

Ten Reasons Why “Save Darfur” is a PR Scam to Justify the Next US Oil and Resource Wars in Africa

By [Bruce Dixon](#)

Global Research, December 12, 2007

blackagendareport.com 27 November 2007

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

The star-studded hue and cry to “Save Darfur” and “stop the genocide” has gained enormous traction in U.S. media along with bipartisan support in Congress and the White House. But the Congo, with ten to twenty times as many African dead over the same period is not called a “genocide” and passes almost unnoticed. Sudan sits atop lakes of oil. It has large supplies of uranium, and other minerals, significant water resources, and a strategic location near still more African oil and resources. The unasked question is whether the nation’s Republican and Democratic foreign policy elite are using claims of genocide, and appeals for “humanitarian intervention” to grease the way for the next oil and resource wars on the African continent.

The regular manufacture and the constant maintenance of false realities in the service of American empire is a core function of the public relations profession and the corporate news media. Whether it’s fake news stories about wonder drugs and how toxic chemicals are good for you, bribed commentators and journalists discoursing on the benefits of No Child Left Behind, Hollywood stars advocating military intervention to save African orphans, or slick propaganda campaigns employing viral marketing techniques to reach out to college students, bloggers, churches and ordinary citizens, it pays to take a close look behind the facade.

Among the latest false realities being pushed upon the American people are the simplistic pictures of Black vs. Arab genocide in Darfur, and the proposed solution: a robust US-backed or US-led military intervention in Western Sudan. Increasing scrutiny is being focused upon the “Save Darfur” lobby and the Save Darfur Coalition; upon its founders, its finances, its methods and motivations and its truthfulness. In the spirit of furthering that examination we here present ten reasons to suspect that the “Save Darfur” campaign is a PR scam to justify US intervention in Africa.

1. It wouldn’t be the first Big Lie our government and media elite told us to justify a war.

Elders among us can recall the Tonkin Gulf Incident, which the US government deliberately provoked to justify initiation of the war in Vietnam. This rationale was quickly succeeded by the need to help the struggling infant “democracy” in South Vietnam, and the still useful “fight ‘em over there so we don’t have to fight ‘em over here” nonsense. More recently the bombings, invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have been variously explained by people on the public payroll as necessary to “get Bin Laden” as revenge for 9-11, as measures to take “the world’s most dangerous weapons” from the hands of “the world’s most dangerous regimes”, as measures to enable the struggling Iraqi “democracy” stand on its own two feet, and necessary because it’s still better to “fight them over there so we

don't have to fight them here".

2. It wouldn't even be the first time the U.S. government and media elite employed "genocide prevention" as a rationale for military intervention in an oil-rich region.

The 1995 US and NATO military intervention in the former Yugoslavia was supposedly a "peacekeeping" operation to stop a genocide. The lasting result of that campaign is Camp Bondsteel, one of the largest military bases on the planet. The U.S. is practically the only country in the world that maintains military bases outside its own borders. At just under a thousand acres, Camp Bondsteel offers the US military the ability to pre-position large quantities of equipment and supplies within striking distance of Caspian oil fields, pipeline routes and relevant sea lanes. It is also widely believed to be the site of one of the US's secret prison and torture facilities.

3. If stopping genocide in Africa really was on the agenda, why the focus on Sudan with 200,000 to 400,000 dead rather than Congo with five million dead?

"The notion that a quarter million Darfuri dead are a genocide and five million dead Congolese are not is vicious and absurd," according to Congolese activist Nita Evele. "What's happened and what is still happening in Congo is not a tribal conflict and it's not a civil war. It is an invasion. It is a genocide with a death toll of five million, twenty times that of Darfur, conducted for the purpose of plundering Congolese mineral and natural resources."

More than anything else, the selective and cynical application of the term "genocide" to Sudan, rather than to the Congo where ten to twenty times as many Africans have been murdered reveals the depth of hypocrisy around the "Save Darfur" movement. In the Congo, where local gangsters, mercenaries and warlords along with invading armies from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola engage in slaughter, mass rape and regional depopulation on a scale that dwarfs anything happening in Sudan, all the players eagerly compete to guarantee that the extraction of vital coltan for Western computers and cell phones, the export of uranium for Western reactors and nukes, along with diamonds, gold, copper, timber and other Congolese resources continue undisturbed.

Former UN Ambassador Andrew Young and George H.W. Bush both serve on the board of Barrick Gold, one of the largest and most active mining concerns in war-torn Congo. Evidently, with profits from the brutal extraction of Congolese wealth flowing to the West, there can be no Congolese "genocide" worth noting, much less interfering with. For their purposes, U.S. strategic planners may regard their Congolese model as the ideal means of capturing African wealth at minimal cost without the bother of official U.S. boots on the ground.

4. It's all about Sudanese oil.

Sudan, and the Darfur region in particular, sit atop a lake of oil. But Sudanese oil fields are not being developed and drilled by Exxon or Chevron or British Petroleum. Chinese banks, oil and construction firms are making the loans, drilling the wells, laying the pipelines to take Sudanese oil where they intend it to go, calling far too many shots for a twenty-first century in which the U.S. aspires to control the planet's energy supplies. A U.S. and NATO military intervention will solve that problem for U.S. planners.

