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Sudan: Roots and Future of the Southern Insurgency



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A Research Paper

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NESA 86-10007
February 1986

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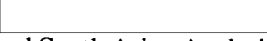

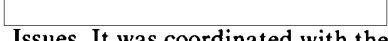

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Sudan: Roots and Future of the Southern Insurgency



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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by 
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,
with contributions from 
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis;
 Office of Central Reference; and
 Office of Global
Issues. It was coordinated with the Directorate for
Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and
may be directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division,
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**Sudan: Roots and Future
of the Southern Insurgency**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 17 January 1986
was used in this report.*

North-south tensions, rooted in ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences between southern animists and Christians and the politically dominant northern Arab Muslims, have been a major factor in the fall of Sudan's last three governments. These tensions now threaten the stability of the current regime. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA)—the major southern rebel group backed by Ethiopia and, until recently, Libya—has substantially improved its operational capabilities and rapidly expanded since 1983 to 12,000 to 15,000 men under the leadership of former Sudanese Army Col. John Garang.

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The southern rebels' emphasis on national grievances and goals—not just southern ones—has increased since the ouster of President Nimeiri last April. The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement—the insurgents' political arm—claims to seek a secular, unified, democratic, federal, and socialist Sudan. Garang has placed the onus on Khartoum to initiate dialogue, demanding the convening of a national conference in which the south's problems are addressed in a national context and at which a new interim government is elected to replace the current transitional regime.

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Resolution of the southern conflict will not be easy and probably will not be possible within the next year for any government in Khartoum. A military-dominated regime probably would be more successful in negotiating an end to the insurgency than an elected civilian government hobbled by the demands of its constituents. A successful political settlement will have to include a federal form of government for Sudan, providing constitutional guarantees to the south that limit the application of Islamic law and assure revenue sharing.

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Ethiopia is likely to be a key player in a future settlement. Its provision of safehaven, arms, military training, logistics, and political support is largely responsible for the SPLA's dramatic growth since 1983. Addis Ababa views the Sudanese rebels' military and political activities as its best instrument to press Sudan to end support to Ethiopian dissidents and possibly to gain a more ideologically compatible leadership in Khartoum. Ethiopia would support a political settlement in Sudan only if it can attain a large part of these objectives.

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Fighting probably will continue and may intensify this year whether or not a dialogue takes place between Khartoum and the rebels. Both sides are likely to violate any cease-fires as they try to improve their bargaining

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positions by achieving military superiority. The insurgents probably will try to increase pressure on Khartoum by staging limited operations in the north, possibly even attacking northern strategic targets. As these clashes continue, there is a strong possibility that Khartoum will attempt to impose a military solution. No amount of foreign military aid that Khartoum can reasonably expect to acquire, however, will provide sufficient military capability to quell the insurgency, especially given Ethiopian determination to support the rebels. 


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Continued fighting portends bleak political and economic prospects for Sudan. It will further discourage foreign creditors and investors and generate additional burdens for the already hard-pressed leadership in Khartoum. The war in the south has strained the Army's unity and loyalty and increases the prospect of yet another coup, possibly led by younger, more radical officers or those who identify with ethnic and religious factions. 

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Khartoum's concern for undercutting assistance for the rebels has given Libya and the Soviet Union an opportunity to improve their position in Sudan. Since the rapprochement in April 1985, Libya has won influence in Khartoum by providing a significant amount of petroleum, some food, and small arms and by ending its earlier backing of the southern insurgents. Khartoum believes that the Soviet Union can press Ethiopia to stop supporting Garang. It continues working to improve relations with Moscow in an effort to acquire spare parts for its aging Soviet-made military equipment. 

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The effort to isolate Garang and the search for alternative sources of arms are forcing Khartoum in directions that are straining US-Sudanese relations. US economic aid is crucial for Khartoum, but US influence on the government's policies toward the south is limited. Khartoum is aware that Washington has no leverage on Ethiopia to end its support to Garang, and restrictions on the use of US military equipment in the south have increased Khartoum's interest in finding other suppliers. 

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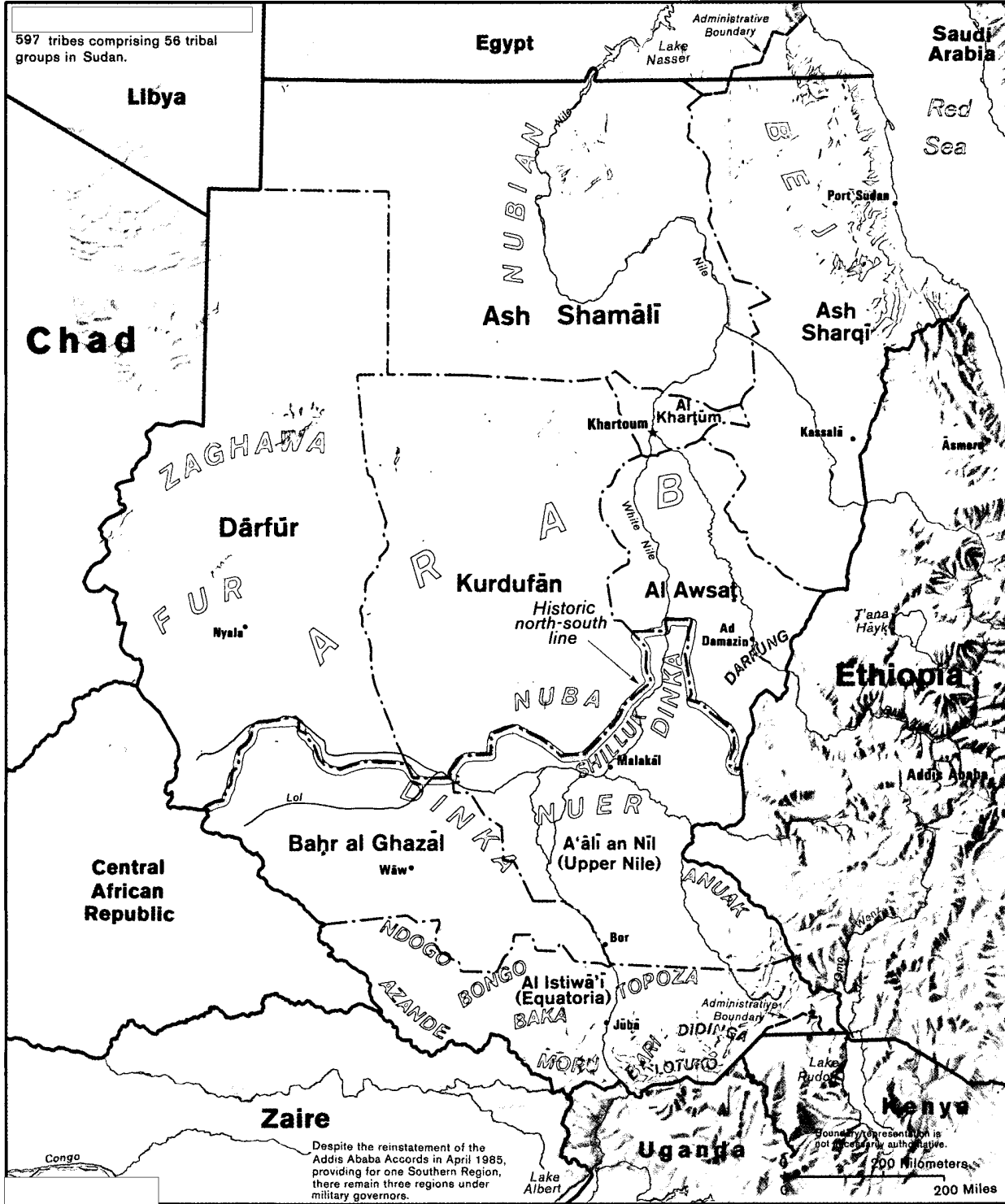
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Figure 1
Selected Sudanese Tribal Groups^a



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Sudan: Roots and Future of the Southern Insurgency



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The Setting

The "southern problem" was a major factor in the fall of the last three Sudanese governments. The resumption of the insurgency in southern Sudan in 1983 contributed to President Nimeiri's loss of control and eventual ouster by senior military officers in 1985.

