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HOW TO PROTECT CIVILIANS IN EASTERN CHAD

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While international efforts remain focused on resolving the conflagration in Darfur, a less publicized but equally urgent crisis across Darfur's borders in eastern Chad and northeastern Central African Republic is finally receiving attention and—possibly—action.¹ Half a million internally displaced persons, refugees, and other conflict-affected civilians are vulnerable to the steadily escalating violence in eastern Chad. The regional contagion that is Darfur—which is fueling instability throughout the region—requires a comprehensive strategy, of which a crucial component is protecting civilians in these neighboring countries.

The leadership emerging from Paris—and the alliance on Darfur being forged between French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown²—to ensure the deployment of a European Union force to eastern Chad is crucial in this regard, but it must be seen as a bridging element to a larger U.N. operation. In the meantime, the military and non-military components of the international peacekeeping presence must be sufficiently mandated and resourced to effectively protect civilian populations, stabilize the region, promote political solutions, and support the return of displaced populations to their homes.

How this force is deployed in eastern Chad, with what mandate, and in the context of what supportive civilian and diplomatic components will largely dictate whether civilians will indeed be protected and the crisis eventually reversed. Ultimately, however, without a resolution across the border in neighboring Darfur, efforts to staunch the bleeding in Chad will remain threatened by the destabilizing policies of the regime in Khartoum.

In most cases, the Chadian government has proven unable or unwilling to protect both its own citizens and the refugees within its borders as deepening violence poses a grave threat to regional stability. However, in an important recent development, Chadian President Idriss Deby has accepted in

principle a force for eastern Chad and the half million people that have been uprooted or impacted, and the United Nations and European Union have begun planning to quickly deploy civilian police and peacekeepers.

According to the plan currently under discussion, the United Nations would train and support Chadian police while the EU force would help protect civilians and the U.N. operation. France, a former colonial ruler in Chad and a country with large air and ground assets stationed in country, is spearheading the current effort to get troops deployed in tandem with the prospective hybrid AU./U.N. force in Darfur. As outlined, this force would also assume protection efforts in northeastern CAR, but that discussion lies beyond the scope of this strategy paper.

This movement toward the deployment of a force in eastern Chad is long overdue. Now that the necessity for such a force is broadly understood and accepted, the core issues we focus on in this Strategy Paper are how to maximize the protection of civilian populations in eastern Chad, foster stabilization and reconciliation, and support the safe return of displaced civilians back to their areas of origin.

In brief, we argue that adequate provisions for the **military and non-military components** of the EU force will largely dictate whether civilians will indeed be protected and the crisis eventually resolved. The essential military and police elements include:

- Rapid U.N. Security Council authorization of a robust Chapter VII operation aimed at protecting vulnerable civilians. This will require a force with the manpower and mobility to protect the two principal target of violence—refugees and the internally displaced in camps and vulnerable Chadian populations in villages and towns.
- The mandate and resources for the EU force to focus on monitoring the movement of armed

groups and reporting to the U.N. Security Council and the EU on major human rights violation and their perpetrators.

- Support from international police forces to have a round-the-clock presence in the camps and conduct road patrols, as currently envisioned, while working to train the Chadian police force.
- Efforts to fully coordinate the EU force with the deployment of the A.U./U.N. hybrid force in Darfur.

The non-military component of the mission will require:

- The deployment of human rights monitors and civil affairs officers to collect information on the sources and targets of violence, provide real-time early warnings, document human rights violations, support local-level mediation, and work to restore traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.
- A concerted diplomatic effort to reinvigorate political talks between the Chadian government, rebel factions, and broader civil society within Chad.
- A dialogue between Chad and Sudan on bilateral issues, including the right of voluntary return for their respective refugees.
- Significant investments in development programs and reconstruction initiatives to reintegrate ex-combatants and ensure the safe return of the displaced to their areas of origin.
- Substantially increased assistance for humanitarian operations in the region.

Although France and the EU are spearheading current efforts to deploy a force to eastern Chad, the United States has an important role to play. To support current plans, the United States should

work closely with France to ensure a robust U.N.S.C Chapter VII authorization of the EU force; be prepared to respond to any requests from the European Union for logistical support regarding the mobility and effectiveness of the force; support U.N. police elements as requested; and contribute strategically to the non-military elements of a comprehensive civilian protection plan.

To answer the question of how to most effectively protect civilians, we first have to understand why civilians are being targeted and by whom. Understanding the sources and purpose of the attacks is a fundamental prerequisite to developing a comprehensive strategy to protect those civilians. We will then elaborate these military and non-military elements of a comprehensive civilian protection strategy that will make the most difference.

