and crowbars are produced. There is prodding and shaking, kicking and banging; then unscrewing and unbolting; then more prodding and banging. Jim goes inside to get boarding passes. Finally, the door opens, and we scurry inside, making the plane by minutes.

To Lokichoggio

Flying from Nairobi to Loki you pass some remarkable scenery. It's a little after noon, and the sky is vast. Looking down, you see small puffs of clouds,

leaving small puffs of shadow on the empty land below. As your eyes move west, the puffs get larger and larger, an escalating family of clouds—and on the horizon, there is a giant thunderhead, bright white on one side, ominous gray-black on the other. It has been raining these past weeks, and so the ground is green. Far below, bushes and trees appear in clumps, interspersed with capillaries of darker green where streams have run in the rain. The dirt is reddish tan, and so the effect with the green is a rich but seemingly fragile tapestry. You see no dwellings, no roads—just vast spaces of what must be during the dry season nomadic countryside.

The land gets less friendly as you approach Loki. It is drier, and there is less vegetation. To the north of Loki, escarpments loom. Tom says that one of them resembles a scene where the Lion King stands on top of the cliff looking out on his domain. As you land you see a town of perhaps ten thousand people spilled out on the flat, bushy, sandy land. Beehive huts are closely packed, looking from the air like bumps on ostrich skin. Tin roofed buildings abut the dirt roads. The small airport at Loki is an artifact of the relief work to Southern Sudan, which began about 1990. White cargo planes with UN and Red Cross markings dominate the airfield, as well as small charter planes. Huge tents are warehouses for food and other supplies. Barbed wire and razor wire protect the perimeter, where you also see the remnants of wooden pallets in jumbled piles.

As we deplane on the airstrip, there is a nice breeze, which is welcome for two reasons. It is hot, and the flies are out.

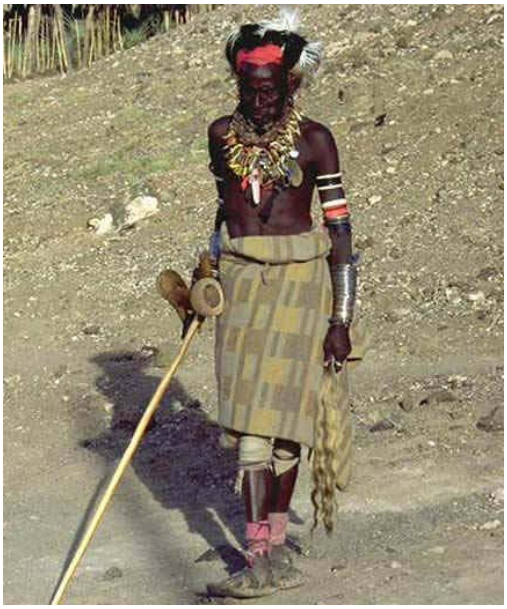
We drive into town. Alongside the roads are shabby stalls with titles like Lucky Lady Beauty and Messengers of the Holy Ghost Mission. The Turkana people live in this region. They are tall and black and thin shouldered. The women shave their heads except for a kind of African Mohawk. Their necks are covered with a dozen or more rigid necklaces, starting at the collarbone and moving up in smaller and smaller diameters to below the chin. The effect is a conical, colorful turtleneck of beads. One of the women has dyed her shaved head a kind of brick red color. The men are also exotic to the extreme. One of them has shaved most of his head except for a patch in the front. He carries a staff and wears a reddish robe.

We proceed to our hotel. There are round concrete huts with individual beds, a toilet, and a cold shower (meaning lukewarm in this climate). The bed has a mosquito net. Two fans, one overhead and a small rotating one at

the end of the bed, keep the air moving as I take a half hour's nap.

Security in Southern Sudan

At five o'clock we go across town to a security briefing at the large United Nations compound. If you want to ride into Sudan in a UN plane, you have to go to the security briefing the day before. Tomorrow we're going on a small charter plane, but we want to hear the briefing anyway.



Sudan has been in the news not only for the negotiations with the SPLM but also for a horrible crisis in western Sudan, in the region of Darfur.

