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**Before the U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa
Chad and the Central African Republic: The Regional Impact of the Darfur Crisis
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to discuss instability in Chad and the Central African Republic, links to regional stability, particularly the ongoing horrific crisis in Darfur, and the Administration's efforts to promote security in both countries. I want to acknowledge Senators Feingold, Sununu, and Levin for their introduction of a resolution calling for a comprehensive strategy to protect civilians, reduce violence, and contribute to a lasting peace in the region. Your efforts have brought attention to an oft-forgotten part of the world, and for this we are appreciative. I will restrict my remarks today to Chad and the Central African Republic, as I understand that the President's Special Envoy will be addressing you on Sudan in the next few weeks, but I do want to underscore the regional nature of many of the challenges we face.

Background

Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), like many of their neighbors, have a long history of instability and war that can be attributed to a combination of domestic and regional factors. Neither country has a record of good governance, rule of law, or democracy, making both vulnerable to external interference and limiting options for peaceful resolution of internal problems. Over time, each has both generated and hosted substantial numbers of refugees, including from each other.

The United States' priorities in Chad and CAR include limiting the regional impact of the Darfur conflict, fostering stability, protecting civilians, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and humanitarian workers, and furthering transformational diplomacy by promoting political reform and good governance.

Since achieving independence in 1960, Chad has been subject to several power struggles. The country suffered through an almost continuous civil war from 1965 to 1993, when current President Deby initiated a national reconciliation process. The current rebel movements, including the United Front for Change (FUC), the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), and the Rally of Democratic Forces (RAFD) gained strength in late 2005 and 2006, in part due to defections of high-ranking civil and military officers, including members of Deby's ethnic group. Many of these groups appear to enjoy support from the Government of Sudan. In recent months, Chad has also experienced a rise in inter-communal violence that is not directly related to the rebellion. However, the various causes of insecurity tend to become mutually reinforcing – something of a “perfect storm” of violence.

CAR also has a history of violence and unrest. It has experienced four coups, additional failed coup attempts, and many years of undemocratic rule since its independence in 1960. Rebels, including some members of the political opposition, emerged in the northwestern part of the country in late 2005. Still other groups with alleged links to Sudan took over four northeastern towns in October and November 2006. After being defeated by government forces with French support, the northeastern rebels attacked again in early March 2007, but were quickly pushed back.

The recent increase in violence in Chad has endangered the lives of civilians, who are subject to attack by rebel groups, government forces, and ethnic militias, and has reduced the number of secure humanitarian corridors. As a result, international and non-governmental organizations (IOs and NGOs) have cut staff by approximately 50 percent, limiting the ability of NGOs to provide non life-saving support activities, such as education, in refugee camps and to IDPs. At present staffing levels, the humanitarian community would be hard pressed to accommodate new IDP populations or new refugee inflows from Darfur. In CAR, which up until recently has not garnered much international attention, insecurity has limited the ability of humanitarian groups to travel to parts of the northwest and northeast in order to assess needs. Recent travelers to the region describe a grave humanitarian crisis.

Factors Affecting Stability

Deficiencies in democracy, good governance, and the rule of law have contributed greatly to instability in Chad. The country's history of recurrent conflict has weakened the rule of law and undermined peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms. As a result, Chad is ill-equipped to remain immune to spillover from regional conflicts.

Chad and Sudan have a complex relationship in which national loyalties are often subordinate to tribal or clan loyalties or the competition for resources. In eastern Chad and in western Sudan, which were once part of the same "kingdom", limited access to water and arable land leads to conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists on both sides of the border. Familial and ethnic ties can exacerbate economic tensions.

Chadian rebels have a long history of using Sudan as a base for attacks into Chad, sometimes with Sudanese government complicity. Both Chadian President Deby and his predecessor, Hissene Habre, assumed power through military campaigns based in Sudan, thus establishing enduring connections with Sudanese actors. President Deby continues to accuse the government of Sudan of providing support to Chadian rebels.

Tribal loyalty appears to be at the heart of Chadian support for Sudanese rebel groups, including those that have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement. President Deby and many members of the Chadian elite belong to the Zaghawa tribe, which dominates some Darfur rebel groups, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). This loyalty appears to work both ways, with JEM elements reportedly fighting alongside the Chadian military (ANT) against Chadian rebels.

