

The Crisis in Darfur

RAY SUAREZ:

I'm Ray Suarez and this is America Abroad. On the program today: Darfur, Genocide, and Global Intervention.

GEORGE W. BUSH:

At this hour, the world is witnessing terrible suffering and horrible crimes in the Darfur region of Sudan, crimes my government has concluded are genocide.

RAY SUAREZ:

We'll look back at the international response to genocide over the past century.

WALTER CRONKITE:

There has been a very great death toll among Cambodian civilians.

RAY SUAREZ:

We'll examine the lessons learned from the 1994 Rwandan tragedy.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

The whole idea of genocide in the sense of a holocaust was even beyond our imagination.

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL:

The decision to withdraw the peacekeepers was an open invitation to slaughter.

RAY SUAREZ:

And we'll travel to Darfur for a first-hand report on this ongoing crisis.

JAN EGELAND:

Thousands and thousands of militias now live from plundering, pillaging, raping.

RAY SUAREZ:

That's all coming up on America Abroad, from PRI, Public Radio International.

RAY SUAREZ:

I'm Ray Suarez, and this is America Abroad. Six decades after the world community vowed never again to repeat the horrors of the Holocaust, and 12 years after the massacre in Rwanda, the world is once again witnessing a human crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan.

GEORGE W. BUSH:

About 200,000 people have died from conflict, famine, and disease. And more than two million were forced into camps inside and outside their country. I've called this massive violence an act of genocide, because no other word captures the extent of this tragedy.

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RAY SUAREZ:

That's President George W. Bush speaking earlier this month. On this edition of America Abroad, Darfur, genocide, and global intervention. [1:45]

For the last three years in western Sudan, rebel groups have battled government-backed militias in an attempt to secure greater economic and political rights. The Sudanese government has responded with a harsh counter-insurgency campaign that's claimed countless lives and spilled over into the neighboring country of Chad. But with a new peace agreement between rebel groups and the Sudanese government, there are renewed calls for the international community to intervene in what the US government has called the first genocide of the 21st century.

On the program today, we explore the phenomenon of genocide, the weak international response to genocide, and the obstacles to global intervention in Darfur. We examine the lessons learned from the Rwandan genocide. And we bring you a report from inside Darfur on the scope of the human crisis and the prospects for a United Nations peacekeeping force. But first, we're joined by New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, who's made many trips to the Darfur region and has written extensively about this humanitarian crisis.

Nick Kristof, you've lived with this issue for a long time; help us understand what kind of place Darfur is. What have you seen during your travels there?

NICHOLAS KRISTOF:

Sure. You drive through Darfur these days and it's largely desert. Wherever there is a little bit of an oasis, some kind of a well, you'll find a village and each house will have a mud wall and then a thatched-roof hut. And you'd see village after village, and every one is burned out. And people have fled in panic, things are broken, the wells have been destroyed, often with bodies stuffed in them to poison them. And when you do see people, the stories that they tell you, across a broad – I mean, hundreds of miles apart. There's no way they're coordinating these stories; the stories are the same. They're of Sudanese military aircraft attacking their village, and then they rush out of their huts and find a couple of hundred Janjaweed militia surrounding the village, opening fire on people. Systematically killing men, less systematically killing women. Sometimes killing women, sometimes raping women, sometimes letting them go.

RAY SUAREZ:

There has been some effort to keep the militias apart from civilian populations – an African Union 7,000-strong mission in the area. How did it end up being an African Union project rather than a UN one?

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NICHOLAS KRISTOF:

Essentially because the world wimped out. The world has very little appetite for engagement in conflict in a forgotten corner of Africa with a regime like Sudan's, so there was some great hope that the African Union force would be sufficient. And one of the real lessons to me from the African Union force is that even though it's woefully ill-equipped, and it only has a total of 7,000 people, of whom only 5,000 actually carry weapons, even those few forces, that where they actually are able to go to a village and establish a presence, then it makes an incredible difference and people are able to go and reestablish their lives. [5:00] But the problem is that it's just a fraction of what is needed.

RAY SUAREZ:

Well, you say the world wimped out. But would it have been easy to intervene in a country where, for instance, the president, Omar Al Bashir, threatened that if the world body tried to intervene, his army would go to war on UN troops? Would it be that easy to intervene in a country where Osama bin Laden has threatened to extend his global struggle to include Sudan?

NICHOLAS KRISTOF:

It's hard to be sure because we never actually tried, but I think that if we had made really major effort, and lean very hard on the Sudanese government, then I think they would have changed their policy and backed down. Because fundamentally in Khartoum, President Bashir is not a real extremist; he's a practical man who was trying to solve a rebellion in Darfur by what he thought was the most rational way, which was to slaughter vast numbers of people of the Zagawa, Masalit, and Fur tribes. And I think that if we had changed the disincentives for him and added to those disincentives, then I think he would have revised his calculation and stopped slaughtering people.

RAY SUAREZ:

How significant is it that American policy makers, elected and appointed very high officials, have used the word genocide? Does that trigger a legal response? Does it trigger an obligation? Or is it really just a word?