Khartoum's current interim military government, weaker than most of its predecessors, has so far failed to reach a political settlement with the south, despite diplomatic overtures and the restoration of the south's legal status as one region in response to dissident demands. As a result, Khartoum finds itself embroiled in a war it cannot win.

Since fall 1983, the most prominent of the southern insurgent groups, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), has put pressure on Khartoum by kidnaping foreign workers and attacking government garrisons. The deterioration of security in southern Sudan has set back economic development by forcing foreign firms to suspend vital oil and water projects and placed an added financial burden on the government, estimated by Sudanese officials to be about \$500,000 a day for military operations. The insurgency strains the unity and loyalty of the government's forces, increasing the prospect of additional coups by younger, possibly more radical officers, or non-Arab and non-Muslim ethnic minorities, who comprise a majority in the enlisted ranks.

The roots of the southern rebellion can be found in the fundamental ethnic, linguistic, and religious divisions between northern Muslim Arabs, who dominate the central government, and southern animists and Christians, who identify with their black African heritage. Former President Nimeiri, a hero in 1972 for signing the Addis Ababa accords ending a 17-year-long civil war, by the late 1970s was pursuing policies that revived old fears among southerners of northern political, economic, and cultural domination. According to US Embassy reporting, the Nimeiri regime increasingly interfered in southern politics and pressed for

the replacement of English with Arabic in the schools; it decided to build an oil refinery in the north to process oil from the south; and it started construction of the Jonglei Canal, which many southerners believed—correctly—would mainly benefit northerners and Egypt.¹

Several controversial decisions in 1983 by the Nimeiri regime brought north-south tensions to a boiling point and laid the groundwork for the creation of the SPLA. Khartoum precipitated a mutiny in May by ordering some southern Army units to rotate to the north. Loyal government forces crushed the mutiny, but some 1,000 rebels from the towns of Bor, Pibor Post, and Pachala crossed the border into Ethiopia with their families and military equipment. Additional southern troops and dissident politicians fled to Ethiopia following Khartoum's partition of the south into three regions in June and the imposition of Islamic law throughout Sudan in September. By November the rebels, supported by Ethiopia and Libya, organized themselves into the SPLA and began their attacks against government garrisons and foreign workers in southern Sudan.

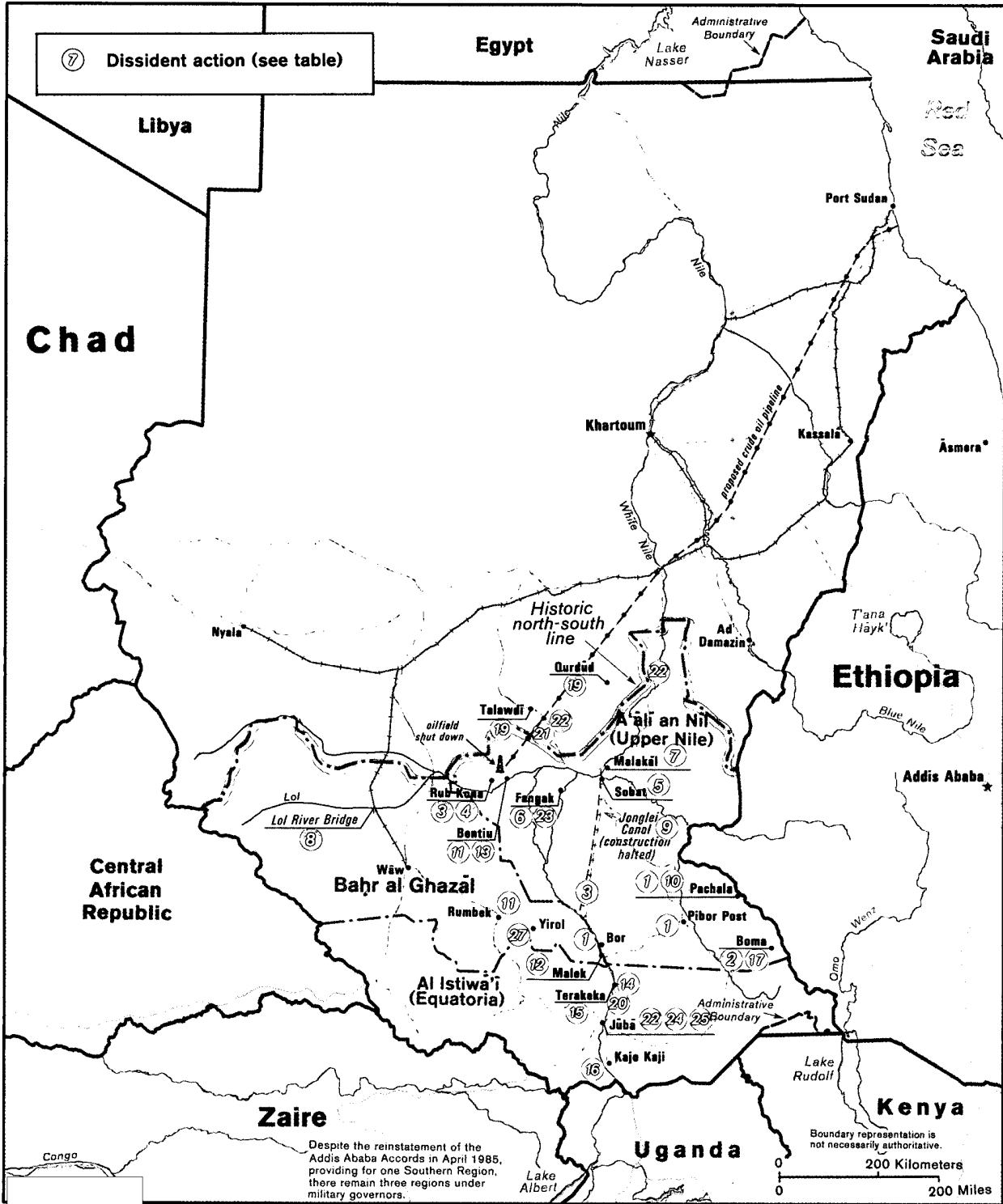
Size, Leadership, and Organization of the SPLA

On the basis of reporting from the [redacted] we estimate 12,000 to 15,000 rebels belong to the SPLA, a significant increase over an estimated 2,000 rebels in late 1983. Several smaller independent rebel groups exist alongside the SPLA.