Mukesh Kapila, the United Nations

> humanitarian coordinator in Darfur, Sudan, cannot be emphatic enough. He tells a seminar at the Overseas Development Institute in London last Wednesday that what he witnessed in Darfur (located in the western portion of Sudan) was worse than any humanitarian crisis he has seen, with the sole exception of Rwanda—and that includes Kosovo and East Timor. It is not just another crisis, he says, but "the worst humanitarian and human-rights catastrophe in the world."
>
> …The smug protestations of [northern] Sudanese officials notwithstanding, perhaps a million people have been uprooted and seen their villages razed. One hundred thousand have made it to neighboring Chad; about 10,000 have been killed. The rest could die from famine, as they will not be able to plant crops before the rainy season begins in May. Thousands have been raped. The U.N. calls these numbers "conservative." Along with human rights groups, it has documented that these are not the actions of rogue forces, but of militias with clear links to the Khartoum government. An independent filmmaker who snuck into Darfur tells the crowd at the London seminar that he has footage of Sudanese air force planes attacking Darfurian civilians...[4]

Fortunately, we're not going anywhere near Darfur. Tom has told his wife that Sudan is as big as the United States east of the Mississippi, and the trouble in Darfur is in Indiana while we'll be traveling in the Deep South.

The UN area is walled off and has several checkpoints. But the security is not impressive. You're supposed to exchange your passport for a visitor's badge, but I left mine in my room and they still provide a pass, and no one checks my satchel.

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[4] Robert Lane Greene, "Quietism," *The New Republic* online, posted May 11, 2004. http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?pt=cr5ijUOXpZyyUALwc%2FJBf0%3D%3D

Inside the compound's walls are the quarters of the United Nations and affiliated agencies, and also the buildings of UN-approved non-government organizations such as CARE and Save the Children. The UN helps these NGOs if their members get into trouble. For example, their staff can be evacuated by UN planes. In return, these NGOs agree to remain neutral and not to provide relief in areas that the government of Sudan (GOS) doesn't

permit. Some NGOs are unwilling to comply, as they know that some of the greatest needs are outside the GOS-approved areas, where there is conflict. The unwilling NGOs cannot have their offices and dwellings inside the boundaries of the UN compound. (Among these non-complying NGOs is Samaritan's Purse, which is led by Billy Graham's son Franklin. We'll be staying in the camp of Samaritan's Purse when we go to the Nuba Mountains next week.)

We make our way across the compound and arrive in the briefing room at five minutes to five. It is packed. About forty-five people, half of them Africans, sit and stand around the room. The walls are covered with maps. Many of them are custom maps—such as ethnic groups in the southern Nile area—and look very professional.

An African man about forty years old gives the security briefing. We later

learn he is from Zimbabwe and works for the UN. He wears a white golf shirt and gold rim glasses. He launches into a PowerPoint presentation.

He shows maps of the various regions of Southern Sudan, beginning in the southeast and moving clockwise. Each map contains circles in different colors, representing levels of risk; but he also refers to numerical levels of risk. Most people in the room have been to this sort of briefing many times before, so they understand the colors and levels.

The tour contains details such as these. "In Western Equatoria, it's all blues. See, over here? But another area is level four, a possible ethnic conflict over a revenge killing."

Later in the tour, the Western Upper Nile has four red circles, three of them level four. "And here is our real problem," he says, pointing to a red circle. "Shilluk Kingdom. Movement of militia there, maybe fifty thousand Sudanese displaced and needing support. These people are stuck between the Nuer and the GOS positions."

And so it goes, with only a few areas escaping unscathed. In almost every province there are GOS soldiers controlling certain areas and the SPLA controlling others. The potential for conflict is live, despite the ceasefire.

"In the Eastern Upper Nile, there's a report of a problem spot in Yuai. Militia roadblocks were reported. The militia supposedly sent a message, 'Join us or we attack you tomorrow.' We investigated by air and found the militia had dispersed. So, if you have heard that rumor, it isn't true."

Tom and I are happy to learn that our first destination, Yei, is "not problematic." Also, the Nuba Mountains are all blue. "The only issues there," the briefer says, "are mines and unexploded ordinance. So, remember very well what was said during your classes about driving."

Our other destination, Rumbek, had problems last week. "Apparently some sort of inter-group conflict has occurred, and some foreigners got caught in collateral damage. In another incident, roadblocks were set up, with looting and some renegade soldiers. Now it's under control. It's now quiet, and it will get quieter when the rains start. People will go back to cattle grazing."

Lokichoggio

At the end of the region-by-region tour, the briefer reviews the UN's rules about security in Southern Sudan.

"When you get to your destination, you need to get briefed there on the local situation. Remember, no movement after six p.m. Whenever you are traveling, be at your location one hour before last light. Do a physical check of your emergency meeting point. And get to know the area so you can leave your tent. Check your quick run bag. What does it have to have in it?"