NICHOLAS KRISTOF:

In the past, policy makers have been reluctant to use the word genocide because they fear that, under the 1948 Convention on Genocide, that then they would be required to act. Darfur has actually shown that a president can use the word genocide, and then it actually doesn't have to do anything. The 1948 Convention requires countries, after a finding of genocide, to act, but it doesn't specify what those actions are. And in fact the Bush administration can argue – and probably correctly in a legal sense – that by pushing the matter in the UN, by pushing the matter diplomatically, that it has, in a narrow legal sense, fulfilled its obligations under the Genocide Convention. What it hasn't fulfilled is our moral obligations in response to genocide.

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RAY SUAREZ:

Short of an epiphany in the world community, are there some small measures that can be taken that actually would save a lot of people in the near term?

NICHOLAS KRISTOF:

One measure that I think is crucial is to shore up Chad. Chad is on the brink of collapse. My guess is that there is a 50/50 chance that the country of Chad will just fall apart by the end of this year, and that is fundamental – I mean, it has its own problems, but fundamentally that's because it is being invaded by a proxy army sent by Sudan. [7:56] And France has a major airbase right in that invasion corridor; it should be using its air assets, backed by the US, to destroy those invading forces. We should be doing everything we can to prevent Darfur from spreading across all of Chad. And then fundamentally we've got to push hard for a new UN force to actually stop the violence.

RAY SUAREZ:

Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times. Thanks for being with us.

NICHOLAS KRISTOF:

My pleasure.

[break]

RAY SUAREZ:

The United Nations calls the situation in Darfur the worst humanitarian crisis in the world right now. But when it comes to genocide, international concern rarely translates into international action. As Garrick Utley explains, what we see today in the Darfur region of Sudan is only the most recent chapter in a tragic story of genocide.

JIMMY CARTER:

Never again will the world stand silent or fail to act in time to prevent this terrible crime of genocide.

RONALD REAGAN:

Like you, I say in a forthright voice: never again.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH:

Barbara and I have been to Auschwitz, and literally when I left, I left part of me. But I took something away in its place: the determination not just to remember, but also to act.

BILL CLINTON:

Never again must we be shy in the face of the evidence.

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GARRICK UTLEY:

The human crisis in Darfur is only the most recent tragedy in the long history of genocide. From presidents and other world leaders, we hear assurances that genocide will not be allowed to happen again, but then it does happen again. Samantha Power is a professor of human rights practice at Harvard University, and the author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*.

SAMANTHA POWER:

The pattern of American responses to genocide is a pattern that one sees played out in virtually every Western democracy. It's a pattern of bystanding, it's a pattern of privileging short-term national security and economic interests over long-term investments in the international order.

GARRICK UTLEY:

In the early 20th century, American diplomacy was largely shaped by the United States' desire to remain neutral in foreign conflicts, particularly to avoid becoming entangled in Europe's wars. [10:24] During World War I, the Ottoman Empire deported its Armenian citizens; it's been estimated that, at a minimum, hundreds of thousands of Armenians died of starvation, disease, or murder at the hands of Turkish security forces. Today, there is still a fierce debate over the intent of the Ottoman government in the Armenian tragedy. But at the time there were some government officials, such as US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, who objected.

SAMANTHA POWER:

We had an ambassador in the Ottoman Empire and had missionaries coming to him every day saying, you won't believe the number of Armenians who I used to know who have been murdered. So Morgenthau was getting one set of instructions from Washington which was, don't make mention of these crimes, this is the internal practices of a state, it's not our business. But on the other hand, his very being was getting confronted every day by the reality of the human costs of this carnage.

GARRICK UTLEY:

Morgenthau urged the US government to intervene, but failed to influence American policy.

SAMANTHA POWER:

The interesting thing about the Armenian case is it shows you, in a way, how far the debate has moved over the course of the last century. There was no notion of armed intervention to rescue the Armenian minority. All he was asking to do is to have permission to say, what you do inside your borders is our business. And even that was too radical an intrusion on sovereignty back in that era.

[clip of Nazi speech]

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GARRICK UTLEY:

Faced with the rising Nazi threat in the 1930s, the Western powers again relied on traditional diplomacy and took few, if any, steps against anti-Jewish laws and policies inside Hitler's Germany. Then came World War II, and what the Nazis called the Final Solution of the Jewish problem: the Holocaust.

During the war, leaders of Poland's Jewish community met with Jan Karski, an official with the Polish government in exile. Karski spoke of his fateful meeting in the documentary film *Shoa*.

JAN KARSKI:

They described to me that the Jewish problem is unprecedented. Hitler will lose this war, but he will exterminate all the Jewish population unless the Allies take some unprecedented steps.

GARRICK UTLEY:

Karski met with President Franklin Roosevelt and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden. [12:50] He tried to persuade them to take immediate action to stop the mass killings, but the Allied governments argued that the best way to save the Jews was to win the war. The Nazis were defeated in 1945, but when peace came, six million Jews were dead.

In 1948, the young United Nations debated a resolution to ban the mass murder of any group on the basis of its religion, race, or ethnicity, even if the killings occurred within the borders of a sovereign nation. But before this crime could be made into law, it needed a name.