1. WHY ARE CIVILIANS BEING TARGETED IN EASTERN CHAD?

The proximate cause for the growing instability in eastern Chad, the instigating factor, is the Khartoum regime's genocidal counter-insurgency strategy in Darfur. To that end, the international response in Chad must be closely linked to attempts to end the Darfur emergency; these efforts will either support or undermine our effectiveness in Chad. There were indeed pre-existing inter-communal tensions and rivalries in eastern Chad, just as there were in Darfur prior to 2003. However, as Khartoum stepped up its proxy war with N'Djamena beginning in 2004, cross-border attacks by janjaweed militias, focused on stripping assets and displacing non-Arab civilians in eastern Chad, have intensified. Attacks on Chadian IDPs and Sudanese refugees by a number of groups have increased substantially in recent months and now occur almost daily along the border between Chad, CAR, and Sudan. This has seriously impeded humanitarian efforts throughout the region.

The Khartoum regime has been highly motivated to support such cross-border militia attacks as it sought to punish the Chadian government for its support for Darfurian rebel groups. Having noted the success of its strategy to split the Darfur rebellion by fomenting ethnic attacks and forcibly displacing non-Arab civilian populations, the Khartoum regime has replicated this strategy across the border in eastern Chad. Reprisal attacks multiply, and most observers conclude it is an “orgy of inter-tribal violence,” as we heard journalists and others incorrectly describe the attacks in Rwanda in 1994 and that of 2007 Darfur. The cycle of attacks and counter-attacks, once set into motion, can be sustained with minimal effort by Khartoum. The damage has been done.

We have interviewed dozens of people displaced by this violence. Nearly all the IDPs we have interviewed describe a pattern of Arab militias conducting increasingly brazen livestock raids within the last few years. The animals were usually taken across the border into Sudan. Arab militias then returned to rob non-Arab villagers of their possessions and money. And finally, over the last year or so, they came to burn villages and fields.³

The economic incentive is clear: driving villagers from their land and stealing their livestock literally alters the destiny of entire communities. This Khartoum-backed asset stripping by Arab militias across Darfur and eastern Chad has changed the demographics of the region and dramatically redistributed the wealth of the region, which will lead to further conflict during the coming years over land and natural resources, and the political power that accompanies access to them.

Khartoum also has a strong strategic interest in destabilizing Chad. Darfur’s rebel groups have relied heavily on Chad as a rear base and a source for weapons and logistical supplies. By supporting Arab militias to attack villages in Chad and by back-

ing Chadian rebels in their attempts to overthrow Deby’s corrupt and unpopular central government, Khartoum hopes to provoke a wider conflict between specific ethnic groups who have historically competed against each other and eventually replace Deby with a Khartoum-friendly regime. The strategy has been effective, promoting intensifying attacks and counter-attacks by increasingly militarized communities.

Rather than rely on conventional military forces and *gendarmes* (police) to protect Sudanese refugees and Chadian citizens from attack, the Chadian government has supported Darfurian rebels who have helped defend Chadian government positions against Chadian rebels. Chadian forces—including a significant number of child soldiers⁴—have done little to protect civilians, and have also committed abuses against civilian populations accused of supporting the rebels. Deby’s government has also in some cases provided small arms to non-Arab communities in eastern Chad to stoke intercommunal rivalries for strategic gain. It is a policy to support the enemies of his enemies, and the result is that Chadian civilians are even more vulnerable to attack.

Arab militias, rebels, and bandits function with impunity and thrive in this vacuum, and humanitarian access is under severe strain due to widespread lawlessness. Traditional mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict have been overwhelmed. Communities that used to trade with each other, live as neighbors, and intermarry now live in a climate of fear, bracing for attack.

Divide and conquer? We call it divide and destroy.

The victims in eastern Chad are the local communities who live near the long and porous border with Sudan, an artificial boundary that divides communities and contributes to the mutual interference between the two countries. The Massalit, Dadjo, Zaghawa, and many other smaller groups find

A STORY FROM EASTERN CHAD

A Chadian man, age 27, told his story to Mia on one of her recent trips:

"This man's eyes were gouged out by Janjaweed knives. I first saw him in the Goz Beida hospital in November 2006. He is Chadian from Marmadanga. When he was attacked by 'Sudanese Arabs'—he also called them "Janjaweed"—his descriptions were different from those of others I interviewed because most would say that Sudanese Arabs and Chadian Arabs would attack together.