He quizzes the audience. They respond. Water container. Compass. Evacuation map. First-aid kit and any personal medication. Mosquito net. Reflecting blanket. Torch. ("Yes, I know some of you call it a flashlight.")

Then the briefer goes over landmines. "The post-conflict situation, still the mines are not cleared, it's just beginning. Avoid overgrowth. Stay on the roads."

Finally, he reviews how to signal for air rescue. "No tourists go there. Stay to your purpose. If you get lost, we'll come get you." He shows a diagram of a plane, representing the one that you'll call by satellite phone if you need to be rescued. Then he lifts up a wire model plane. The front of the plane is twelve o'clock, the right wing three o'clock, and so forth.

"Suppose you're over here, compared to the plane," he asks. "What do you tell the pilot about where you are?"

Even some of the young veterans of this sort of thing get the clock mixed up. One fellow would have sent his plane in the opposite direction. All of this draws lots of laughter from the crowd.

As we break up, I get a few maps of evacuation routes from places we'll be. Tom says, "Aren't you glad our wives didn't hear all that?"

Cows, Not Cars

In the evening we hit the Hotel California. Along with a host of small tents—the hotel rooms—it features a bar, outdoor seating for a restaurant, and music consisting of obsolete jazz and big bands. An American named Jack Lusson runs it. His company has also built a similar camp in Rumbek, where we'll be staying.

Why "Hotel California"? "I'm a New Yorker but I lived for a while in San Francisco," he says. "'Hotel New York' just doesn't sound right."

Jack compares corruption in Southern Sudan and Kenya.

OLS SECURITY
EVACUATION ROUTES
EVACUATION ROUTES – YEI
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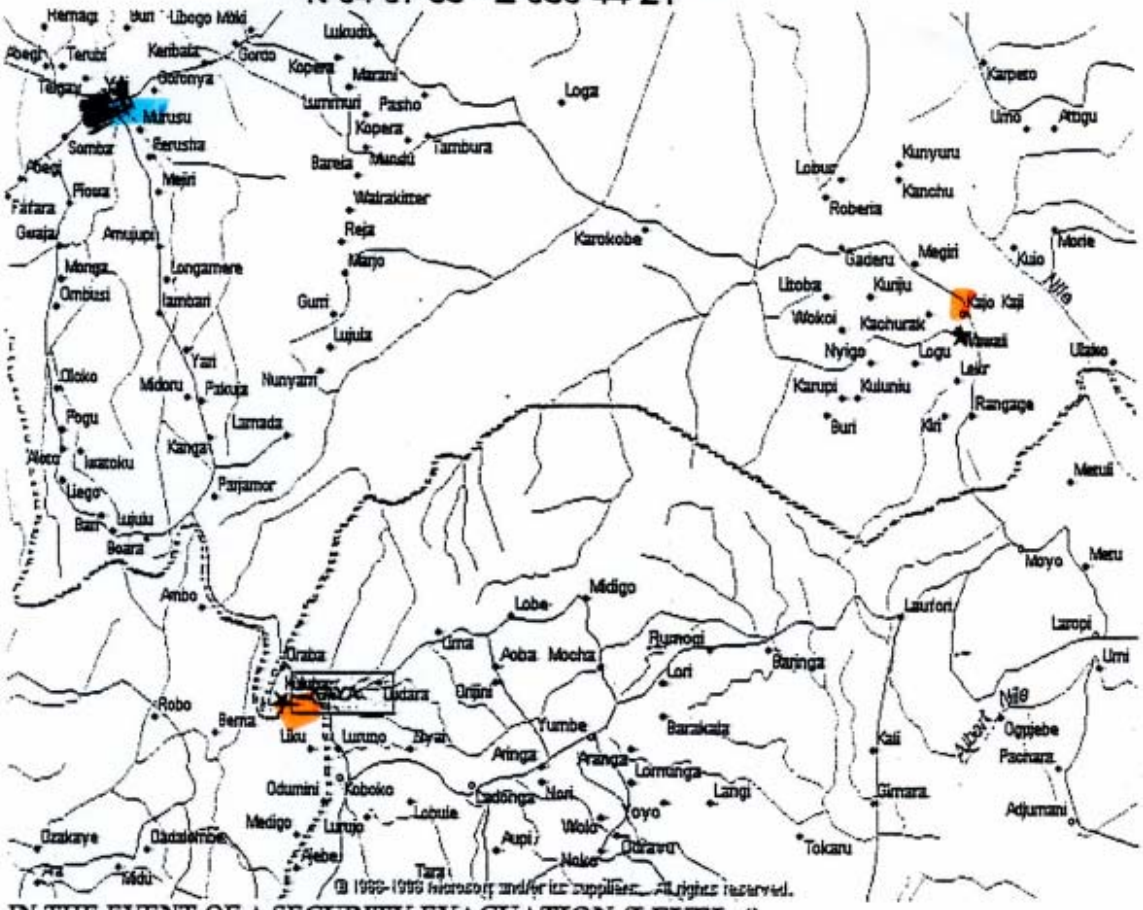