QUINCY HOWE:

Genocide is a new word combining the Greek word *genos*, meaning race or group, with the root of the Latin *caedere*, meaning to kill. Dr. Raphael Lemkin is the man who created the word genocide. Dr. Lemkin, could you give us a little background on how you came to be interested in this genocide?

RAPHAEL LEMKIN:

I became interested in genocide because it happened so many times. It happened to the Armenians, and after the Armenians, Hitler took action.

GARRICK UTLEY:

Raphael Lemkin was a Polish Jew who began advocating for a law on genocide in the 1930s. He would later lose 49 members of his family in the Holocaust. Samantha Power:

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SAMANTHA POWER:

He began, in the '30s, to believe that if he could only identify or brand the crime, find a word commensurate with the kind of evil that he had read about, then maybe we could make some progress. He made his way to the United States, and then he began drafting legal conventions and stalking ambassadors at the new United Nations.

GARRICK UTLEY:

H.V. Evatt, President of the UN General Assembly, spoke in 1948.

H.V. EVATT:

I would urge – and I think that's the spirit, the unanimous view of the assembly – that this convention be signed by all states, ratified by all parliaments at the earliest date.

SAMANTHA POWER:

And lo and behold, in 1948 the new United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously to ban this crime, the crime of genocide, committing themselves to taking steps to prevent and punish it should they ever see it again.

GARRICK UTLEY:

But influential US Senators worried that the Genocide Convention could infringe on America's sovereignty and be used to prosecute Americans under trumped-up charges of genocide. [15:10] After intense debate, Congress refused to ratify the Genocide Convention. And while many other countries did ratify the convention, the political will to implement it was another matter.

SAMANTHA POWER:

In the wake of the Second World War, no enforcement tools were put out there in service of the genocide convention. No international court was created, so what was going to stop the perpetrators of genocide when they were carrying out their crimes?

GARRICK UTLEY:

In the 1960s and '70s, widespread massacres that may have amounted to genocide took place in Burundi, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and in 1975, Cambodia.

WALTER CRONKITE:

Secretary of State Kissinger says there has been a very great death toll among Cambodian civilians since the Communist Khmer Rouge took power in April. Kissinger said the deaths were connected with that forced evacuation of cities and towns, which began as soon as the Cambodian War ended.

GARRICK UTLEY:

During their four-year rule, the Khmer Rouge killed nearly two million people in a country of only seven million. But with the United States reeling from the war in

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Vietnam, neither Congress nor the public would tolerate further involvement in Indochina.

RONALD REAGAN:

Anyone who has contemplated the horror inflicted on Jews during World War II, or the deaths of millions in Cambodia, must understand that if free men and women remain silent in the face of oppression, we risk the destruction of entire peoples.

GARRICK UTLEY:

For over three decades, the United States refused to ratify the Genocide Convention. That became an increasing embarrassment that was exploited by the Soviet Union. Then, in 1984, President Ronald Reagan made an important decision.

RONALD REAGAN:

Our administration has conducted a long and exhaustive study of the Convention. And yesterday, as a result of that review, we announced that we will vigorously support, consistent with the United States Constitution, the ratification of the Genocide Convention. [applause]

GARRICK UTLEY:

But just a few years after Reagan's speech, Saddam Hussein unleashed a series of brutal attacks that killed more than 200,000 Iraqi Kurds.

REPORTER:

Since the Iraqi attack on Halabja in March, there has been mounting evidence that Iraq is using poison gas, not only against guerrillas, but against defenseless Kurdish civilians as well. [17:27]

GARRICK UTLEY:

The United States took little action to punish Saddam Hussein because it feared strengthening Iraq's neighbor, fundamentalist Iran. In the 1990s, the United States and the world continued to speak out against the crime of genocide, but rarely was firm action taken to prevent it.

REPORTER:

The United States tonight is considering an airlift to the central African nation of Rwanda in order to possibly evacuate Americans.

GARRICK UTLEY:

In 1994 a human crisis engulfed Rwanda.

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REPORTER:

There are no pictures from today but we're told there's a bloodbath underway in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. The acting prime minister has been murdered; government soldiers and rebels are fighting house to house for control.

GARRICK UTLEY:

Eight hundred thousand Rwandans were massacred in a matter of weeks. The United Nations had a small military force on the scene, but it had neither the manpower nor the authorization to protect the victims. And then there was the conflict in Bosnia. In 1995, the United Nations again appeared helpless, this time in the village of Srebrenica.

REPORTER:

For a week there's been no word about the fate of the men of Srebrenica. Today about a thousand came into Tuzla, which leaves at least 10,000 men still missing. It was their duty to protect us, says one girl.

GARRICK UTLEY:

Under the direction of Slobodan Milosevic, Bosnian Serb forces killed over 7,000 Muslim men and boys. UN forces did not intervene. It was the worst mass murder in Europe since World War II. Pressure mounted for US action, and a month later the United States and its NATO allies launched air strikes. Samantha Power:

SAMANTHA POWER:

President Clinton, by 1995, began to feel that there was actually a domestic political price being paid for doing nothing about Serb aggression in Bosnia. And that was an amazing achievement by Jewish groups, by African American groups, by Muslim groups, by vocal members of Congress, by editorial writers, who gave President Clinton the impression that he simply had to act. [19:25]

GARRICK UTLEY:

In addition to military intervention, the international community also established war crimes tribunals to prosecute genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda.