"This man and his family fled to Kolloye. When they attacked Kolloye his eyes were gouged out. 'We do not want you black people here,' he told me they told him. Now he lives in Gouroukum. 'All of the attackers were Sudanese,' he told me. 'From Darfur. First they took our animals. They took them to Sudan. Then they took our money. Finally they came to destroy our village and our fields.'

He believes the problem started in Sudan. 'If the U.N. does not go to Sudan then they will continue to attack us. We are not safe here in Chad.'"

themselves caught in a circle of violence perpetrated by Sudanese Arab militia in conjunction with Chadian Arabs, both now referred to widely as janjaweed, Chadian and Darfurian rebels, non-Arab communities armed by the Chadian government,⁵ and an undisciplined and ill-prepared Chadian army. To date, over 170,000 people have fled their villages. Many Chadian Arab civilians have also fled with their livestock into Sudan after reprisal attacks by communities armed by the Chadian government. Unknown numbers have been murdered, raped, and mutilated as their homes were torched and families terrorized. Humanitarian agencies are themselves imperiled as they struggle to sustain operations, and international assistance has been perilously insufficient.

2. HOW CAN CIVILIANS BE PROTECTED IN EASTERN CHAD?

After much international disagreement about an appropriate response to the deterioration in eastern Chad and how to protect civilians, we are finally at a point where real action is likely to be forthcoming. International consensus is forming around a strategy that would see the deployment of an EU military force of 3,000 to 4,000 troops to eastern Chad. Discussions have focused on this

force as eventually transitioning into a larger U.N. force of up to 12,000 troops. This presence will be supplemented by about 200 U.N. police trainers and roughly 850 Chadian *gendarmes* to help protect civilians. However, the international community must not rely on police units to protect civilians. Chadian police and *gendarmes* have been accused of human rights abuses themselves, and U.N. police are unlikely to take on any law enforcement responsibilities. Primary responsibility for civilian protection must fall first to the EU forces and eventually to U.N. peacekeepers.

While it is extremely encouraging that the EU is planning for the potential deployment of this smaller force to eastern Chad, it is clear that this is only the beginning of what must be a comprehensive strategy to protect civilians, stabilize the security situation, and facilitate the return of displaced persons to their areas of origin. There are crucial military and non-military elements to such a strategy.

A. Military Elements

The U.N. Security Council must authorize a robust Chapter VII operation focused on protecting civilians in vulnerable camps and population centers. The Chadian and Sudanese governments have previously agreed to a border monitoring force,⁶

but, like every other agreement signed by the parties in this deepening regional conflict, it was never implemented. The EU—led by the French—will likely commit enough troops and assets. But within a year, when the EU expects to withdraw, a much larger U.N. mission must be ready to step in and fill the protection gap.

The principal objective of the EU and U.N. missions must be to protect civilian populations. This requires a strong mandate by the U.N. Security Council to allow for proactive operations to preempt, prevent and deter attacks. This will require:

- Around-the-clock protection in IDP and refugee camps
- Firewood patrols
- Civilian police presence to monitor, investigate and report on security incidents
- Rapid response capacity for responding to attacks against civilians

This plan means deploying forces to protect two principal targets of violence: refugees and IDPs in camps and Chadian populations vulnerable to attacks in villages and towns. The force should operate over a broad area, and not just focus on certain camps, as such a focus could create greater insecurity in certain areas. A rapid reaction element should concentrate on using force to counter attacks on civilian populations, whether cross-border or not.

In addition to the mandate's necessary focus on civilian protection, the EU force should also be mandated and resourced to focus on monitoring the movement of armed groups and reporting to the U.N. Security Council and the European Union on major human rights violations and their perpetrators.

It will be crucial that this EU deployment be seen as distinct and separate from the current French

deployment. The reality is that France will dominate the initial EU deployment, but France and the European Union will seek to minimize that impression in order to ensure neutrality and impartiality.

The EU force should focus on civilian protection activities, not try to duplicate the role of humanitarian groups through an array of quick impact projects and other activities best left to aid agencies. There must be clear distinctions between humanitarian and military actors in order to maintain the impartiality of the aid effort.

Finally, force mobility will be of the utmost importance. The porous, extensive border combined with multiple sources of violence requires a force that can react and respond quickly and decisively to any impending threats against civilian populations. This will require attack helicopters and sufficient ground transport. It will also require an intelligence gathering capacity that utilizes satellite imagery and overflights to monitor ground movements.