IN THE EVENT OF A SECURITY EVACUATION (LEVEL 4)

1. Consult Counterparts
2. If CP advises to relocate: inform Lima Base of type of relocation (by foot, vehicle or boat) and destination; take Quick Run Bags and radios; stay together.
3. Wait for OLS security instructions

If immediate departure is necessary

1. Choose nearest safe direction.
2. Follow evacuation route to airstrip.
3. Do not move across country at night or carry unnecessary equipment.

Route	Distance	Bearing	Time	Ground
1. Remain on Airstrip				
2. Kaya (Uganda)				
3. Kajo Kaji				

In the event of a Security level 4, call Lima Base and request instructions regarding routes security situations. Don't move without OLS Security instructions.

"In Rumbek I've never been asked for a bribe, never. I just pay my taxes and duties, and that's it. The government doesn't ask me to have Sudanese owners or insist that I employ certain people." Duties are low, about five percent. The taxes in Sudan are haphazard and not well thought out, he says. But the hotel tax seems reasonable to him—all told, below ten percent.

Jack says the contrast with Kenya is strong. "Oh, not at all like that here," he laughs. "The Sudanese shouldn't try to learn from the Kenyans. Just the opposite, when it comes to corruption."

We talk with Dominique Ayer, who leads the UMC organization that monitors the peace in the Nuba Mountains. A Franco-Swiss with a winning smile and a humble yet efficient manner, he describes the current situation.

"They're ready for peace, more than in other parts of Southern Sudan. The actual signing now won't make that much difference there. The watershed was when the truce was signed in 2002. The people want to get along, the Arabs and the blacks. We have balanced groups that I work with. We investigate say a missing car or wife that someone says has been stolen and taken away over the boundary between north and south."

I ask if the meetings are only about stolen cars and wives.

He laughs. "Not cars, *cows*. There are no cars in this area."

Jim adds, "They'd sure know it if a car showed up!"

Dominique says, "At first the people in these groups were wary. They would look at the people from the other side of the border and say 'hmm.' But after a while, they have worked well together. Now they even socialize. They kill a goat after the meeting, for example, for a feast together. This was not usual before. Once one side asked me to a dinner after a meeting, and I asked if the other side was coming. They said no. And I said, 'Well, I must appear neutral so if they cannot come, I cannot either.' And so they asked the others, and they came, and it was fine.

"The people will go forward if you can show them the way. Not tell them what to do, but indicate to them, gently. In advance I help them prepare an agenda, for if not, you get chaos. But at the meetings, I say nothing."

Tuesday, April 27

After scrambled eggs, bacon, coffee, and lots of water, we depart for the

airport and a charter flight at 7:15 to Yei (pronounced *Yay*).

We rise and cross the border to Sudan. On my side of the plane, facing south toward Uganda, heaps of mountains rise suddenly into large, relatively flat ranges, then fall off again. Then there is another heap. The mountains and plains get greener, but there are still signs on the flatlands that the dry season may be inhospitable here…scrub and patches of sandy soil. We cross the Nile. On my side of the plane the ranges have been regular and grassy. On the other side of the plane, though, you can see weird upthrusts of mountains that resemble tumors of rock, felted green.

As we descend and approach Yei, the landscape is flat and tropical. Below us are many farms amid the trees. We land at a red dirt airstrip surrounded by dark green trees. At runway's end sit a number of four-wheel drive vehicles and a large Red Cross transport plane.

Jim says, "Uh-oh, that's usually not a good sign, having a Red Cross plane here." He pauses. "Well, maybe it doesn't mean anything."

We deplane and bake a bit in the sun as people are greeted. Here we find no air terminal, indeed no air shack. No check of our official documents, indeed no officials at all. There is nothing to let us know we have arrived in another country.

