**"Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic: The Regional Impact of the Darfur Crisis"**

**John Prendergast, Senior Adviser to the International Crisis Group**

**Statement Before the Subcommittee on African Affairs**

**Washington, DC**
**March 20, 2007**

Thank you, Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Senator Sununu, and Members of the Subcommittee, for this opportunity to discuss the U.S. strategy for ending the crisis in Darfur which is now spilling over into Chad and the Central African Republic.

In the current issue of <u>Foreign Affairs</u>, my colleague Colin Thomas-Jensen and I argue that the interlocking conflicts in Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic (CAR) represent a conflict cluster that is tearing the region apart. The evidence for this assertion is clear. Violence in Darfur, eastern Chad, and CAR has escalated dramatically in recent months. Armed groups commit mass atrocities against civilian populations with grim regularity, and the increased displacement of civilians is stretching relief operations to the limit. Just yesterday (March 19, 2007), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur are almost at full capacity, and at least 700,000 conflict-affected civilians in Darfur are beyond the reach of relief agencies.

The dynamic between Sudan, Chad, and CAR is multifaceted, but there are three **drivers** at the core of the violence:

➢ Cross-border attacks against civilians in southeastern Chad by Sudan-backed Janjaweed militias -- Sudanese Janjaweed have joined forces with Chadian militias and are pursuing the same scorched earth policies against non-Arab villages as in Darfur.  Inter-communal and inter-ethnic fighting is then a product of this, which is precisely the intention of the Khartoum regime's divide and destroy policy.

➢ Cross-border support for insurgent groups -- The government of Sudan has openly admitted to supporting Chadian rebels opposed to President Idriss Déby in response to Déby's fairly transparent support for rebels in Darfur. The level of Sudanese support for insurgents in northeastern CAR is less clear, but there are Sudanese fighters among their ranks and some have received military training inside Sudan.

➢ Non-inclusive governance in Sudan, Chad and CAR -- Chad and CAR each has an internal political crisis independent of the violence emanating from Darfur. Both governments came to power militarily, pay lip-service to democracy, and fail to provide basic services to their citizens.

While this conflict is certainly a full blown regional crisis – fomented principally by the Sudanese government -- the fulcrum for conflict in the Chad basin remains Darfur. Without a political settlement and an effective peacekeeping force to protect civilians in Darfur, Chad and CAR will continue to burn.

U.S. policy to contain and end this spiraling regional crisis must pursue a three track approach following the "3Ps" of peacemaking, protection, and punishment.

➢ *Peacemaking:* Any solution must begin with aggressive regional diplomacy. While U.S. diplomats, military officials, and humanitarian assessment teams have made trips to Chad and CAR in recent months, the level of U.S. engagement must be increased exponentially and coordinated multilaterally to achieve any headway in ending the violence. The U.S. should establish a conflict resolution cell in the region staffed by full-time senior diplomats to work toward a comprehensive agreement to end violence in Darfur and political processes in Chad and CAR to address the lack of political inclusiveness that fuels internal unrest. Most important is striking a deal between the Sudanese regime and Darfur rebels, which will require much more sustained and concerted efforts by the U.S. and broader international community than is presently being expended.

➢ *Protection:* The UN must work in close coordination with the African Union to line up the forces necessary to reach the 20,300 troops for Darfur agreed upon by the AU, the UN, the Arab League, and international donor countries. The international community must also accelerate its planning and increase its preparedness for military action without Khartoum's consent. Concurrently, the UN should deploy a peacekeeping force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to protect civilians and relief operations in eastern Chad and CAR and to monitor and deter cross border attacks and arms flows. This force must be closely linked to the peacekeeping operation in Darfur, as authorized by the Security Council in Resolution 1706. Troop generation will be a major problem, so the primary emphasis must remain on deploying the hybrid force with a protection mandate to Darfur.