A weak link in the present plan that is now being debated is the civilian police component. Relying primarily on Chadian police—who themselves have been accused of human rights violations and endemic corruption⁷—will leave huge holes in the civilian protection net, whether or not they are trained by the United Nations. The police are envisioned to have a round-the-clock presence in the camps and to conduct road patrols.

To quickly enhance the capacity of the police to fulfill their challenging mandate, the United Nations should deploy Formed Police Units, or FPU, to back up the Chadian police.⁸ The Security Council should authorize the FPU to intervene with force when civilians are under imminent threat.

The effort to deploy a force to eastern Chad and northeastern CAR should be fully coordinated with the deployment of the A.U./U.N. hybrid force in Darfur. This would best be achieved by having

the respective U.N. Security Council resolutions specifically authorize inter-Mission cooperation and coordination. Unless that is stated, there is no tradition of such cooperation, and many member states hold a legal view that it is not allowed—that each Mission stands separately based on terms of its mandate. The inter-Mission cooperation between the Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire Missions was ad hoc and tentative for that reason.

B. Non-Military Elements

Although an adequate military force will be key to protecting civilians in eastern Chad, non-military components of a comprehensive strategy to protect vulnerable populations are equally important.

First, human rights monitors and civil affairs officers will be critical to making the larger peacekeeping mission effective. The monitors and officers would focus on collecting information about sources of violence and targeted communities, provide critical real-time early warnings about impending attacks, and monitor and document all major human rights violations. These personnel should also support efforts to revive and restore traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution that have dealt with inter-communal divisions in the past. These should be U.N. personnel deployed jointly with the introduction of the EU force, and should be buttressed by additional personnel as the mission transitions from EU to U.N. control.

Second, a concerted diplomatic effort must be launched to reinvigorate political talks between the Chadian government, rebel factions, and broader civil society within Chad. The current dominance of the Zaghawa in general, and the Bidayat in particular, has replicated past patterns of minority dominance of the governments of the day (the Sar controlled power since before independence and the Gouran did so during the Ouadai and Habre administrations). An inclusive approach that guarantees power sharing should be fostered and a

political process that will bring about a sustainable peace must be encouraged. With France reexamining its role in Africa, the Sarkozy government must lead the way toward a political process that will, among other things, encourage the sharing of political power with excluded groups. Eventual succession to Deby is a particularly thorny issue, but it must be dealt with transparently and in the context of the rule of law in order to avoid a chaotic and violent transfer of power sometime in the future.

Third, dialogue should be brokered between Sudan and Chad on bilateral issues, including the right of safe and voluntary return for their respective refugees. The two governments should be encouraged to respect and implement the previous agreements reached through the mediation of the A.U., Libya and later Saudi Arabia to defuse tensions and respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This dialogue is essential to addressing the political divisions and the security vacuum that are drivers for violence in eastern Chad. This effort at brokering enhanced cooperation should coordinate with and take into full account the Darfur peace process and any internal Chadian political process.

Fourth, and hand-in-hand with political accommodation, significant investments in development programs and reconstruction initiatives must be planned, and then implemented, to reintegrate ex-combatants and ensure the safe and voluntary return of displaced to their areas of origin. There must be credible international participation in an effort to reduce the number of militia in these highly insecure zones.

Fifth, the amount of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons in the region must be increased substantially to address unacceptably high mortality and morbidity rates. Reasons for the shortfall include insufficient donor funding, late planning from the United Nations, and insufficient U.N. coordination. A May 2007 Medecins sans

Frontières survey of Chadian IDPs reports that the number of children under the age of five dying every day is double the World Health Organization's "emergency" threshold.⁹ Separate studies conducted by U.N.ICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Food Program and the Chadian Ministry of Public Health have confirmed a 20 percent malnutrition rate for children under five. In addition to more funding, it would be a welcome step for the U.N. to appoint an experienced Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for eastern Chad.

Sixth, regarding the larger regional crisis emanating from Darfur, full-time, field-based diplomatic teams from a quartet of countries that bring a great deal of influence to the table—the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and China—should work with other countries, the United Nations, European Union, and African Union to address the multiple variables driving the crisis in Darfur, Chad, CAR, and beyond.¹⁰

Finally, governments and rebels on both sides of the border must face a higher cost for fanning the flames of war and obstructing efforts to end it. The U.N. Security Council must therefore be prepared to impose targeted sanctions on any individual government or rebel leader who continues to pursue such destructive and obstructive policies. Support should also be given to the International Criminal Court to pursue cases against individuals who are responsible for war crimes on either side of the border as part of the Security Council's referral of the Darfur case.