¹ In October 1982 Egypt and Sudan agreed to strengthen cooperation in all fields, including foreign policy, national security, and social integration. The Jonglei Canal, begun in 1978, is the largest Egyptian-Sudanese economic project. The two governments are to share the costs and benefits of increasing the volume of Nile water. Kidnapings and other insurgent attacks caused the French contractors to shut down operations by March 1984, leaving the canal's completion in doubt.

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Figure 2
Major Southern Sudanese Dissident Activity



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Major Sudanese Dissident Activity, May 1983–December 1985

Event	Location	Date
1 Southern Army units' mutiny crushed	Bor, Pachala, Pibor Post	May 1983
2 Foreigners held hostage/rescued	Boma	June-July 1983
3 Foreigners held hostage/released	Rub Kona (Chevron camp), Jonglei Canal (French company-CCI-base)	November 1983
4 Oilfield attacked	Rub Kona (Chevron camp)	February 1984
5 Canal attacked, hostages taken	Sobat	February 1984
6 Nile steamer attacked	Fangak	February 1984
7 Province capital attacked	Malakal	February 1984
8 Railroad bridge heavily damaged	Lol River	March 1984
9 Rebel infighting	Upper Nile	April 1984
10 US-supplied F-5 downed	Pachala	June 1984
11 Towns attacked, hostages taken	Bentiu, Rumbek	September-November 1984
12 Nile steamers attacked, hostages taken	Malek, river north of Bor	December 1984
13 Government officials taken hostage	Bentiu	December 1984
14 Airborne unit routed	Juba-Bor Road	December 1984
15 SPLA unit routed	Terakeka	January 1985
16 Dinkas at Army garrison mutiny	Kajo Kaji	March 1985
17 Boma Plateau captured, camps established	Near Boma	April 1985
18 Garang declared cease-fire		April 1985
19 SPLA attacks in Kordofan	Talawdi, Qurdud	June-July 1985
20 Army conducted road-clearing operation	Juba-Bor Road	July-October 1985
21 Foreigners captured, released	Southern Kurdufan	July 1985
22 Three helicopters downed	Juba, El Lier, Upper Nile	July-August 1985
23 Rebel infighting	Fangak	August 1985
24 2 US-supplied F-5s deployed	Juba	September 1985
25 2 US-supplied F-5s crashed	Near Juba	October 1985
26 Garang declared cease-fire		October 1985
27 Rebels captured town	Yirol	December 1985

Some refer to themselves as Anya Nya II—a collective name for small southern rebel bands which predate the SPLA and which initiated minor attacks on government garrisons from Ethiopian territory between 1975 and 1983. [redacted]

Nilotic tribesmen—mainly Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, and Anuak from Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile regions—are dominant among the insurgents.² The

² The Dinkas and Nuers account for 60 percent of the southern population. [redacted]

Equatorial tribes play a smaller role in the current insurgency than they did in the original Anya Nya movement. The US Embassy reports several Equatorial groups have attempted to create their own insurgent movement and may even seek a separate settlement with the central government to avoid being subordinate to the Dinkas. Equatorial sympathy for the SPLA, fueled earlier by Nimeiri's imposition of Islamic law, has receded since the coup in 1985. [redacted]

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The Addis Ababa Accords

The Addis Ababa accords of 1972 ended a 17-year-long civil war and granted the south limited autonomy. The south elected its own regional assembly, which in turn elected a president and a Higher Executive Council. The Addis Ababa accords gave southerners considerable financial independence, including the right to impose taxes. Security and foreign policy, however, remained the responsibility of the central government. The accords also provided for a southern military command of 12,000 troops, half of whom were to be southerners, including former members of the principal southern guerrilla movement, the Anya Nya (Snake Poison). [redacted]

Many southerners viewed the division of the south into three separate regions in 1983 as an abrogation of the Addis Ababa accords, but then President Nimeiri contended it was experimental and that southerners were free to decide the fate of partition through a referendum. The US Embassy reported after partition that the regional governors were no longer elected but appointed by Nimeiri. The central government was given wider powers to veto legislation adopted by the local assemblies, and southern police forces were placed under central government control. The power to collect taxes was also rescinded. [redacted]

Khartoum's ruling Transitional Military Council re-instituted the provisions of the Addis Ababa accords in April 1985 and appointed members to an interim Higher Executive Council. Khartoum's new leaders promised a conference at which southerners would determine the future administrative structure for the south before the national elections planned in 1986. Until then, the three southern regions are to remain under military governors. [redacted]

At a recent US Government-sponsored conference, a US academic expert described most of the rebel leadership as relatively young, energetic, and unhappy with those they regard as self-seeking, old-guard southern politicians. Many leaders from both the



Figure 3. Col. John Garang walking through one of the SPLA's camps in the area of Gambela, Ethiopia. [redacted]

rebel army and its political arm, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), served in the lower echelons of the first Anya Nya movement. Most have served since 1972 in either the southern regional government or in the Sudanese armed forces. Most are Dinkas, Christians, and well educated by Sudanese standards. Some have studied in Khartoum, the West, or the Middle East. Almost all fled Sudan following the mutiny of May 1983. Only a few leadership positions in the SPLA have gone to rebel leaders in the Anya Nya II or to non-Dinkas. [redacted]

The SPLA is headquartered near Gambela, Ethiopia, with a political office in Addis Ababa. Its chief, and also chairman of the Executive Committee of the SPLM, is John Garang. Educated in the United States, he has a doctorate in economics from Iowa State University, is a former Army colonel, and is a Dinka. In the event of Garang's death, we believe his successor would be SPLA Deputy Commander in Chief and SPLM Deputy Chairman Karbino Kwan-yin. No successor would have the charisma and personal loyalty that have contributed to Garang's success in building the rebel movement.³ [redacted]

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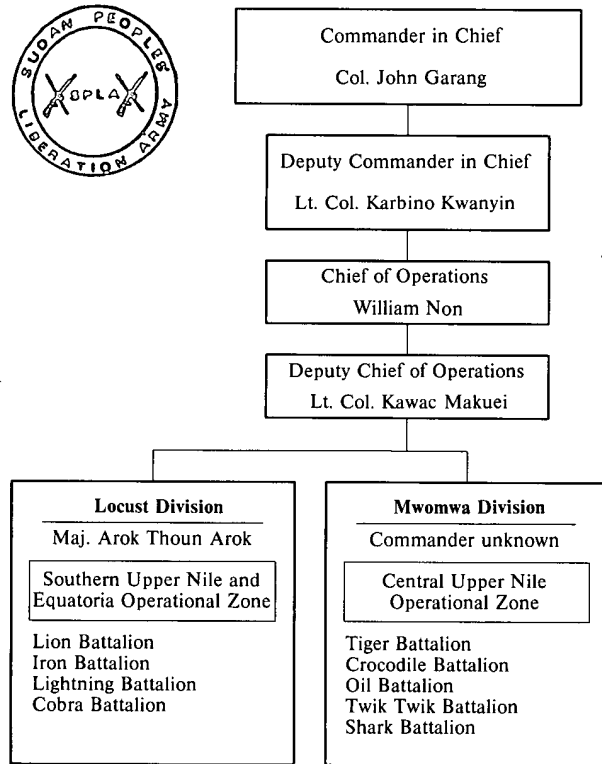
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Figure 4
Sudanese People's Liberation
Army (SPLA)^a