5. It's all about Sudanese uranium, gum arabic and other natural resources.

Uranium is vital to the nuclear weapons industry and an essential fuel for nuclear reactors. Sudan possesses high quality deposits of uranium. Gum arabic is an essential ingredient in pharmaceuticals, candies and beverages like Coca-Cola and Pepsi, and Sudanese exports of this commodity are 80% of the world's supply. When comprehensive U.S. sanctions against the Sudanese regime were being considered in 1997, industry lobbyists stepped up and secured an exemption in the sanctions bill to guarantee their supplies of this valuable Sudanese commodity. But an in-country U.S. and NATO military presence is a more secure guarantee that the extraction of Sudanese resources, like those of the Congo, flow westward to the U.S. and the European Union.

6. It's all about Sudan's strategic location

Sudan sits opposite Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, where a large fraction of the world's easily extracted oil will be for a few more years. Darfur borders on Libya and Chad, with their own vast oil resources, is within striking distance of West and Central Africa, and is a likely pipeline route. The Nile River flows through Sudan before reaching Egypt, and Southern Sudan has water resources of regional significance too. With the creation of AFRICOM, the new Pentagon command for the African continent, the U.S. has made open and explicit its intention to plant a strategic footprint on the African continent. From permanent Sudanese bases, the U.S. military could influence the politics and economies of Africa for a generation to come.

7. The backers and founders of the "Save Darfur" movement are the well-connected and well-funded U.S. foreign policy elite.

According to a copyrighted Washington Post story this summer

"The "Save Darfur (Coalition) was created in 2005 by two groups concerned about genocide in the African country - the American Jewish World Service and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum...

"The coalition has a staff of 30 with expertise in policy and public relations. Its budget was about \$15 million in the most recent fiscal year...

"Save Darfur will not say exactly how much it has spent on its ads, which this week have attempted to shame China, host of the 2008 Olympics, into easing its support for Sudan. But a coalition spokeswoman said the amount is in the millions of dollars."

Though the "Save Darfur" PR campaign employs viral marketing techniques, reaching out to college students, even to black bloggers, it is not a grassroots affair, as were the movement against apartheid and in support of African liberation movements in South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique a generation ago. Top heavy with evangelical Christians who preach the coming war for the end of the world, and with elements known for their uncritical support of Israeli rejectionism in the Middle East, the Save Darfur movement is clearly an establishment affair, a propaganda campaign that spends millions of dollars each month to manufacture consent for US military intervention in Africa under the cloak of stopping or preventing genocide.

8. None of the funds raised by the "Save Darfur Coalition", the flagship of the "Save Darfur Movement" go to help needy Africans on the ground in Darfur, according to stories in both

the Washington Post and the New York Times.

“None of the money collected by Save Darfur goes to help the victims and their families. Instead, the coalition pours its proceeds into advocacy efforts that are primarily designed to persuade governments to act.”

9. “Save Darfur” partisans in the U.S. are not interested in political negotiations to end the conflict in Darfur.

President Bush has openly and repeatedly attempted to throw monkey wrenches at peace negotiations to end the war in Darfur. Even pro-intervention scholars and humanitarian organizations active on the ground have criticized the U.S. for endangering humanitarian relief workers, and for effectively urging rebel parties in Darfur to refuse peace talks and hold out for U.S. and NATO intervention on their behalf.

The slick, well financed and nearly seamless PR campaign simplistically depicts the conflict as strictly a racial affair, in which Arabs, generally despised in the US media anyway, are exterminating the black population of Sudan. In the make-believe world it creates, there is no room for negotiation. But in fact, many of Sudan’s ‘Arabs’, even the Janjiweed, are also black. In any case, they were armed and unleashed by a government which has the power to disarm them if it chooses, and can also negotiate in good faith if it chooses. Negotiations are never a guarantee of anything, but refusal to participate in negotiations, as the U.S. appears to be urging the rebels in Darfur to do, and as the “Save Darfur” PR campaign justifies, avoids any path to a political settlement among Sudanese, leaving open only the road of U.S and NATO military intervention.

10. Blackwater and other U.S. mercenary contractors, the unofficial armed wings of the Republican party and the Pentagon are eagerly pitching their services as part of the solution to the Darfur crisis.

“Chris Taylor, head of strategy for Blackwater, says his company has a database of thousands of former police and military officers for security assignments. He says Blackwater personnel could set up perimeters and guard Darfurian villages and refugee camps in support of the U.N. Blackwater officials say it would not take many men to fend off the Janjaweed, a militia that is supported by the Sudanese government and attacks villages on camelback.”

Apparently Blackwater doesn’t need to come to the Congo, where hunger and malnutrition, depopulation, mass rape and the disappearance of schools, hospitals and civil society into vast law free zones ruled by an ever-changing cast of African proxies (like the son of the late and unlamented Idi Amin), all under a veil of complicit media silence already constitute the perfect business-friendly environment for siphoning off the vast wealth of that country at minimal cost.

Look for the adoption of the Congolese model across the wide areas of Africa that U.S. strategic planners call “ungoverned spaces”. Just don’t expect to see details on the evening news, or hear about them from Oprah, George Clooney or Angelina Jolie.

Bruce Dixon can be contacted at bruce.dixon@blackagendareport.com

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