3. THE U.S. ROLE IN PROTECTING CIVILIANS IN EASTERN CHAD

Although it is the French government that has invigorated efforts to respond to the crisis in eastern Chad and northeastern CAR, the United States has an important role to play in support of the international response both in these countries and in linking these efforts to those across the border in Darfur.

First, it is crucial that the United States work closely with France to ensure that an appropriately robust U.N. Security Council resolution under Chapter VII authorizing the EU force will include as its core mission the protection of civilian populations and that the resolution sets a trajectory toward an eventual larger U.N. Mission. The resolution should authorize the non-military elements of the mission, such as human rights monitors and civil affairs officers, to ensure that the deployment of these critically important elements of an overall effort to protect civilians begins immediately.

Second, the United States should be prepared to respond to any requests from the EU for logistical support the organization requires.

Third, the United States should support the U.N. police elements, known by the acronym CIVPOL, by providing personnel and contributing financially to the mission.

Fourth, the United States should support the non-military elements of a comprehensive civilian protection plan for eastern Chad in ensuring that the EU and later U.N. mission are fully resourced for the non-military elements of the mission, including civil affairs officers and human rights monitors, as well as providing reintegration support for IDPs and ex-combatants and additional humanitarian aid. Diplomatically, the United States should work quietly with France to encourage the Chadian government and rebels to revive political discussions. As a U.S. ally in the "Global War on Terror," the Chadian government receives significant military assistance under the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership. The United States must make clear to President Deby that cooperation on terrorism is not a license to deal with internal political crises through exclusion, ethnic manipulation, repression, and war.

Fifth, the United States Department of Defense should immediately proceed with producing the report required by recent amendments in the House

and Senate to the 2008 Defense Authorization Act by analyzing both the current capacity of the airfields at Abeche and possible upgrades which could be made in support of the EU and U.N. missions in Chad, and the AU/U.N. mission in Darfur. If such improvements are deemed necessary to help these missions protect civilians and provide humanitarian aid, Congress and the Administration should help provide the necessary funding to do so.¹¹

4. CONCLUSION

There is a real chance that help is on the way for the first time since attacks against civilians began to emerge as a pattern in eastern Chad and intensify over the last year. The new government in

France has blasted through the pall of inaction that marked the international community's approach to the spiraling human crisis emanating from Darfur. Now that a decision to send an international force to Chad and CAR appears forthcoming, it is essential to demand a mission with a robust mandate to prioritize civilian protection. Non-military elements of the mission and a broader diplomatic strategy will be also critical in ensuring that the effort is successful. This opportunity for real and meaningful action will not come around again soon. It is therefore crucial that the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States—working closely with the AU and Chadian government—put all the right pieces in place to succeed.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 This paper will focus principally on the crisis in eastern Chad. For more on the Central African Republic, see "Central African Republic: An Unknown Emergency in a Dangerous Region," Refugees International, Dec. 12, 2006; and "Internal Displacement in Central African Republic: A Protection Crisis," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Jan. 26, 2007.
- 2 Both assumed office recently, and in mid-July announced that they would travel together to Sudan to help move forward the peace process in Darfur.
- 3 See Human Rights Watch report, "Ensuring Civilian Protection in Chad: The Proposed U.N. Mission," February 2007; and an Amnesty International press release, "Chad: Civilians left unprotected as brutal Janjaweed attacks reach 150 kilometres inside Chad," Dec. 1, 2006.
- 4 See Human Rights Watch report, "Early to War: Child Soldiers in the Chad Conflict," July 2007.
- 5 See Human Rights Watch reporting on this issue at www.hrw.org
- 6 In the Tripoli Agreement signed in February 2006, both Sudan and Chad agreed to put troops along the border.
- 7 This is the widespread perception of Chadians about the police. It is too soon to tell, however, whether the new effort to put Chadian police under the U.N. High Commission for Human Rights has been successful in promoting more professional behavior. These police will actually likely comprise a good portion of the force, so a real opportunity exists for improved performance.
- 8 FPU's consist of around 125 gendarme/riot type police in a company from a single country and usually a single police entity in the sending country. They always operate as units and usually intervene in case of some sort of riotous or potentially riotous situation.
- 9 MSF, June 8, 2007, available at <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/pr/2007/06-08-2007.cfm>.
- 10 See ENOUGH Strategy Briefing #3, "An Axis of Peace for Darfur: The United States, France, and China," by John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen, June 2007.
- 11 H.AMDT.189 (passed on May 16, 2007) and S.AMDT.2309 (introduced on July 17, 2007) to H.R. 1585.



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