Inter-ethnic fighting, which is indirectly related to the rebel activity, has increased considerably as well in eastern Chad. Communal tensions have grown in recent years due to conflict over land and natural resources, particularly water, in an area of environmental extremes. This rise in communal tensions, coupled with a security vacuum (due to the Chadian military's engagement with the Chadian rebels), has left local populations vulnerable to attacks by ethnic militias that engage in violence to settle scores, loot villages, and raid cattle and livestock. Some of the violence is perpetrated by Sudanese Janjaweed, but most seems to be conducted by Chadian Arabs. In response, several ethnic groups have formed self-defense militias, leading to a proliferation of weapons and exacerbating the cycle of violence. Even the security and neutrality of refugee camps risk being compromised.

In Central African Republic, threats to stability include domestic factors such as a weak central government, widespread impunity amongst the country's armed forces, and several rebel movements, including the Popular Army for the Reconstruction of the Republic and Democracy (APRD), which operates in the northwestern part of the country, and the Union of Democratic Forces for Rally (UFDR), which has conducted attacks in the northeast.

CAR President Bozize, who resided in Chad while in exile, has strong links to Chadian President Deby, who provides Bozize with armed guards and significant support. Throughout CAR, it appears that the country's rebels are linked with their Chadian counterparts. The rebels and general population in northwestern CAR do not appear to have direct ties to Sudan, while the population in northeastern CAR does have ethnic, familial, and commercial links to the Sudanese population residing across the border. While there is no irrefutable evidence that northeastern CAR rebels enjoy support from the Sudanese government, there are reports that these rebels have operated out of, and been supplied through, Sudan, and President Bozize accuses the Government of Sudan of fueling instability in CAR. Furthermore, Chadian rebels have traversed northern CAR to attack N'djamena from bases in Sudan, and may do so again in the future. Most of CAR's territory is ungoverned space, which makes it extremely unstable and therefore attractive to rebel groups looking for either refuge or unobserved transit points. For example, there are reports that the Lord's Resistance Army is planning on shifting its operations to CAR, especially if it is forced out of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

U.S. Government Efforts to Promote Stability

The U.S. government has taken a holistic approach to address stability and security in Chad and CAR, one that takes into account both regional and domestic dynamics. We have publicly and privately supported a robust United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operation in Chad and CAR that will focus on both protecting civilians and deterring cross-border attacks. While the proposed mission will not have an express mandate to secure the Chad-Sudan and CAR-Sudan borders, we believe that its presence and execution of its civilian protection and monitoring mission will lead to a reduction in violence.

We have consistently encouraged the Chadians to accept a robust military mission and were disappointed by the Chadian government's recent rejection of the military component of the proposed mission and the deployment of the advance mission. We will continue to engage with President Deby to convince him to accept a military force. We have also consulted with other allies, including France, the United Kingdom, NATO partners, and others about how to obtain Chadian acquiescence to the operation and will continue to work with both our African and non-African partners on this issue. President Bozize has announced his readiness to accept a robust peacekeeping force in northeastern CAR.

We are committed to generating the most robust force possible for the operation and have approached several governments with requests for contributions. We understand, however, that with approximately 100,000 international peacekeeping troops currently deployed worldwide, force generation for the Chad/CAR mission will be a challenge. Therefore, if necessary, we will urge the Security Council to consider options that may decrease the number of troops in exchange for greater logistical support or equipment, such as helicopters, that will keep the force agile and robust.

There have been a number of efforts, both bilateral and based on third parties in the region, to either police the Chad-Sudan border or to commit Presidents Deby and Bashir to avoid interference in the other's country. None of these have borne fruit, and our position remains that UN peacekeeping forces in Darfur, eastern Chad, and northeastern CAR remain essential. We will continue to monitor these alternative efforts, however, and may find opportunities to support them as complements to UN efforts.

To address concerns that the force has been dispatched to bolster unpopular regimes or could be viewed as belligerent by local populations and rebels, we anticipate developing a public diplomacy campaign to explain to the Chadian and Central African people our goals of protecting civilians and promoting regional stability.