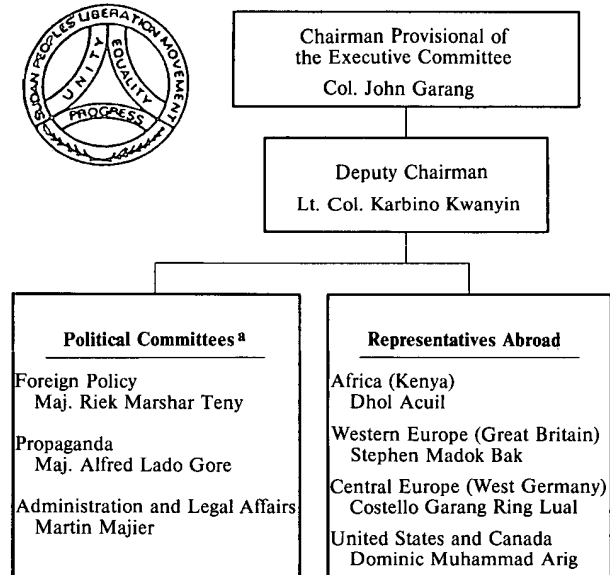
Other battalion names noted: Buffalo, Condor, Elephant, Hippo, Maur Maur, Rhino, Scorpion and Thunder.

^a Incomplete structure of SPLA derived from SPLA radiobroadcasts. There are probably at least two more operational zones in War Zone I (the south) that cover northern Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal.

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Garang has created a conventional military command structure in the SPLA, according to SPLA radiobroadcasts and US Embassy reporting. His subordinates include several well-trained former Sudanese Army officers who have combat experience in insurgent operations in southern Sudan. Garang generally directs operations from his headquarters in Ethiopia, although he has claimed publicly that he has led

Figure 5
Sudanese People's Liberation
Movement (SPLM)



^a Only three political committees identified; there may be as many as seven.

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operations inside Sudan. The insurgents usually fight as company-size units, even though, on the basis of [redacted] we estimate the SPLA is organized into at least 15 battalions, each designated by a special name, often taken from animals native to the south. [redacted]

The SPLA finds recruits in the large number of defectors from the poorly paid southern Army, police forces, and unemployed southern youth, according to the US Embassy. Another source of recruits may be southern refugees in the UN camps near Gambela, Ethiopia. The US Embassy in Addis Ababa has received complaints from southern students in Addis Ababa that Ethiopia has coerced southern Sudanese

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in the UN camps in the Gambela area to join the SPLA. We cannot confirm this type of recruitment, but reporting from the US Embassy suggests that family members of many SPLA recruits may reside in the UN camps. [redacted]

Former southern Sudanese politicians who staff the SPLM's political committees generally remain in Ethiopia. In addition, the SPLM has representatives in the United Kingdom, Kenya, West Germany, and the United States. According to a reliable source of the US defense attache in Khartoum, a political school for the SPLM is located in the Gambela area. The school, according to the same source, teaches Marxist doctrine and is staffed by foreign personnel, including Cubans and East Germans. [redacted]

The grassroots political organization of the SPLM appears less developed than the corresponding SPLA structure. Since the coup in 1985, southern politicians in Khartoum known to sympathize and collaborate with the movement have formed a political party called the Sudan African Congress, according to the US Embassy. Some members of this party provide an intelligence network for Garang on developments in Khartoum. [redacted]

Garang's insurgent movement suffers from many of the same internal tensions that have reduced the cohesion of earlier southern dissident movements. Personal rivalries and tribal and ideological differences cause infighting and keep numerous small rebel groups independent of the SPLA. For example, a well-placed source of the US Embassy says that the movement is divided into several political factions, one of which favors a peaceful solution for the south and another, an uncompromising military wing, which seeks victory on the battlefield. US Embassy reporting also indicates continuing tensions between the Nuer rank and file and the Dinka leadership, and factional infighting between the Dinkas from Bor in Upper Nile—Garang's constituents—and those from the Waw area of Bahr el Ghazal. [redacted]

Ideology, Goals, and Strategy

Garang claims to seek a secular, unified, democratic, federal, and socialist Sudan, according to SPLM radiobroadcasts since November 1984. He believes that through an African and socialist identity the country can achieve national unity among Muslims, animists, and Christians, as well as among the tribes. He strongly opposed former President Nimeiri's efforts to unify the country by imposing Islam and the Arabic language, which he and other insurgent leaders believed threatened the cultural identity of non-Arabs and turned non-Muslims into second-class citizens. SPLM propaganda has consistently characterized Khartoum's central government as under the rule of a minority "Arab clique," and it describes Khartoum's new military leaders as "Nimeiri's generals." [redacted]

In the wake of Nimeiri's ouster, Garang's radiobroadcasts increasingly emphasize national over purely southern grievances and goals. He calls for the creation of a federal system of government that will give all regions a fair share of political power, social services, and economic development. Garang stresses that the south's problems are shared by almost all Sudan's regions outside Khartoum. He argues, for example, that the imposition of Islamic law and the integration treaty with Egypt were personal initiatives of Nimeiri's that harm the interests of all Sudanese. [redacted]

The SPLM has found some support among northern non-Arab tribes like the Christian Nuba and the Muslim Beja, some of whose members fight with the rebels, according to US Embassy reporting. The Movement's radiobroadcasts indicate that non-Arab tribes from western Sudan are also a focus for recruitment. Mansour Khalid, former Foreign Minister and a Nimeiri opponent, is the only northern politician known to have joined the Movement. He told US officials last August that he is developing a platform based on national, as opposed to strictly southern, concerns for the SPLM to use if it runs as a party in future elections. [redacted]

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The SPLM's platform differs from those of earlier southern Sudanese opposition movements, which generally have advocated specifically southern goals, often including secession from the north. According to a US academic specialist, the SPLM's stated intention not to seek secession reflects the nationalist attitudes of Garang and a new generation of southern leaders. The Movement's leadership, moreover, may view an independent southern Sudan as only a last resort because it would be politically and economically nonviable. In addition, SPLM leaders are probably seeking to gain the support of member states of the Organization of African Unity, whose charter opposes secession. [redacted]

their ally during the earlier civil war, when the Nimeiri government received support from the USSR. The US Embassy reported recently that, since Nimeiri's ouster in April 1985, the SPLM representative in Nairobi has asked twice for US humanitarian support to his movement. [redacted]

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Garang and other leaders have openly advocated socialism, claiming that capitalism cannot work in Sudan because the country is too undeveloped and lacks a large middle class. The SPLM's manifesto of July 1983, its other publications, and radiobroadcasts, however, do not convey a coherent socialist ideology. The movement's leaders may be deliberately keeping their formal pronouncements vague to avoid alienating those of its members who are wary of socialism, fearing that it may in fact be Marxism. [redacted]