SAMANTHA POWER:

So now you have a permanent international criminal court. And it is progress, there's no question, because in the heads of the perpetrator, they now have to ask themselves, might I someday end up in a court? But when you actually talk to victims, they're looking for protection as much as they're looking for punishment, and that's the piece of this puzzle that we just can't get right.

GEORGE W. BUSH:

At this hour, the world is witnessing terrible suffering and horrible crimes in the Darfur region of Sudan, crimes my government has concluded are genocide.

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GARRICK UTLEY:

That was President George W. Bush speaking at the United Nations in 2004. So what does the United States and other nations do when they – we – see genocide occurring? In Darfur, the moral issue is clear; however, the competing political considerations – foreign and domestic, issues of sovereignty and national interest – can be complex. And then there is that other human trait: indifference. I'm Garrick Utley, for America Abroad.

RAY SUAREZ:

Next on the program, we'll revisit the hundred days of terror in Rwanda, and how the world community responded.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

Increasingly they were targeting men, women, and children who were Tutsi; that was their only label.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

A lot of the conversation in the Security Council was, how do we protect the UN force?

RAY SUAREZ:

And later, a special on-the-ground report from Darfur. That's ahead, on this edition of America abroad.

[break]

RAY SUAREZ:

I'm Ray Suarez, and this is America Abroad.

BILL CLINTON:

We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. [21:10] All over the world there were people like me, sitting in offices day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror.

RAY SUAREZ:

That's President Clinton speaking in 1998 at the Kigali Airport in Rwanda. As we search for answers to the crisis in Darfur, the catastrophe in Rwanda provides important lessons. It was only 12 years ago that 800,000 Rwandans were murdered in just over three months, while the international community took little action. As America Abroad's Steve Roberts reports, the tragic events in Rwanda exposed the weaknesses of the United Nations and the deadly consequences of diplomatic paralysis.

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STEVE ROBERTS:

The roots of the tragedy in Rwanda began with the end of the Cold War, when the United Nations saw an excellent opportunity to take a more aggressive role in resolving global conflicts. In a few short years, the UN established more than 15 new peacekeeping operations, compared with only 13 in the previous three decades. But in the early 1990s, UN peacekeepers were often deployed to conflicts where there was no peace to keep, including Somalia.

REPORTER:

Forty-eight hours of massive violence in Mogadishu is continuing tonight, as American forces try to capture Somali warlord Mohammed Aidid and destroy his operation. Three US helicopters were shot down by rocket-propelled grenades.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

It's difficult to over-emphasize the impact of the tragedy of Somalia and what would take place in Rwanda, and frankly for the UN as an institution.

STEVE ROBERTS:

Michael Barnett is a professor of political science at the University of Minnesota who served at the US mission to the United Nations in 1993 and '94.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

When those poor 18 American soldiers were killed in Somalia in early October 1993, the consequence was shattering, not only for the United States but also for the UN. Because the United States at that point essentially decided that the UN could not be trusted, and one of the lessons learned from the UN is that essentially the UN should not try to enforce a peace.

STEVE ROBERTS:

The failure in Somalia would have a direct impact on the international response to Rwanda.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

What you had, beginning in 1990, was a civil war in Rwanda that had an ethnic dimension to it. [23:28] You had a Tutsi refugee force called the Rwanda Patriotic Front that had taken up arms against the Hutu-led Rwandan government, and you have what's called the Arusha Accords that are signed in mid-1993 that are supposed to not only broker a peace agreement, but also offers the promise of a transition to a multi-party, multi-ethnic democracy. And so that's the big prize.

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STEVE ROBERTS:

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, UNAMIR, was established in October 1993, with a modest deployment of 2,500 soldiers and high hopes for a peacekeeping success.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

Those in the Security Council in the hallways are desperately wanting to find a success story, and so the hope is that the UN will find a good case where it can actually take a society that was involved in a civil war and now bring about a multi-ethnic democracy. And in doing so, that's a great public relations coup. As one Security Council member said, this is like manna from heaven.

STEVE ROBERTS:

With both the Hutu government and Tutsi rebels supporting the peace agreement, the United Nations believed that Rwanda would not require a large UN commitment in order to succeed. Major Brent Beardsley was an infantry officer in the Canadian Army who served as military assistant to Major General Romeo Dallaire, Commander of the UN Mission in Rwanda.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

It was a very, very restricted mission both in mandate and in resources and in size, and it was also made very clear to General Dallaire in New York, of conversations to which I was privy, that the mission was to be fast, it was to be cheap, and it was to be bloodless.

STEVE ROBERTS:

But within a month of their arrival on the ground in the capital city of Kigali, UN forces began to realize that the situation in Rwanda was less rosy than it appeared.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

The first thing was in November there were a series of killings, very small-scale massacres – eight, ten, twelve, fifteen people at a time – but killings that, when I went to investigate them, had things that either didn't make sense to us at the time or showed a very higher level of organization. These were not just sporadic murders.