➢ *Punishment:* As the International Crisis Group has long argued, the Government of Sudan will continue to reject a durable peace deal and a robust peacekeeping force until the international community changes the cost-benefit analysis of the regime. The international community, with strong U.S. leadership, must alter the calculations of Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP -- formerly the National Islamic Front (NIF)) by working multilaterally to impose punitive measures—such as targeted sanctions and economic pressures—against senior NCP officials and the companies they control. The U.S. must also share declassified intelligence with the International Criminal Court to help accelerate the preparation of indictments against more senior Sudanese regime officials implicated in the perpetration of mass atrocities.

The ENOUGH campaign, an initiative that Crisis Group has recently launched with the Center for American Progress, applies this 3P approach to crises in Darfur, northern Uganda, and Congo, and encourages activists to press this agenda with policymakers.

**Chad and Sudan – Bad Neighbors**

As the Darfur situation has deteriorated, hostilities between Chad and Sudan have increased. Chadian rebels and Janjaweed militias operating out of Sudan have launched increasingly frequent incursions into eastern Chad since October 2005. President Idriss Déby has blamed Khartoum for supporting these armed groups, declared a "state of belligerence" with Sudan and sought to strengthen his ties to the Darfurian rebels, who are spending increasing amounts of time in N'Djamena. Chad's last two presidents came to power in military campaigns launched from Darfur, so Déby has reason to watch his eastern border. But the Darfur crisis has also exacerbated Chad's domestic political woes.

Over the four years of the Darfur conflict, Chad and its people have seen their humanitarian, economic, political and security situations decline. The country shares many of the same political and cultural fault lines as Sudan – Arab/non-Arab, Christian/Muslim, farmer/nomad, north/south -- and hosts many of the same tribes affected by the fighting in Darfur. Bilateral relations have gradually worsened since 2003.

Though President Déby historically enjoyed good relations with Khartoum, the heavy presence of his Zaghawa tribesmen in the Darfur rebel groups placed him in a difficult situation. He initially tried to strike a balance by formally cooperating with Khartoum while turning a blind eye as Zaghawa within his army helped the two main rebel groups: the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The balance proved unsustainable, particularly as Déby came under fire from key constituents for not doing enough to support the Darfur rebels, and Chadian rebels organized inside Sudan. As Déby has strengthened his ties with the Darfur rebels, relations between the neighbors degenerated into proxy war.

The most obvious consequence of the Darfur war has been the influx of more than 220,000 refugees into eastern Chad and cross-border Janjaweed incursions that have displaced some 100,000 Chadians. I have traveled to eastern Chad and rebel-held areas of Darfur six times since 2003, and it is one of the poorest regions of one of the world's poorest countries. Although many border region inhabitants are from the same tribes as the refugees, the latter receive more support and services than the internally displaced Chadians. Unlike Darfur, displaced Chadians are not congregating in large numbers and therefore difficult to assist. Relief workers on the ground have told us that they are struggling to cope with the growing numbers of displaced.

A second consequence has been an increase in insecurity in eastern Chad and a weakening of the army, which has lost both men and weapons to the Darfur rebels as well as to other armed groups in Darfur. JEM in particular recruited heavily among Chadian soldiers early in the conflict, buying mercenaries as well as weapons. Informal Chadian support has also flowed to the Zaghawa elements of the SLA and JEM in North Darfur.

The third and most dangerous repercussion has been the division within the Chadian Zaghawa community over Déby's Darfur policy. Déby, a Zaghawa, came to power in 1990 by overthrowing Hissène Habré in a military campaign emanating from Darfur, where he was supported by the Sudanese Zaghawa. At the outset of the Darfur war, Déby worked closely with Khartoum, even ordering 800 troops into Darfur to fight the rebels in April 2003. This discouraged but did not stop support flowing to the rebels from Zaghawa in the Chadian military. Though his policy was

divisive, Déby understood the danger of protracted war in Darfur and the threat from Khartoum if he did not cooperate. In August 2003 he organized the first negotiations, culminating in the ill-fated September 2003 Abéché ceasefire, which collapsed three months later, just before a massive government offensive.