Nonetheless, the SPLM was critical of Western, especially US, support for Nimeiri. By mid-1984 rebel representatives had urged US officials to stop military aid to the Nimeiri government because they alleged US arms were being used against innocent southern civilians. They defended the shutdown of a US company's oil operations as an effort to deny Khartoum a means to underwrite the war.⁵ They also told US officials to evacuate foreign aid personnel from the south because their safety could not be guaranteed. By December 1984 the level of fighting in the south caused virtually all US and West European personnel to be evacuated, with the exception of Western missionaries. [redacted]

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We believe the occasional outburst of Marxist rhetoric in the SPLM's radiobroadcasts is the price that Garang pays for continued Ethiopian support. Garang's collaboration with Ethiopia probably is more pragmatic than ideological. Nonetheless, the adoption of a more radical ideology by Garang and his followers, who, we believe, are mainly opportunists seeking support for their movement, cannot be ruled out, especially if they remain dependent on Ethiopian support for the next several years.⁴ [redacted]

Insurgent Military Strategy, Tactics, and Capabilities

We believe the insurgents' overall strategy is designed to demonstrate the government's lack of control over the south and to expand their own influence into the Equatoria Region, where the SPLA is weaker than in other southern areas. The strategy also is intended to increase the rebels' leverage in negotiations for a settlement and to demonstrate their effectiveness to ensure continued external and internal support. [redacted]

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In our view, Garang's movement is not anti-Western, despite its socialist rhetoric. Propaganda attacks against the United States or Western Europe on the rebel radio have been infrequent. Insurgent leaders have stated that they will accept aid from any source, and they probably would accept support from Western governments. Southerners considered the West

⁵ Oil exploration and development by a US firm in southern Sudan has been indefinitely suspended since February 1984 because of unsettled security conditions. Output from these fields, originally expected to yield 50,000 to 100,000 barrels per day by 1986, would have provided critical foreign exchange earnings of at least \$275 million annually. [redacted]

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⁴ There is little conclusive evidence to categorize the ideology of Garang or the SPLM. Sudanese officials claim Garang is a Marxist or Communist. Other Sudanese and outside observers have argued that the Marxist rhetoric of the SPLM reflects an Ethiopian-imposed requirement. [redacted]

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The insurgents hope to accomplish this strategy by inflicting tactical defeats on government forces that will eventually lead to the capture of a major southern regional capital. [redacted] The rebels already have unrestricted movement throughout the countryside and can block most roads south of Bor. They also have cut the single rail line to the south and have blocked most river traffic south of Malakal. [redacted] they have gained control of an area on the Boma Plateau in southern Upper Nile region, where they have established three camps. [redacted]

Over the past two years, the rebel army has expanded its area of operations significantly. Operations were limited to Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal until late 1984, when the first major probes were made in the region of Equatoria. In June 1985 rebel operations in southern Kurdufan began with a clash with government forces. US Embassy reporting indicates the SPLA plans to move farther north this year to carry out sabotage against key strategic targets, including those in the Khartoum area. In late 1985 the SPLA made additional probe attacks in the north into the Blue Nile Region near Ad Damazin, the location of Sudan's major hydroelectric dam. [redacted]

Insurgent capabilities have improved substantially over the last year. [redacted] the movement's foreign supporters have supplied a steady flow of weapons such as Soviet SA-7s, RPGs, mortars, and heavy machineguns, as well as ammunition, radios, and food. SPLA tactical intelligence regarding government forces has been good enough to prevent major defeats. [redacted]

External Support

Garang's insurgent movement has received most of its external support from Ethiopia and, until recently, from Libya. According to US Embassy reporting, Tripoli apparently ended most of its support for the SPLA in April 1985 following a rapprochement with Khartoum's new leaders, who, in return, have ceased support for Libyan dissidents. Ethiopia views its support as a way of retaliating for Khartoum's support for Ethiopian dissidents. [redacted]

[redacted]

Khartoum's Military Strategy

The Sudanese Army's strategy since the coup in 1985 has been to place military pressure on the insurgents to improve Khartoum's bargaining position. This has taken the form of limited offensives to reassert control over the main road to Juba. Additionally, the US Embassy reports the Army is using tribal rivalries against the SPLA by supporting breakaway factions and arming southern tribes who oppose the Dinka-dominated group. [redacted]

The Sudanese Army, which we estimate has about 8,000 combat troops stationed in the three southern regions, is incapable of containing, much less quelling, the insurgency. It is hindered by incompetent leadership, ethnic tensions, mediocre intelligence, and shortages of supplies, equipment, and fuel. Moreover, the SPLA's tactical successes and well-orchestrated propaganda broadcasts have lowered the morale of troops stationed in the south. [redacted] reports northern soldiers view duty in the south as punishment, and some have refused orders assigning them there. Also, northern officers cannot be sure of the loyalty of their southern troops, who make up about 40 percent of the enlisted men. [redacted]

Most of the Army's operations have been primarily defensive because of the military's poor intelligence and lack of mobility. In early July 1985, government forces launched an operation to open road and river links to the south, but they took three months to clear one road. The Air Force deployed two US-built F-5 fighters to Juba in early September but lost all its ground attack capability when both F-5s crashed in October. Meanwhile, Khartoum lost several helicopters to insurgent fire and has suffered heavy casualties. [redacted]

[redacted]

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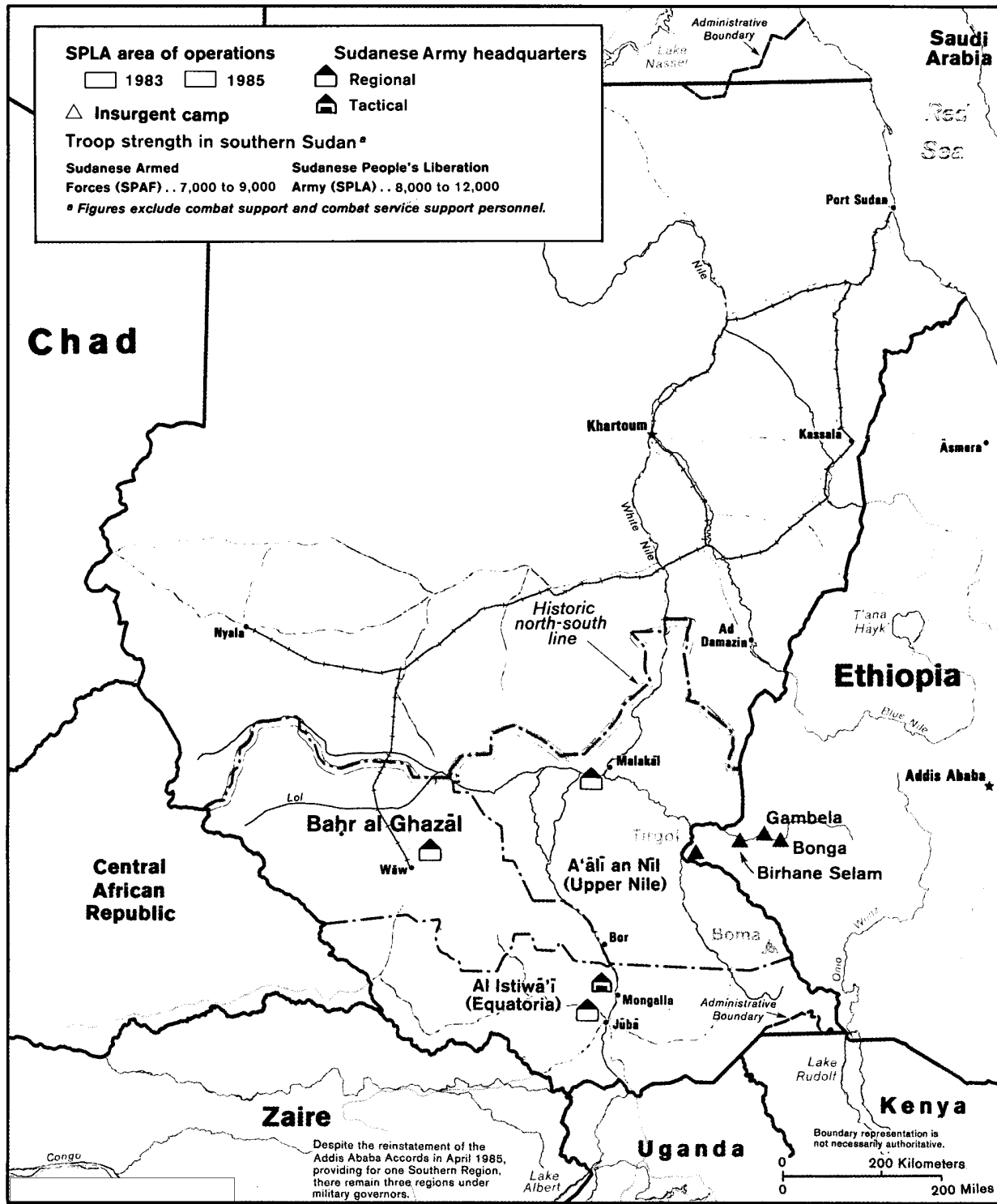
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Figure 6
Area of Operations of the Sudanese Liberation Army