STEVE ROBERTS:

In January 1994 an informant warned UN peacekeepers that Hutu extremists were stockpiling guns and machetes, and planned to reignite the civil war in order to exterminate the entire Tutsi population. General Dallaire decided to confiscate the secret arms caches. Michael Barnett: [25:43]

MICHAEL BARNETT:

You can imagine, from the standpoint in New York, they're looking at Dallaire and going, you've got to be out of your mind. Here you had in Somalia 30,000-plus troops, well-

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equipped, that essentially lost, and now you're asking with a meager force in Rwanda to undertake the same activities? There's no way this is going to succeed, and if it fails, this will be just simply a meltdown for the Rwanda force and a meltdown for the organization.

STEVE ROBERTS:

The UN ordered Dallaire to call off the raid. Brent Beardsley:

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

Our title was UNAMIR, which unfortunately in Rwanda translated into *minoir*(sp), which is a castrated bull. That, of course, we didn't realize at the time when we named the mission. So they were basically calling us a castrated bull – that we didn't have the ability or the courage or the capability to stand up to them.

STEVE ROBERTS:

Despite their concerns about the arms caches, even Major Beardsley and General Dallaire did not believe there was a plan for extermination.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

I think the whole idea of genocide in the sense of a Holocaust was even beyond our imagination. There were going to be a lot of Tutsi men, women, and children murdered. But genocide is a long stretch from that.

STEVE ROBERTS:

By the spring of 1994, the transitional government outlined in the Arusha Peace Accords still had not been established, and the security situation continued to deteriorate.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

There was a keg of powder and there was a fuse burning. And we could see it coming; you could feel it. I kept saying over and over, you know, the situation's getting worse, so when that spark hit we knew it was going to blow, and sure enough it did.

STEVE ROBERTS:

The spark came on April 6, 1994, when a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down as it approached the airport in Kigali. Romeo Dallaire and Brent Beardsley rushed to a meeting at Rwandan Army headquarters, where hard-line Hutu officers announced they were taking power.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

When we returned to our headquarters the following morning at dawn, a very carefully made plan was obviously in execution, and throughout that day we received word that moderate ministers and their families were hunted down very, very efficiently. [27:48] And by almost noon on the seventh the entire moderate political leadership of the nation

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was dead. But from the tenth – the ninth, tenth on – we had gotten reports from our military observer teams that increasingly they were targeting men, women, and children who were Tutsi; that was their only label.

STEVE ROBERTS:

Beardsley soon learned that ten Belgian members of the peacekeeping force had been brutally murdered by Hutu militia. With the chaos and killing in Rwanda, Western governments moved quickly to protect their citizens.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

Two thousand of the best troops in the world arrived at the Kigali Airport: a battalion of French paras, a Belgian para-commando battalion, US Marines. They were largely there to pick up their expatriates and to evacuate them. And I've got to be blatant about this: it was the white people. If you were white you got on the airplane. You got on the airplane with your dog, your pet bird, your six suitcases. But your Tutsi nanny didn't get on the bus, and your Tutsi employees and the embassy employees and the aid agencies' employees didn't get on, and they were left to die.

STEVE ROBERTS:

UN troops remained on the ground and scrambled to save as many Tutsi civilians as they could.

BRENT BEARDSLEY:

Now, we couldn't take on the genocide but we could certainly save 15, 20, 25, 40,000 people, whatever. Usually all we had was about a section's worth of soldiers – eight, ten soldiers – and basically said this area is now our protected site. And letting the extremist leadership know that we were there and if they killed those people they would have to kill our soldiers, and then they'd have to answer to the international community. There was a lot of bluffing involved.

STEVE ROBERTS:

With a renewed civil war, the original mission of the UN peacekeepers had collapsed, and ten Belgian peacekeepers had been murdered. The question was what the United Nations would do next. Michael Barnett:

MICHAEL BARNETT:

The UN operation is increasingly surrounded by violence, it's running low on provisions, it may be marked for death, and so a lot of the conversation in the Security Council was, how do we protect the UN force? And increasingly the conversation revolved around two possibilities. One was reinforcements, but there were no reinforcements and if you can't reinforce, then the natural conclusion is we need to reduce the exposure of the UN. So the options from the Security Council standpoint were really between awful and even more awful. [30:00]

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STEVE ROBERTS:

The United Nations, the United States, and other leading powers would not risk sending new troops on a mission to which they had never been strongly committed. Prudence Bushnell was the deputy assistant secretary for African Affairs at the State Department.

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL:

This is where the specter of Somalia came front and center. The mandate won't allow for the peacekeepers to confront the violence; they don't have the wherewithal, they don't have the manpower, so let's get them out.

STEVE ROBERTS:

On April 15, Secretary of State Warren Christopher sent a memo to Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the UN, outlining American support for a withdrawal of UN forces from Rwanda.

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL:

The decision to withdraw the peacekeepers was made on high, and I will never forget the look in the eyes of the Rwandan-Burundi desk officer when I said they're withdrawing the peacekeepers. He knew – those of who were closest knew – that this was an open invitation to slaughter.

STEVE ROBERTS:

On April 21 the UN Security Council voted to withdraw all but 270 UN peacekeeping troops from Rwanda. Inside the US government, an inter-agency group met to consider other options.