The May 2004 coup attempt by senior Zaghawa military commanders was primarily driven by discontent over Déby's lack of support to the Darfurian Zaghawa and his cooperation with Khartoum. The affair was managed peacefully, in part to avoid exposing divisions within the tribe to the rest of the country. Yet, those divisions have continued to grow, encouraged by Déby's decision to alter the constitution so he could run for a third term and grumblings over domestic issues such as unpaid salaries.

Bilateral relations worsened dramatically in the second half of 2005 as Khartoum welcomed all opponents of Déby, who dropped his veneer of neutrality to support the Zaghawa-based rebel groups in Darfur. Sudan's ruling National Congress Party and its military and security structures appear determined to topple Déby's regime and thereby weaken the Darfur rebels. A wave of defections of high-level Zaghawa, a spate of hit-and-run attacks by Sudan-backed rebels in eastern Chad, and an attack on an armory in N'djamena all occurred in the last three months of 2005.

The situation exploded in December 2005 when the Sudan-backed RDL (Rally for Democracy and Liberty), led by Khartoum's hand-picked Chadian dissident Mahamat Nour, attacked the town of Adre. The core of the RDL included elements which had been fighting beside Khartoum-supported Arab militias in West Darfur, where the Chadian Arab presence is particularly high thanks to a history of displacement from Chad's civil wars and Arab migration and settlement since the 1970's. With Sudanese support, Nour pulled together an array of smaller rebel groups under a larger umbrella called the FUCD (United Front for Democracy and Liberty). While other rebel groups included dissidents from the inner circles of power and Déby's Zaghawa people who seek to distance themselves from Déby's costly failures and to maintain their prominence in the country's leadership, the FUCD appears determined to remove Zaghawa influence in Chad altogether.

The RDL was defeated badly at Adre, but even more embarrassing than the loss was the exposure of Khartoum's direct involvement. Chad went public with its allegations reportedly because it had captured and killed Sudanese army personnel. It is said to have presented the evidence to Libya, which led President Qaddafi to convene a summit in Tripoli on 10 February 2006 that brokered an accord between Presidents Déby and Bashir to halt support to each other's rebels. Although the agreement laid the foundation for a peacekeeping force to monitor the border, neither side took the accord seriously.

In April 2006, FUC forces led an offensive against N'Djamena that was beaten back from the city's outskirts with heavy losses. The French government provided intelligence and airlift capabilities to help Déby fend off the attack, and JEM fought side by side with Déby's forces. Crisis Group's interviews with Sudanese government officials indicated that the coup attempt was backed strongly by members of Sudanese military intelligence.

Hardliners in the Sudanese army, other security forces and the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) share the FUC objective of undermining Zaghawa power because of Chadian support for the Darfur rebels. Khartoum, therefore, allowed FUCD to build its forces in West Darfur during the months before the April attack. In turn, Déby and his entourage encouraged the SLA faction of Minni Minawi and JEM, in which Sudanese Zaghawa dominate, to coordinate military and political action under an alliance launched in January 2006. Several serving and former Sudanese government officials are involved in stoking a virulent hate campaign, alleging the Zaghawa are responsible for the war in Darfur and suggesting their goal is to establish a Greater Zaghawa State over large swathes of Darfur, Chad, and Libya.

Since repelling the attack on N'Djamena, President Déby has focused on defeating or buying off the numerous internal threats to his regime. The Chadian military has consolidated its positions in main towns, leaving civilians in the countryside vulnerable to increasing attacks by rebel groups and the predations of the Janjaweed and other Khartoum-backed militias. Moreover, the Chadian military has been guilty of human rights abuses against civilians it accuses of supporting Chadian rebels.