We climb aboard a four-door 4x4 truck for the drive to town. The morning sun is behind us as we drive west. It beautifies the mango trees, the palms, the small fields and gardens of sorghum and peanuts and vegetables, the meticulously swept dirt grounds inside the compounds of rounded thatched-roof mud huts. The morning sun even embellishes and dramatizes the huge dips and puddles on the road, which keep us at twenty kilometers an hour on the ten-kilometer trip to town. The rainy season begins here in February. It arrived late this year, but on this bright clear morning its effects are apparent. The vast sky is clean, with veils of clouds mixed among the blue. All the leaves of all the trees and all the bushes have been bathed, and they are resplendent.

Crossing the Nile…and flying near Yei.

The airstrip at Yei. Below, what may once have been the "terminal."

As we approach the town of Yei (population about thirty thousand), we see more and more people walking along the dirt road. One woman carries on her head a batch of kindling below a perfectly balanced axe, its handle facing forward. Many Chinese bicycles, usually with large loads above the rear wheels, precariously negotiate the giant ruts and rain-filled craters. We pass a school, then a clinic, and then hit some roadside stalls that say we have arrived, this is Yei.

After dumping our bags at a local agricultural training center, we go to the local office of security, just to let them know we're in the area. Then we drive to the office of the Undersecretary of Finance and Economic Planning for Southern Sudan.

An Explosion

The undersecretary, Francis Latio, is amiable and large. He wears glasses, an African print shirt, and a gold-colored watch. He takes us into his small office, a tiny cottage under a huge tree. There is one door and three small windows. Women are summoned to bring in extra chairs of heavy teak, which look locally made.

The office is not impressive. The floor is a sheet of dusty linoleum with a tile pattern in electric blue. The concrete walls are painted light blue for the first foot from the bottom, then a dirty tan color. The shutters are blue. On one wall you see a crude, hand-drawn organization chart of New Sudan Secretariat of Finance and Economic Planning. It is tacked up way crooked. On another wall is a poster with a fuzzy photo of Chairman John Garang and the words "The struggle for peace and justice continues." From outside, you hear children yelling as they play and the shrill buzz of insects.

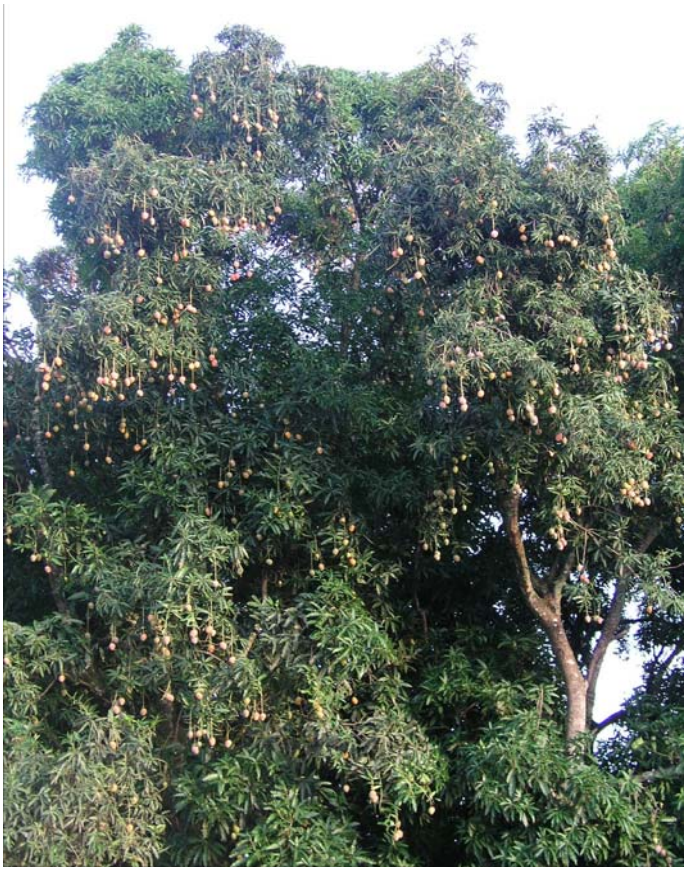
The undersecretary begins with a little speech. He describes the meager commerce that now exists, meaning there is also meager taxation. They collect revenues from agriculture, too. "The accounting system has not improved much, which is why we say we need reinforcement," he says. "Our old experiences, with them you cannot meet the new reality." He goes on to say that taxation and customs require good accounting, at all levels. He mentions the need for printing more forms for record keeping. "We should have a printing machine of our own. Now we print them in Nairobi."

On the road from Yei Airstrip.