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL:

Once the decision was made to withdraw the peacekeepers, the inter-agency group continued to meet. Blah, blah, blah, blah, every meeting. And the reason why I say blah, blah, blah, blah is because it was very clear: don't even think about sending Americans, forget that. So we're not going to send Americans, we're not going to encourage anybody else to go in, we're not going to send any resources, but hey, within those parameters, do whatever you can do.

STEVE ROBERTS:

As the United Nations announced it was withdrawing UN forces from Rwanda, Human Rights Watch began using the word genocide to describe what was happening on the ground. Michael Barnett was part of the US mission to the United Nations.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

There was word that we shouldn't use the word genocide. I can't tell you that there was a directive, but there was a general belief that the US government, and this also includes

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the Security Council, should not use the word genocide. And so there was a broad consensus that this was a word to be avoided at all costs, and the reason why is, if you say the genocide word, then you have to do something. [32:21] But everybody understood in New York that nothing was going to be done.

STEVE ROBERTS:

In the United States, the Clinton administration did not face much public pressure to take action to address the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda. Prudence Bushnell:

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL:

There was absolutely no public opinion, no tidal wave of concern in the least, and that of course made the job of getting the attention of senior political people that much more difficult. If the White House is interested, anything can happen. If the White House is not interested, nothing happens.

STEVE ROBERTS:

By the beginning of May, the scale of the genocide in Rwanda had become widely known. And at the United Nations, new meetings were held to discuss options for a new UN mandate in Rwanda.

MICHAEL BARNETT:

Well, it was all theater. Everybody understood that you can create a mandate, but that there were not going to be any troops to back up the mandate; it just wasn't going to happen.

STEVE ROBERTS:

In the end, the United Nations did not deploy any additional peacekeepers in Rwanda, and the genocide ended in July when the Tutsi rebel force defeated the Hutus and took power in Rwanda. Approximately 800,000 Tutsis had been killed in one of the most rapid and efficient genocides in history. Prudence Bushnell:

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL:

The lesson that I take away is that when you allow so-called national interest to trump moral imperative, you do not get off as a human being. Don't think that, when you're making decisions based on rational impersonal interest, that you're going to escape the moral burden that you bear when you say I'm sorry. Eight hundred thousand people are being killed, but there's nothing I'm going to do about it.

STEVE ROBERTS:

Michael Barnett:

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MICHAEL BARNETT:

Rwanda continues to haunt the UN. One of the reasons why Kofi Annan and Boutros Ghali and others did not want to get into Rwanda was because they thought it was a loser, and they thought if they get involved in a loser – this is in April – the consequence will be that the UN will be discredited. What they didn't anticipate, though, was that using the cloak of impartiality to be indifferent to genocide would itself lead to charges of illegitimacy to the organization. So it was the very failure to get involved, I think, that caused so much of the UN's lack of legitimacy over the last ten years. [34:43] And I think that's one reason why the UN has actually stepped up a little bit more on Darfur; Jan Egeland and Kofi Annan and others have actually tried to do something to keep attention on Darfur, and I think that's one of the implicit moral lessons that they've learned from Rwanda.

STEVE ROBERTS:

I'm Steve Roberts, for America Abroad.

RAY SUAREZ:

Next on the program, we travel to Darfur for a first-hand account of the humanitarian crisis in the region.

JAN EGELAND:

The last few months we are getting more and more displacement, more and more mouths to feed.

RAY SUAREZ:

That's ahead on this edition of America Abroad.

[break]

RAY SUAREZ:

I'm Ray Suarez and this is America Abroad. The crisis in Darfur remains, according to the United Nations, explosive. Even as a peace agreement was being negotiated between the Sudanese government and the largest rebel faction in the region, more than a quarter of a million newly displaced villagers were fleeing fresh outbreaks of violence and heading to the relative safety of sprawling refugee camps. There are enormous questions about whether the peace deal can ever take hold and whether the millions of victims affected by this conflict will recover. America Abroad's Margaret Warner traveled to Darfur to better understand their suffering and loss.

MARGARET WARNER:

It isn't easy getting to Darfur. First you need a Sudanese visa, then a government-issued travel permit, especially for the country's vast western region. And if you manage to

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secure both of those, you need transportation. In our case, that came in the form of an airplane operated by the United Nations World Food Program.

From the air, all you can see is a vast expanse of baking red soil. Flat dusty plains extend to the horizon, punctuated in places by dried-up riverbeds, ancient rock formations, and small, tightly laid-out villages. It's almost a lunar landscape, and as you look down from above, it's hard to imagine that this land can even sustain life, much less be worth fighting for. But it has been fought over viciously and violently for more than three years.

The brutality that has been inflicted upon Darfur is immediately apparent the moment you drive into one of the refugee camps that together house more than two million people. [37:05] The town of Gereida used to be a small dot on Darfur's landscape; today it's home to over 100,000 people. In the first four months of this year the camp tripled in size, as wave upon wave of villagers fled fresh violence launched by the government-backed Janjaweed militia. Asha Ibrahim Ali has been here for two weeks now, after being driven from her village under what she says was a coordinated assault by the Sudanese military and the horse-and-camel-riding Janjaweed.