Chad's relationship with Darfur rebels – particularly JEM and other groups under the umbrella National Redemption Front (NRF) formed by groups that refused to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement – has deepened considerably in recent months. Before late 2005 Déby had worked with Khartoum to undermine JEM, believing them a rival Zaghawa group and a threat to his regime. However, on a recent trip to the strategic town of Abéché in eastern Chad, Crisis Group researchers described the Chadian military and JEM rebels as "indistinguishable". The NRF relies on Chad for sanctuary and support, and in return they assist Déby with internal security issues.

In January 2007, Déby reconciled with Mahamat Nour, reportedly through large cash payments, and in early March Nour became defense minister. With the RDL now largely in his pocket, President Déby's principal concern right now is the Union of Forces for Democracy (UFDD), led by Khartoum's latest proxies Mahamat Nouri and Acheikh Ibn Omer. While not strong enough to threaten N'Djamena, the UFDD took control of Abéché for 24 hours in November 2006. Humanitarian operations for eastern Chad are based in Abéché, and the attack prompted a withdrawal of many international staff. Since the attack, humanitarian access has been severely limited by insecurity along the roads and the threat of rebel attacks.

The risks of an outright war between Chad and Sudan would be high for both countries but it is likely that relations will deteriorate further regardless, as both governments position themselves for an expanded proxy conflict. Sudan wants to cut NRF supply lines and end Chadian support but it is unlikely it could decisively defeat the Chadian army when it has been struggling with the Darfur rebels for years. Consequently, it will likely content itself with the current chaos in Darfur and not risk a dramatic change by open war with its neighbor.

Déby benefits from highlighting the external threat and Sudan's support for Chadian rebels because that distracts attention from the domestic issues which are driving opposition to his regime. Full-scale war would seem suicidal for his smaller army, which already faces major challenges at home. And while Déby focuses on shoring up his military strength to fend off internal enemies, he rejects international calls for a robust UN peacekeeping force and Chadian citizens bear the brunt of escalating violence.

**The Darfur-Chad-CAR Axis**

The instability in Darfur has fostered linkages between armed groups in Darfur, Chad, and CAR. The movements of CAR and Chadian rebel groups in the region are interrelated, and weapons flow easily across porous borders.

Impoverished, conflict-prone, and poorly governed, CAR is easily affected by violence in the region. CAR was a safe haven for the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA) during its 22 year civil war with successive governments in Khartoum, while Sudanese armed forces used CAR as a staging ground for attacks against the SPLA in southern Sudan. At least 36,000 southern Sudanese refugees fled to CAR, and repatriation of these refugees back to Sudan is ongoing.

Outside the capital Bangui, CAR is largely ungoverned. CAR President François Bozizé took control of CAR in a 2003 military coup with strong support from Déby, and, like Déby, his government is focused principally on remaining in power. Bozizé retains a personal Chadian security force and enjoys strong support from the French government, which participates in attacks against CAR rebels who move too close to Bangui. In addition, 380 peacekeepers from the regional organization CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa) provide additional security for the regime.

Rebel groups in CAR are fighting on two fronts, in the northwest and the northeast. In the northwest of the country, clashes between rebel groups and the CAR armed forces have forced 150,000 civilians to flee their homes. Some 50,000 refugees have crossed into Chad and another 30,000 into Cameroon. Atrocities have been committed by both sides and the CAR armed forces has systematically burned the homes of villagers it accuses of sheltering the rebels.

The situation in northeastern CAR is more closely linked to violence in Darfur and eastern Chad. The principal rebel group in the northeast is the UFDR (Union of Democratic Forces for Unity), a recently formed alliance of smaller rebel factions that decry Bozizé's corruption, allege state discrimination against Muslims, and demand that Bozizé step down or share power.