Along the way we are joined by Michael Amule, the director of customs, and it is now his turn to speak. He talks about losing all books during the war, and therefore no one has been properly trained. As he drones on, I glance at the undersecretary leaning back in his chair. His belly is a mountain above the plains of his desktop. His fingernails glow pink against the black of his hands. On the desktop are two boxes, one marked OUT and another marked IN, with the N written backwards.

The customs director is now talking about the need to train staff so they can use the six computers the department has received. He says his department has no communications and almost no transportation.

Suddenly, there is an explosion. Everyone jumps. The small office echoes with the blast. What, a mortar shell? A land mine?



Then, after a moment, the Sudanese suddenly laugh.

"Mango!" the undersecretary says, almost simultaneous to the customs director's saying, "Mango!"

The undersecretary's office is located under a four-story high mango tree. Apparently, a very large mango has just fallen from a very great height onto the bare tin roof, which amplified the impact like a giant kettledrum.

The explosion loosens up the meeting, as well as various arterial deposits and, possibly in some visitors, areas in the undershorts region. Jim says he's heard that two counties are collecting a half duty—in other words,

in addition to the national five percent, the counties are collecting an addition two and a half percent. The customs director confirms it. "It's been allowed. The counties need the money." They converse about the unorthodox nature of additional charges levied by various governments and sometimes by the SPLA. "Each place taxes differently. We have too many taxes. This has been a temporary arrangement. Eventually, we need to abolish some of these taxes, and we need an agreed schedule of taxes from the negotiations in Naivasha. We need to know which level of government will tax what. Then we can know how much comes from the region to the national government."

The undersecretary decries the quality of audits and procurement. "We have been fighting a war, and these ideas—audit and procurement procedures—are not in the military consciousness. We need to replenish ideas, to refresh things, especially in auditing and procurement."

We depart with hearty thank yous all around. It was a good conversation. Both men want to come to the workshop next week in Rumbek.

Exploring the Economy

At midday we visit the main market in Yei. It was recaptured by the SPLM in 1997, and trade has grown ever since with the rest of the region and with nearby Uganda and Congo. But the market is unimpressive. In a large courtyard you can buy vegetables, dried fish, ground sesame, flour, and other edibles. Down the various streets are shops selling clothing, implements, furniture (especially white plastic chairs), canned and bottled goods, locally made wooden wheelbarrows, bicycles, and services such as haircuts. On one end of the market you encounter a couple of blocks devoted to used clothing, where you'll find the international generic polycotton clothes and t-shirts (one says, "Real Madrid 2003"; another simply "PANAMA").

Jim changes some Kenyan money into Ugandan money, which is the currency in this part of Southern Sudan. According to a recent economic report,

> New Sudan has effectively been broken up into a variety of currency zones, reflecting the major trading routes, migrant labor flows and remittances. Hence, many parts of northern Bar el Ghazal and the Nuba Mountains use mainly the Dinar. In the Panyagor area of Upper Nile, Kenyan and Ugandan shillings were used; in Southern Blue Nile only

> Ethiopian Birr were used; while in much of Equatoria [Yei is here], Ugandan Shillings were used, along with the Kenyan Shilling and the Sudanese Pound. In some areas, the currencies of the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo] and Central African Republic are also used.[5]

The author makes a point elsewhere that we confirm throughout our trip: the Southern Sudan is effectively cash-free. War is to blame, as is the tendency of people to convert liquid cash into cattle. This is how they save. "Studies have shown that many entrepreneurs will plough back their profits into building up their cattle herds instead of expanding their businesses. Livestock holdings are the main source of security against crop failure,

having the advantage of being mobile to find grazing areas."[6] Economists have studied economies in times of conflict. Among their findings is an understandable reluctance to invest in anything that looks like fixed capital, which can readily be seized or destroyed. Cattle, too, can be seized, and indeed this is a major source of crime in Southern Sudan; but cattle are much more mobile than a warehouse or a workshop.

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[5] Fion de Vletter, "Credit Strategies…" 2004, p. 22.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The marketplace in Yei

A wheelbarrow that can also serve as a chaise longue.

We have lunch back at the training center, and then visit a teak plantation with Jaden Tongun, undersecretary of agriculture and animal resources; Towongo Gama, deputy director; and John Schuon, agricultural crop department.

Teak used to be a major export in the south, along with coffee and tea. But now the only takers are adventurers who buy for a quarter of the price in Mombasa and invest only in some equipment for cutting and sawing. The teak plantations have been neglected for two decades. The resulting overgrowth leads to thin trunks, which have less hardwood and therefore less value. We hear stories of teak being smuggled into Uganda, but it seems unlikely that this could be a big issue, given the weight of the smuggled product and the abysmal condition of the roads.