ASHA IBRAHIM ALI:

[via translator] The military came and attacked first; after that, the Janjaweed came. They killed our children. They looted the house. They even took all our clothes. They did not leave anything for us.

MARGARET WARNER:

Asha walked for four hours, carrying one of her young children to get here. When she arrived, she discovered there are no structures offering shelter in Gereida; only the trees give her and the other new arrivals here any level of relief from temperatures that can reach 115 degrees by early afternoon.

The camp's sudden growth is one reason it lacks the basics of shelter, food, and clothing. But humanitarian aid agencies also accuse the local governor, appointed by the national authorities in Khartoum, of harassing aid workers and arbitrarily stopping fuel and supply convoys into the camps. Local rebel groups are culpable too. They've hijacked aid convoys and stolen United Nations fuel and vehicles.

It's all given rise to a desperate situation at Gereida, and one that the UN Undersecretary General Jan Egeland was seeing for himself the day we visited. He described as atrocious the scenes he was witnessing.

JAN EGELAND:

The way it is now it cannot continue. It has deteriorated every week now the last few months. We are getting more and more displacement, more and more mouths to feed. I

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hope that we're turning a corner now to the better, because I cannot even fathom what will happen if it will continue to deteriorate.

MARGARET WARNER:

The possibility of a corner turn lies in the peace agreement signed in Nigeria in early May between the government of Sudan and the largest armed rebel group operating in Darfur. The agreement offers Darfur's rebels a greater role in governing the region, and calls for their forces to stand down, be disarmed, and some integrated into the Sudanese Army. On the other side, it commits the government of Sudan to disarm the rapacious Janjaweed militia, and the government insists it's serious about doing so. Mazjoub El Khalifa Ahmed is an advisor to Sudan's president, and he's the man who signed the peace agreement on behalf of the government in Khartoum.

MAZJOURB EL KHALIFA AHMED:

The government is committed to address this seriously according to the law, and to disarm them and to bring them to justice. [40:04] This is our sovereignty and this is our responsibility. We are not going to hesitate at all.

MARGARET WARNER:

In this refugee camp the vast majority of residents – even one listening to a shortwave radio in English, a language he does not understand – were unaware that a peace deal had been reached, and even those who did know about it had little faith in the promises made by the Sudanese government. The government continues to deny any involvement with the Janjaweed or their atrocities, but the refugees, from their own experience, see the Sudanese military as virtually indistinguishable from the Janjaweed militias. UN Undersecretary General Egeland acknowledges that getting the government to rein in its allies, the Janjaweed, will be difficult, even if the government's intention is genuine.

JAN EGELAND:

It will take time, I think, to control thousands and thousands of militias who now live from plundering, pillaging, raping; that's what they do. This will take time. We have not yet seen any sign that they're reining in these groups.

MARGARET WARNER:

And there are some groups that don't want to be reined in. Hassan Al Turabi is a leading Islamist with influence over one rebel group. He was once a key insider in the Sudan government, and invited Osama bin Laden to live here in the early 1990s. Today he's in opposition after falling out with his former colleagues in the regime.

MARGARET WARNER:

Do you think this peace deal is going to take hold?

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HASSAN AL TURABI:

I don't think so. All the national political forces here, the national political forces, they are against it. And then in Darfur, the Arabs and the majority of the resistance movement is against it. I don't think it would hold.

MARGARET WARNER:

Cameron Hume is the top US diplomat in Sudan and took part in the peace talks in Nigeria.

CAMERON HUME:

There is a large element of chaos and anarchy. So coming to an agreement can restrain the people who are under control of those who made the agreement. But anyone who's seen the pictures of those camps in Darfur – that's not order, that's really a sign or consequence of disorder.

MARGARET WARNER:

The only thing guarding against that disorder are the green-helmeted peacekeepers from the African Union. [42:25] They patrol the refugee camps on pickup trucks, their crisp uniforms bearing the names of their countries of origin: Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal. But across Darfur, a region the size of France, there are just 7,000 AU troops, and the rules governing their engagement only permit them to shoot back when they themselves feel endangered. It's nowhere near enough to pacify the region or even bring security to the refugees.

[crowd chanting] As Mr. Egeland's convoy arrived, it was mobbed by a group of enthusiastic demonstrators welcoming him to the camp and demanding the immediate deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to protect them.

JAN EGELAND:

Tensions are building. There are many political groups also here now; their message is that they want an international force, they want a UN force, because they do not feel safe. They say we do not believe really that there is a better future for us unless there is this international force. I had to tell them that it can become better, especially next year, but in the next few months it's probably going to deteriorate here.

MARGARET WARNER:

Eight thousand miles away from Darfur, at UN Headquarters in New York, the need to deploy a UN peacekeeping force has long been on the minds of top officials.

MARK MALLOCH BROWN:

There could be nothing more shameful than another Rwanda on our watch. I mean, I myself every day wear a little green wristband: Not on My Watch, Save Darfur.

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MARGARET WARNER:

Mark Malloch Brown is the UN's Deputy Secretary General, number two to Kofi Annan.