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Libya's major contributions to the SPLA were economic support and military supplies. Tripoli gave financial aid to Garang and his representatives abroad—

[redacted] On the basis

of reporting of the [redacted] we estimate that, between September 1983 and April 1985, the Libyans sent at least four major arms shipments to Ethiopia, part of which probably was delivered to the southern insurgents. In our judgment, past Libyan aid is the major reason the insurgents are better armed and outfitted than most Sudanese Government forces. [redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]

four camps in the vicinity of Gambela, Ethiopia, that together house more than 10 battalions. The Ethiopians act as the conduit for arms from other countries.

[redacted]

[redacted] Ethiopia's extensive support is largely responsible for the SPLA's dramatic growth since 1983. In addition, Ethiopia helps keep Garang's army unified by denying aid to other southern rebel groups. Addis Ababa occasionally serves as an intermediary in negotiating the release of foreigners taken prisoner by the SPLA during operations in southern Sudan. Ethiopia also features

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the SPLA in its newspapers and provides the insurgents equipment they use to transmit clandestine radiobroadcasts into Sudan. [redacted]

Since early 1984 rebel leaders have worked to broaden their sources of foreign assistance and more recently to replace lost Libyan support. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Tripoli's suspension of support for the SPLA has increased the insurgents' reliance on Addis Ababa as an intermediary for such arms transactions. The US Embassy [redacted] indicate Garang had hoped to reduce Ethiopian control over his activities and keep the southern insurgents from being a card for Addis Ababa to play in future negotiations with Khartoum.⁶ [redacted]

In 1985, Garang—seeking alternative bases for safe-haven and greater legitimacy for his insurgency—looked for support from the other states bordering southern Sudan. These states are sympathetic to the insurgents but are wary of incurring the wrath of Western and Arab supporters of Khartoum. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Both Zaire and the Central African Republic have rejected Garang's requests for aid, according to reporting of the US Embassy, but, in our view, they will reverse this policy if they are persuaded that Khartoum has become a client of Libya. [redacted]

⁶ [redacted] US Embassy reporting indicates that Garang is under tight control in Ethiopia, especially with respect to contacting personnel from Western embassies. Nonetheless, Garang keeps direct contacts with SPLM representatives abroad and has met with Sudanese politicians in Addis Ababa. [redacted]

Reconciliation and the Interim Government

Garang made public his first serious proposal for dialogue with Khartoum last October after meeting with northern civilian politicians in Addis Ababa. He declared a limited cease-fire as a show of good faith and stated that a dialogue would have to be preceded by Khartoum's agreement to:

- A national conference, including representatives of all Sudan's major political forces, to seek solutions for the country's problems.
- The election of an interim government at the national conference to replace the current Military Council and Cabinet, which would hold power until Sudan could prepare for nationwide elections.
- The repeal of Islamic law throughout Sudan, specifically the Nimeiri laws of September 1983.
- The end of the state of emergency imposed following the coup of April 1985.
- The cancellation of the 1982 integration treaty with Egypt and the 1985 military protocol with Libya until they can be ratified or rejected by the Sudanese people. [redacted]

Subsequently Garang acknowledged that Khartoum's interim government has de facto sovereignty, that it would have to oversee any national conference, and that it would be a legitimate political force participating in the conference. He stated that he does not oppose the convening of other conferences to prepare for the national conference—even one dealing with the south—as long as they did not oppose the interests of his movement. He also stressed his preference for negotiating directly with Khartoum rather than through the mediation of a third country. [redacted]

Garang's proposal is a significant departure from his previous hard line, in that the rebel leadership has openly accepted the role that the interim government must play in convening a national conference. Most of Garang's demands probably can be finessed with the exception of the interim government agreeing to its replacement by one elected by the participants in a national conference. We believe this demand and the promise to abolish Nimeiri's Islamic laws are the most

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significant. It is an effort by the SPLM to gain recognition as a legitimate national force and to enter the government on an equal footing. Garang clearly hopes to postpone national elections scheduled for April 1986 because the SPLM is poorly organized politically within Sudan. [redacted]

important step in containing the insurgency. Khartoum had hoped Libya would act as an intermediary with Ethiopia but has in past months encouraged other countries, including Egypt and South Yemen, to mediate. We expect, however, that Addis Ababa will continue to distrust Khartoum's intentions. [redacted]

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The interim government's carrot-and-stick tactics toward the insurgents may have prompted Garang's overture. In response to Garang's initial rebuffs, the Military Council has pursued a two-track policy. It is working to exert political and military pressure on Garang and to isolate him while the Cabinet and other civilian groups pursue dialogue. The Council cut off a significant source of external support to the rebels through its rapprochement with Libya. Ethiopia rebuffed the Council's efforts to improve ties because Addis Ababa doubts that Sudan will cease its support to Ethiopian dissidents. The Council demonstrated its willingness to apply direct military pressure on the rebels when it launched a campaign in July 1985. We believe that Khartoum late last year dealt the rebels and Ethiopia a psychological blow by making a great show of recent military aid from Libya and its efforts to acquire military aid from Arab states, China, the Soviet Union, and the West. [redacted]