Then we visit a training center for woodworkers. The afternoon sun is spectacular on the surrounding forest. Three gentlemen greet us, the chairman of the board of the center, the acting principal, and one of the staff. They show us newly painted but bare classrooms, a locked small library, and a cement pad upon which dorms may be built. Finally, we arrive at a woodworking classroom, where on the wall on large sheets of brown paper are notes from a lecture given by a visitor last November.

All the way, Jim is asking questions. When was the first board meeting? When will classes begin? How will they recruit the students? Finally, Jim arrives at a sore point in many projects in Southern Sudan.

"How are you going to reach your goal of fifty percent women?" he asks mildly.

The acting principal gives a long answer, which in effect says it is difficult because few women are carpenters.

Jim says, again so gently that what might be an offensive question comes across as simply a firm inquiry, "I didn't ask how difficult it would be, I asked how you planned to meet that fifty percent target."

The principal hems and haws. When he finishes, Jim lets the pause hang in the air. Then he goes on.

"Let me tell you a story about a secondary school in Rumbek," Jim says. "A high official from USAID launched that school in a big ceremony, and she praised the goal of more and more women in the school. Everyone cheered.

But a year later, there were actually fewer girls at the school than before, from three down to zero. We supported the school, but when they came back to us again for more help, we said, 'No, you didn't live up to your agreement.'"

Dead silence. Jim's story made its point. But given what I heard from the acting principal, I wouldn't bet on the carpentry training center's meeting its target.

Gender is a huge issue in Southern Sudan. Some estimates put female literacy at two percent, and the overall rate at ten percent. In a recent visit to the New Sudan Women's Federation in Panyagor, the economist Fion de Vletter was alarmed to find that all the staff, except for the Chairperson, were men "due to the fact that there were no literate women in the town." I am glad throughout this trip that the USAID folks keep advocating on behalf of women.

What Did You Learn Today?

We return to the agricultural training center where we're spending the night. Jim invites Jaden and Towongo and John to join us for a beer. Showing his strong planning instincts, he purchased a case in the market at midday. We go to a small cottage with a single room, which serves as the dining room for the teachers of the agricultural training center. The tables and chairs are made of local teak and weigh half again as much as ordinary furniture. We slide the tables together and serve the beer. Alas, the beer hasn't been chilled—the generator isn't on yet, and so the refrigerator is simply a container. But we don't let this detail hold us back. Soon we are imbibing, and everyone talks one by one about what we learned today.

Jaden says, "I learned that we're not running our forest well. We're not getting out of it what we should. Of course, I already knew that before today. But I learned it again in our discussions." He talks about forest care and also about the economics of teak sales. None of the revenue from the forests goes back into the forests, he points out. Consequently, there is no management of this resource.

"I don't know how to say it," Jaden concludes, "but realizing this again does

not dull our energy, it makes us want even more to change. After peace, we need a one hundred and eighty degree turn, a complete change."

Tom asks how much money they're getting out of the local forest now. Jaden and Towongo make some calculations and guess two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year.

Tom then asks, "What if you wanted to make it a million dollar a year business? You'd ask yourselves, 'What are the key business drivers?' Then you'd choose one of the drivers as a priority for everything you do. Keep asking about that one thing, focus on it."

Jim says, "The movement is uncomfortable with money. There are lots of secrets—where the funds come from, how they're used. Some of this is for military reasons, the secrecy. But because of this, they don't want to think about the long term and about questions like 'how could we invest in the forest and get four times more from it?'

Jim takes a swallow of beer and goes on. "But they'll have to get better at money matters after the peace agreement. After the agreement is signed, they'll get more than one million dollars *a day* from oil. They may say about the teak forests, 'Hey, don't waste my time on that small amount of money, a million a year.'"

Jim looks at Jaden and Tawongo and John. "What that means is, you can probably just go *do* it."

After Tawongo and John and Jim say a few words about what they learned today, it's Tom's turn.

"I'm eager to tell you," he says, "because I've learned a couple of very important things. First, there are many good people in Southern Sudan. Everyone we've met is thoughtful and dedicated—that's so encouraging, I think, for your country. The second thing is how USAID manages things."

Tom explains that before coming here his impression—as always, he's modest and says things like "my ignorant impression"—was that aid to Africa is like money poured down a rat hole. That aid officials are watching out for themselves, and are not taking care of the money they dole out. But he says that he's already learned how diligent the aid people are.