The dangerous axis between northeastern CAR, eastern Chad, and Darfur was fully exposed in April 2006, when the Chadian FUC rebels led by Mahamat Nour launched their attack on N'Djamena through CAR's ungoverned northeast. Following the failed coup, reports surfaced that aircraft crossing from Sudan into northeastern CAR landed and offloaded military hardware and some 50 uniformed fighters. In October 2006, UFDR rebels captured several towns, stealing supplies from CAR armed forces caught off guard by the well-planned attacks. In late November, CAR forces, with strong support from the French military, retook the towns in late November. Bozizé insists that the UDFR is backed by Sudan. Both UDFR and Sudan deny such claims, but cross-border support for armed groups in CAR furthers Khartoum's agenda to regionalize the crisis to stifle a coherent international response.

**Containing and Ending the Crisis**

There must be political solutions in Chad, Darfur, and CAR, but these solutions will require unraveling the cross-border nature of the conflicts and putting negotiations back within their domestic contexts.

➢ In Darfur, disunity among the rebels, uncoordinated and infrequent international diplomacy, and a failure to effectively pressure the government of Sudan have led to a dangerous status quo that will drag on indefinitely unless the international community agrees on a plan of action and pursues it aggressively.

➢ In Chad, rampant corruption and mismanagement caused wages to go unpaid for months and led to the collapse of the few social services that existed. In the absence of international pressure – particularly by the French – on Déby's government to crack down on corruption and share power with rivals, the root causes of insurrection in Chad will continue.

➢ In CAR, divisive ethnic politics, poverty, underdevelopment, and a proliferation of small arms has created a combustible mix. Neighboring countries will continue to exploit structural weaknesses in CAR until the international community invests more heavily in extending state control beyond Bangui and establishing a more inclusive government.

As argued above, the way forward demands a coordinated and multilateral effort to implement the 3Ps: building **peace** through diplomacy, **protecting** civilians through military deployment, and creating leverage through **punitive** action.

*Peacemaking:* Bringing the Darfur rebel groups and the Government of Sudan back to the negotiating table will not be easy: the rebels are too divided right now to negotiate effectively, and the Khartoum regime has demonstrated no interest in stabilizing Darfur or in negotiating a fair political agreement, preferring to pursue its policies of divide and destroy. Since the conflict began in 2003, the two original rebel movements have splintered into at least eight different factions. International efforts to help forge rebel unity have been uncoordinated, sporadic, and are unlikely to work until the U.S. and its partners aggressively pursue a joint strategy.

The formation late last year of a new UN/AU mediation team is an important development. Newly appointed UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Chief Mediator Salim Ahmed Salim are spearheading an effort to restart negotiations, but the peace process will not move forward until the rebels agree on a common negotiating position and the international community applies significant pressure on the government to return to the table. Despite the Sudanese government's promises to allow rebel unification conferences to go forward, Sudanese bombers have attacked the locations of the last two planned meetings.

Chadian President Déby and CAR President Bozizé have demonstrated no commitment to addressing the root causes of instability in their respective countries, and they are unlikely to do so until they are compelled by their allies.

The U.S. and EU should assemble a team of diplomats based in the region to work intensively on unifying the Darfur rebel groups. The UN and African Union must immediately begin to build their capacity to reconvene negotiations between the government and the rebels. Concurrently, governments with leverage over Déby and Bozizé – particularly the U.S. and France – should press them to begin an internationally-supported political process to deal with internal rebel groups.

*Protection:* The international community has agreed on a three-phase process to deploy a hybrid AU/UN peacekeeping force to Darfur, which Khartoum had initially agreed to. It is essential that the eventual hybrid force have the mandate and equipment necessary to protect civilians. The Sudanese government now resists elements of the hybrid force related to the deployment of UN troops to Darfur. Consistent pressure on the Sudanese government is necessary to compel Khartoum to accept such a force.

The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations must work in close coordination with the AU to line up the forces necessary to reach the 20,300-troop level agreed upon by the AU, the UN, the Arab League, and international donor countries. The international community must also accelerate its planning and increase its preparedness for military action without consent from Khartoum.