Chairman Mengistu, in our view, would support a political settlement in Sudan only if it gave Garang and other SPLM leaders key positions in Khartoum. The US Embassy reports Mengistu believes that the rebel leader would help end Khartoum's support for Ethiopian dissident operations out of Sudanese territory. On the basis of US Embassy reporting, we believe the Ethiopian leader considers it essential to prevent a consolidation in Khartoum of a strongly pro-US or Islamic regime, and that SPLA political-military activities are his best instrument to accomplish this. Addis Ababa, moreover, would like to see a more ideologically compatible regime in Khartoum. [redacted]

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Mengistu may be more willing to enter negotiations with Khartoum if the SPLA cannot exploit Sudanese Army weaknesses in the south. He probably calculates that a military stalemate would undercut rebel morale, leaving Garang's supporters vulnerable to exploitation by southern spokesmen who are not tied to the Ethiopians. Mengistu, however, is unlikely to forgo his military options altogether. The Ethiopian Government may well increase assistance to Garang's forces and encourage them to conduct cross-border operations against Sudanese troops to weaken Khartoum's resolve. [redacted]

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Garang's overture in October not only put Khartoum on the defensive but also created the conditions that make dialogue possible. We believe Garang's overture is an honest attempt at dialogue, but Khartoum's Military Council views it as an Ethiopian-backed tactic to buy time to improve the insurgents' military situation for a dry-season offensive. Nonetheless, the civilian Cabinet and the National Alliance—a political lobby including all the major trade unions and political parties—are trying to meet Garang's conditions while publicly stating there can be no conditions. [redacted]

Outlook

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Resolution of the southern conflict will not be easy and probably will not be possible within the next year for any government in Khartoum. The fluid political situation in Sudan before elections offers the rebels

The Ethiopian Factor

Ethiopia—as the rebels' main benefactor—is, in our view, the key player in any future settlement. US Embassy reporting indicates that Khartoum views improved ties to Ethiopia, specifically an agreement to end support to each other's dissidents, as the most

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and Khartoum an opportunity for compromise, but the uncertain political outlook has created obstacles. We do not know whether the government in Khartoum will be headed by an elected civilian government, a reconstituted interim regime, or younger generals and senior middle-grade officers who would take over through a coup during a crisis. In the current situation, we believe a military-dominated regime run by more senior officers who were not close to Nimeiri would be more successful in negotiating an end to the insurgency than an elected civilian government hobbled by the demands of its constituents.

[redacted]

Fighting probably will continue and may intensify, whether or not a dialogue takes place between Khartoum and the rebels. Both sides are likely to violate any cease-fire as they each try to improve their bargaining positions by achieving military superiority. There is a danger that Khartoum or the rebels will be tempted by opportunity or necessity to try to force a military solution. In our view, no amount of foreign military aid that the government can reasonably hope to receive can provide Khartoum with sufficient military capability to quell the insurgency, especially given Ethiopian determination to support the rebels.

[redacted]

The continuation of the insurgency, in our judgment, will place a serious drain on Sudan's already limited economic reserves, preventing the return of the foreign personnel needed to develop oil and water resources and, in turn, discouraging foreign creditors and investors. The political stability and even territorial integrity of Sudan is seriously challenged by the insurgency. US Embassy reporting suggests the prospects of uncontested civilian elections or viable civilian rule are remote while the fighting continues. More important, we believe the southern conflict will continue to strain the Army's unity and morale and increase the prospect of additional coups, including those led by younger, possibly more radical, officers or regional and ethnic factions.

In our view, there is a strong possibility that a national conference will convene this year, and it probably will address the country's structural problems along the lines of most of the SPLM's demands. There is at least an even chance that the SPLM will

send a delegation to the conference. Rebel participation in a national conference almost certainly would strengthen the SPLM politically and offer the opportunity to enhance the SPLM's image as the sole legitimate representative of southern Sudanese aspirations. Khartoum, moreover, probably would use the opportunity to try to co-opt Garang. US Embassy reporting suggests many of Sudan's politicians and intellectuals already favor adoption of a federal system of government, a major demand of the rebels. If agreement is reached on a federal system, it probably will have to include provision for at least four semi-autonomous regions to handle local affairs and a federal district of Khartoum, with the central government responsible for defense, foreign policy, and other national concerns.

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Several factors are likely to make the outcome of a national conference difficult, possibly even a failure. In our judgment, the strong likelihood that both Khartoum and the rebels will continue fighting during the conference will jeopardize the atmosphere for discussions. The wide-ranging agendas of the participants and the reluctance of the Army to see the central government relinquish power to the regions will also be major sources of friction. We believe the prospect that the SPLM will not attend or will walk out of a national conference also remains high.

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Even if a national conference is successful and a federal system of government adopted, a political settlement with the south probably will be difficult to negotiate. US Embassy reporting indicates Equatorians, for example, would reject any government structure that allowed the more numerous Nilotic tribes to dominate the political process in the southern region. We believe constitutional guarantees that the south will not be forced to adopt Islamic law and formal agreements regarding revenue-sharing from development projects will be at the heart of any settlement with the SPLM. Garang probably will insist on key positions in the central and southern governments for himself and other rebel leaders and integration of his army into the government's forces. He is also likely to

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demand that southern troops be stationed only in the south and that Khartoum's treaties with Egypt and Libya not harm southern interests. [redacted]

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Implications for the United States

Khartoum's concern for undercutting support for the insurgents has given both Libya and the Soviet Union an opportunity to increase their influence at the expense of the United States. The interim government and any successor is likely to value its rapprochement with Libya as long as Tripoli refrains from renewing military support to Garang. Libya has gained favor in Khartoum since the reconciliation in April 1985 by providing food, oil, ground transport, and small arms and is offering military training and even advanced fighter aircraft. Libyan petroleum shipments during 1985 covered at least 25 percent of Sudan's consumption requirements and were valued at over \$50 million. Khartoum believes that the Soviet Union has leverage over both its Ethiopian and Libyan clients and can force Addis Ababa to stop supporting Garang. The government will continue working to improve relations with the USSR and also hopes to acquire spare parts for old Soviet equipment that can be refurbished to fight the rebels, [redacted]

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The effort to isolate Garang and the search for alternative sources of arms are forcing Khartoum in directions that are straining its relations with the United States. US economic aid of \$62.5 million in FY 1986, together with \$20 million in military assistance, is crucial to Khartoum's survival, but, despite this, US influence on the government's policies toward the south is limited. Khartoum is aware that the United States has no leverage to press Ethiopia to end its support to Garang. In addition, restrictions on the use of US military equipment in the south increase Khartoum's interest in finding other suppliers. [redacted]