"So both these things I've learned are encouraging for Southern Sudan," he concludes. "I'm impressed."

Hear, hear! We all raise our glasses to Tom's two excellent lessons, partly in

recognition and partly in hope.

A little while later Jaden, Tawongo, and John depart, and we have dinner with all the instructors at the agricultural training center. I sit next to a female instructor who's just arrived this week from exile. She'll be working on women's issues. This region is where she grew up, and she hasn't been here for more than a decade. What does she notice now?

"This area used to be the London of Sudan," she says.

This metaphor baffles me. She and her colleagues try to alleviate my confusion.

"People used to come here for vacation from all over Sudan," one of them explains. "There are mountains south of here with a balmy climate. There is a beautiful waterfall. They used to have plantations of coffee and tea there, excellent exports."

"The region was prosperous then," the female instructor says. "Now I can't believe how there's nothing here."

The dinner conversation is vivid and many sided. What a pleasure to be here, I think. And what a challenge for them, for all of us, to help Southern Sudan get back on its feet.

It's finally time for bed. The agricultural station has a generator, so there is electricity at night. On the porch of the cement slab cottage where I'll sleep, the neon light has attracted hundreds of insects. Some swarm frantically around the bulb, while a crowd of bigger, lazier bugs watches from the wall. I open the door and slip inside quickly, so none of them joins me in entering. Then I turn off the outside light, leaving the six-legged hordes to find another playground.

After a cold shower, I climb onto the bed and turn out the lights. Off in the distance heat lightning flashes. The sounds of the tropics surround you. A high-pitched insect zzzz like a mini-buzz saw. Two tones of crickets. Once in a while, a chorus of frogs commences and then after a while suddenly ceases. How to describe their sound? Imagine you have a hollow wooden tube, and you come across a tree with hard gnarly bark. You rake the bark sharply with the tube, up for a second,

then down, then up, then down. You have just made the sound of tonight's Southern Sudanese frog serenade.

Wednesday, April 28

During the night thunderstorms roll in, kicking up the thin curtains in the bare cement bedroom and blowing rain onto the floor. This morning's sunrise is spectacular, a pale mango color that becomes more and more vivid as a wall of clouds ignites.

Breakfast is the same as yesterday's dinner, which was the same as yesterday's lunch: now dead-tired pasta shells, a softer-than-ever beef stew with bones, some dried meat, and a cooked African green called suka maweeki. You can't expect a lot for $5 a night, though, and there is instant coffee.

The drive through town and out to the airport is once again fascinating and beautiful. Dozens of long-horned cattle cross the road. Allan says that some of the Dinka shape the horns, by cutting them in certain ways as they grow, so that some bulls have one horn pointing forward and the other pointing

back. On some other bulls both horns spread back, and on still others both horns go forward. Allan describes a local dance that imitates the shapes of these horns, both arms back, one forward one back, both forward—a kind of Sudanese Makarena.

We board a small charter plane for the hour and fifteen minute flight to Rumbek. As we fly north, the land gets drier. When we descend, Jim says, "That's Rumbek." You can barely see it. There appear to be five, now ten roofs, and that's it. No, now you can make out beehive huts among the trees, and as your eye spreads from the "town" you notice there are quite a few of these huts. These are pastoral people, whose sustenance is milk. They need space for their herds, and so their houses are spread over a wider terrain than those of the farming people of Yei.

After landing, we walk to the end of the dirt runway. A crashed two-engine airplane lies right beside the sign that announces "Rumbek Airstrip." The combination is not likely to calm the anxious traveler.

A short walk away is the tented camp where we'll be staying. Some international peace monitors are headquartered here, military types with close-cropped hair, tattoos, and bad words. There is a circular bar outdoors, covered by a thatched roof but open all around. We quaff a coke. I'm led to a dark green tent where I'll sleep. It has two layers, the top one supposedly to protect the one over your head from the sun. But inside, the temperature is well over one hundred degrees.

Come to think of it, it's probably well over a hundred outside as well. Later we learn that this is the hottest time of year here, right before the rains. The roads are parched, and the little areas around the huts we see as we drive to town have no grass, only stumps of straw. The Dinka people here are tall. Some of the women wear head kerchiefs in bright colors of green and yellow and red. Many men wear robes. The heat has perhaps contributed to a sense languor and idleness. As we reach the dusty Freedom Square in the center of

Rumbek, we see people draped in the shade of trees and verandahs.

Above, an aerial view near Rumbek. Below, a welcoming exhibit.