The UN should also begin planning for deployment of peacekeepers to protect civilians and humanitarian operations in eastern Chad and northeastern CAR, but the deployment of protection forces should occur in conjunction with genuine political dialogue between the governments of these countries and their internal opposition groups. Concerted multilateral pressure is needed to convince Déby that a robust force is necessary to protect civilians. This force should be mandated to protect the camps and humanitarian convoys, and monitor and deter cross border attacks and arms flows. This will require air capability (attack helicopters and aircraft) and satellite imagery. The French are well placed to help with such a mission, though they've been resistant thus far.

The second benefit of such a force will be on the situation inside Darfur. A force in Chad should be linked to a Darfur mission. A UN presence in Chad and CAR was first authorized in UN Security Resolution 1706, and that link should remain. A large force in Chad can act as a deterrent to further forces in Darfur, and should operate as a partner force to African Union forces and the AU/UN hybrid force that is supposed to be deployed.

The international community must also accelerate its planning and increase its preparedness for military action even in the absence of consent from Khartoum. If the situation continues to deteriorate in Darfur, the Security Council should authorize NATO to enforce a no-fly zone over Darfur and have plans in place to deploy ground forces to the region with a mandate to stop the killing. Although the international community's appetite for this type of military action is small, the Sudanese government must understand that all options remain on the table.

A credible planning process will in itself be a point of leverage in pressing primary objectives forward.

***Punishment*:** Specific to Darfur, immediate multilateral punitive action is needed to change the cost benefit analysis of the Sudanese government.

Until the international community rebuilds its leverage over the Sudanese government by enacting punitive measures, both the government and the rebels will continue to fight it out in the sands of Darfur, while the Janjaweed and other armed groups continue to kill, rape, maim, and loot with impunity. The U.S. must back up its rhetoric by demonstrating leadership in forging multilateral consensus.

First, the U.S. should lead the international community in imposing targeted sanctions through the United Nations Security Council against senior regime officials, as authorized in previous Security Council resolutions, and called for in multiple reports from the Council's Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts. Currently the U.S. and UK have different lists of officials that should be sanctioned. One list should be produced and broadened so that the Security Council can rapidly expand targeted sanctions to demonstrate international seriousness.

Secondly, the U.S. should take the lead in passing a UN Security Council resolution establishing a Panel of Experts to quickly ascertain where the assets of the largest Sudanese companies owned by ruling party officials are located, and quickly move to freeze the assets of those companies, as well as build a coalition of states willing to impose measures that the U.S. is contemplating as part of its "Plan B" threats referenced above, and implement these measures multilaterally with as wide an international support base as possible. Ideally, these measures would be implemented through the UN Security Council.

Thirdly, the U.S. should work with its international partners to freeze the assets of the Government Sudan and related commercial entities of the government – such as the main oil consortium – that pass through their banking systems. The U.S. Department of Treasury has compiled such a list, and the administration should work assiduously to ensure that these assets are frozen domestically and by our allies, which would require significant additional staff and resources.

Fourthly, the U.S. should work with other countries to develop a coalition that would notify international banking institutions that if they choose to continue conducting business with the Government of Sudan or companies affiliated with the ruling party, by a predetermined date, they will be cut off from the financial systems of participating countries. The U.S. has recently imposed similar unilateral measures on banks doing business with the regimes in North Korea and Iran, and they have had a direct impact.

Finally, the U.S. and other concerned nations should provide information and declassified intelligence to the International Criminal Court to expedite arrest warrants for the principal architects of the Sudanese government's scorched-earth campaign against its own citizens.

Hundreds of thousands of lives in the sub-region hang in the balance. If the U.S. leads multilateral efforts to address this regional contagion, whose primary root is in the Presidential Palace in Khartoum, then the escalating crisis can be reversed. But such a forward leaning, robust, proactive policy will require significant Congressional pressure and advocacy and continuing citizen activism. Without these critical ingredients, I fear the drift in the Bush administration's engagement will continue, with hope and rhetorical demands being the main instruments of a failing policy.

Thank you.