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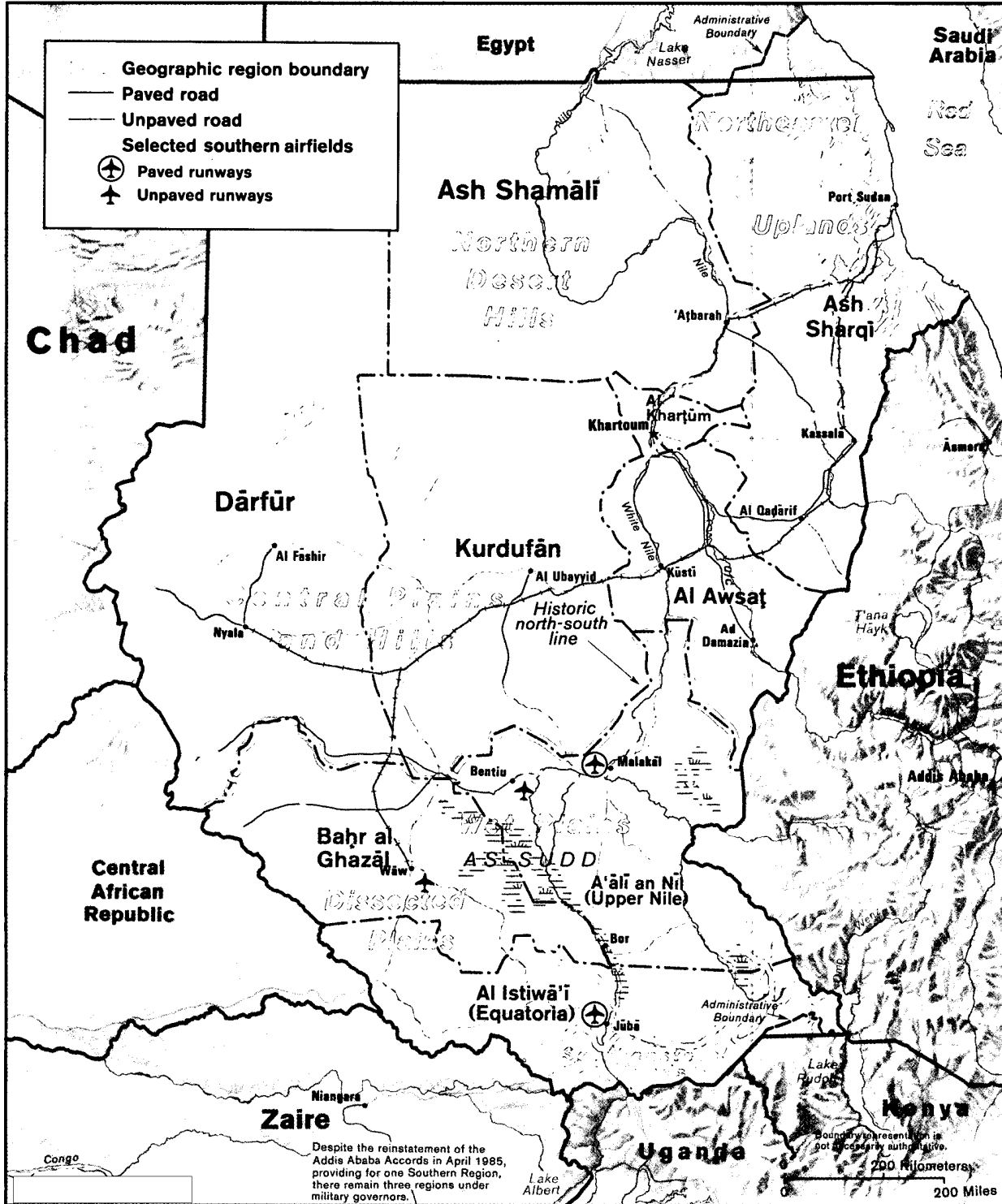
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Figure 8
Sudanese Geographic Regions



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Appendix B

Geographic and Logistic Factors Affecting Military Operations

In the current conflict most geographic factors favor the dissidents over Sudanese Government military forces. Fighting has been concentrated in the Wet Plains, where the rebels are using their familiarity with the terrain to good advantage. During the wet season, population centers and government outposts are isolated by dense vegetation, floodwaters, and mud. Airfields are closed and air support operations are halted for long periods because of frequent torrential rains. Government troops cannot patrol or pursue rebel bands either by vehicle or on foot. The insurgents also are better able to recruit new members in the rainy season because this is when most of the region's nomadic tribesmen return to their villages and many other southerners come home from seasonal employment in the north. [redacted]

The harsh physical environment and rudimentary transportation facilities in southern Sudan pose formidable problems for military and logistic support operations. During the long wet season from March through October, the climate is hot, humid, and debilitating. In the rainiest period, between June and August, skies are usually cloudy, the humidity is particularly oppressive, and daytime temperatures are between 25 and 35 degrees Celsius. During the other months of the wet season, temperatures may reach 40 degrees Celsius. In the dry season, temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius are common, humidity is low, and rain extremely rare. Although skies are mostly clear during the dry season, brushfires may obscure extensive areas with smoke and haze. [redacted]

We divide southern Sudan into three distinct military geographic regions:

Wet Plains. Military operations are extremely difficult for most of the year over the flat, swampy plains of the south. During the wet season the region's dirt roads and tracks, as well as all low-lying ground surfaces, become soft and slippery. Many areas are flooded. Heavy rainfall expands the already extensive and impassable swamps into adjacent higher ground.

Movement on foot or with military vehicles is difficult, and offroad dispersal is almost impossible. Small, lightly equipped guerrilla forces are less likely to become bogged down. Conditions for movement improve during the short dry season, but deep cracks in the clay soil present obstacles for wheeled vehicles. Tall grasses, reeds, and papyrus afford excellent concealment from ground observation throughout most of the region. Dense stands of trees along some of the streams can hide military equipment from both air and ground observation. Smoke and haze from grass fires greatly reduce visibility and can disrupt air operations for short periods during the dry season. Water is plentiful throughout the year but often contaminated. [redacted]

Dissected Plains. Military operations are somewhat easier on the dissected plains, at least seasonally. During the dry season, foot troops and vehicles have little difficulty moving cross-country or dispersing from roads in most places. Local rock fields, hills, and steep stream banks present obstacles and require detours. Movement is difficult in the wet season because of flash floods and soft, slippery ground following heavy rains. Traffic can usually be resumed in a day or so because surfaces dry out quickly. The denser vegetation that springs up in the wet season also impedes movement. Tropical forests, excellent for concealment, become impenetrable to vehicular traffic. Water is available throughout most of the region. [redacted]

Uplands. Military operations in the rugged uplands region are difficult, but easier for guerrilla forces. Cross-country movement is largely impractical in the mountainous and hilly terrain, where bare rocky surfaces alternate with thick mantles of forest, bamboo, and tall grass. In the few broad, northwest-southeast-oriented valleys, movement is easy during the dry season but impossible for long periods during

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the wet season when they are transformed into quagmires. Concealment is good in the savannas for most of the year. During the wet season, broadleaf forests and tall grasses provide additional concealment. Moderate amounts of water are available in most places year-round.

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Southern Sudan's sparse and poorly developed transportation network is inadequate to support extensive or sustained military operations.⁷ The only railroad is a narrow-gauge line extending 250 kilometers northward from Waw to the national rail network. Frequent derailments and washouts make it unreliable. The poorly maintained gravel and unimproved dirt roads and tracks that crisscross the region are impassable for most of the long wet season. The Nile links the important port cities of Juba and Malakal, but slow-moving river traffic (impeded by dense vegetation) falls easy prey to rebel attackers. For rapid deployment of troops and supplies the government must rely on the four airfields in the south capable of supporting cargo aircraft. Juba and Malakal have paved 2,000-meter, all-weather runways; Waw and Bentiu have unsurfaced 1,500-meter runways, usable only when dry.

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