MARK MALLOCH BROWN:

You know, so to try and remind myself every day that in the period I'm on the bridge of the UN, this ship ain't going to make – if I can have anything to do with it – another kind of disastrous failed turn as happened on Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

MARGARET WARNER:

This spring, with public pressure building in the West and death still mounting past the 200,000 mark, UN officials knew that in diplomatic terms the clock was approaching midnight. The UN is committed to a doctrine called the responsibility to protect, a new policy that specifically charges the organization with taking action to save civilian lives when and if the home government isn't doing so. But Deputy Secretary General Mark Malloch Brown says it can still be extremely difficult to turn that doctrine into action.

MARK MALLOCH BROWN:

Kids in England play this game Snakes and Ladders, and every time we think we've climbed up a ladder we slip down a snake on the board, because it really is one of those situations where you think you've got people lined up, and then something goes awry and you fall back again. [45:19] So this is a frustratingly difficult business, and the clock ticks and lives are lost in Darfur every week, month that we can't get this done.

MARGARET WARNER:

Back at the Kalma refugee camp in Darfur, we saw just one example of the on-the-ground difficulties the UN is also facing. Aid workers had started building a well capable of doubling the amount of water available for the camp's rapidly growing refugee population. But they had run up against government obstruction. The local authorities blocked the delivery of fuel that the digging machines need to complete their work. The UN hopes that, now that Sudan's government has signed the peace agreement, that kind of difficulty will be overcome. But on the even bigger issue of whether the government of Sudan will permit a UN peacekeeping force to take up positions in Darfur, there are still doubts. Cameron Hume is the senior US diplomat in Sudan.

CAMERON HUME:

Well, the position that they had long stated is that they would not accept a UN force in Darfur without a global peace agreement. We have such a peace agreement now. I believe we're working on the assumption that they will consent to a UN force.

MARGARET WARNER:

But the man who signed the peace deal on behalf of the government, Mazjoub El Khalifa Ahmed, told us the blue helmets of the UN have no business in Darfur. Their presence, he says, would smack of colonialism, and he insists that only an African Union force should

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be deployed in the region. If that position prevails, it will be bitter news to the refugees, like those in Kalma camp, directly affected by the crisis in Darfur. Some Sudanese government ministers are hinting they are willing to entertain a UN force, and without one it is hard to see how peace can ever come to this troubled region. But even the best-case scenario doesn't foresee the deployment of an international force for many months. UN officials have pressed the Sudanese government in the meantime to at least let humanitarian groups do their work without harassment, in a bid to make the situation in Darfur less perilous for those who have already endured three years of misery. For America Abroad, I'm Margaret Warner in Nyala, Darfur.

[break]

RAY SUAREZ:

I'm Ray Suarez and this is America Abroad. The world let it happen again: the United States, heavily committed elsewhere in the world; the UN, stymied by members of the Security Council, unwilling to pressure friends in Khartoum; the African Union, outmanned, lightly equipped, and viewed with hostility by the Sudanese government, itself a member of the AU. Everyone said the right things. The world sent help to families fleeing the horrifying violence, sure, but seemed stumped when it came to stopping the creation of more fleeing, frightened people.

When he came back from negotiating a possible end to the conflict between the government of Sudan and the rebel armies of western Sudan, I spoke to Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick about everything that needed to happen next. [48:47] Things would have to go very, very right for the peace plan to work in a place where little had gone right while hundreds of thousands died. The Sudanese government had to make the first move, disarming Janjaweed militias that it had long denied supplying and supporting. Only then would the biggest rebel army stop its fight. Then the world community was going to have to step up its aid in a huge way, just weeks after the World Food Program cut rations in Darfur because of dwindling donations.

As the deputy secretary explained all this, I thought, this is pretty optimistic. Then I thought, well, what's the other choice? Most African militaries are incapable of stopping the killing. European militaries would set off an immediate and violent reaction. The United States has been up to its eyeteeth in Iraq and Afghanistan, and an incursion into another Muslim state would have unpredictable consequences.

The rainy season will soon start lashing the tent cities of western Sudan, leaving Darfurians ankle deep in muck, making roads impassable, exposing refugees to disease and starvation. So even if things move quickly, even if everybody does what they're supposed to, more people are going to die before they get a chance to go home. The world will then say never again, and mean it again. The leaders of the Sudanese

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government rolled the dice, trusting that the world would not respond quickly while it tried to snuff out rebellion by killing civilians. Never again... until the next time.

[music]

And that concludes this edition of America Abroad: Darfur, Genocide, and Global Intervention. Visit us on the web at www.americaabroadmedia.org.

Our executive producer is Aaron Lobel. Our senior producers are John Haas and Simon Marks. Our director of broadcasting and station relations is Steve Martin. The production team includes Emma Dingle, Trisha Lucero, and Chris Williams. Archival audio came from ABC News; British Pathe; Vanderbilt University Television News Archives; NBC News; the Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton Presidential Libraries; CBS News; and the White House; with special assistance from Two Cats Productions. We'd also like to thank Mark Hanis and the Genocide Intervention Network, the United States Holocaust Museum, and WHYY in Philadelphia. I'm Ray Suarez; join me for another edition of America Abroad.

SIMON MARKS:

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