The United States has repeatedly condemned efforts by Chadian rebels to take power by force and urges both Sudan and Chad not to engage in support for rebels in the other country.

Because we recognize that poor governance is a major cause of Chadian instability, we have emphasized the importance of democratic reform, respect for human rights, dialogue, and transparent governance in our communications with Chadian officials. This message has been delivered at every level, from Secretary Rice to President Deby down to our working-level interactions. We have consulted with our European Union, French, and UN colleagues on their programs to reform the electoral process, and intend to fund a census project to complement their efforts. We have also encouraged President Deby to consider how best to ensure a peaceful and democratic handover of power when his current term of office expires in 2011. In addition, our human rights policy in Chad has focused on strengthening the institutions necessary for a stable democracy such as civil society and a free, fair, and professional press. Among

other programs and activities designed to protect human rights, the U.S. supports legal assistance for victims of human rights abuses through local human rights NGOs.

Good governance includes the transparent collection and expenditure of the government's oil revenues, and to this end, the Treasury Department has provided technical assistance to Chad's oil revenue management oversight body. We continue to encourage the Chadian government to fight corruption, spend its revenues transparently, and to implement poverty reduction programs as recommended by the International Financial Institutions. We have also urged the Chadian government to live up to its commitment to spend 70 percent of its budget on priority sectors for poverty reduction. Fulfillment of these conditions is the key to unlocking substantial debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country and G-8 (Multilateral Debt Relief) Initiatives.

Under the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), an interagency initiative to which Chad belongs, the United States seeks not only to strengthen regional counterterrorism capabilities and enhance cooperation among the region's security forces, but also to promote democratic governance as a means to discredit terrorist ideology. TSCTP activities, which include strengthening of local governments, conflict management, and small scale infrastructure projects in targeted regions, not only help deter terrorism, but also promote domestic stability. In fiscal year (FY) 2006, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) development assistance for Chad totaled \$1.35 million. The Department of Defense contributed another \$501,000 in humanitarian assistance activities in the education and water sectors.

As in Chad, poor governance is at the heart of instability in CAR. As in Chad, we engage regularly with CAR officials about the need for democratic reform, increased respect for human rights, and good governance. We support CAR's upcoming political dialogue under the auspices of the CAR's Council of Wise Men, a group of respected officials tasked with mediating CAR's political disputes. U.S. efforts to support democracy and human rights in the CAR have focused on strengthening the media and the parliament, which is composed of largely inexperienced legislators and remains susceptible to pressure from the executive branch, as well as on providing voter education.

In international fora, the United States has announced its support for the mandates of the UN Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and of the Multinational Force of the Central African Monetary and Economic Community (also known as FOMUC) in order to promote stability in CAR. Both BONUCA and FOMUC, while constrained by their small sizes and budgets, have contributed considerably to the pursuit of peace in CAR.

Our military training (IMET) programs in Chad and CAR, which are vital to promote long-term institutional military reform were funded at \$342,000 in FY 2006 for Chad, and at \$105,000 in FY 2006 for CAR. The IMET program focuses on security sector reform, professionalization of the military, and civil-military relations with the goal of providing better security for the people of both countries. Our Chad military

assistance is coupled with a de-mining program, intended to make more of Chad's arable land available to the population, which concluded earlier this year.

Force professionalization is badly needed in CAR, particularly in the northwest where members of the military and presidential guard, in addition to the rebels, commit human rights violations with impunity and therefore contribute greatly to instability. We also support responsible forest management and good governance through the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). Because CARPE divides its budget based on trans-border biodiversity landscapes instead of countries, we don't have an exact estimate of CARPE funding for CAR, however, we estimate that CAR receives several hundred thousand dollars as part of the program and that CARPE represents our greatest non-emergency assistance to CAR.

Humanitarian Situation

The UN estimates that there are 230,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad, 20,000 Chadian refugees in Darfur and 50,000 CAR refugees in southern Chad. There are up to 110,000 IDPs in eastern Chad; their numbers have doubled in the last five months and they have suffered secondary displacement. The UN estimates that approximately 280,000 Central Africans are displaced, of whom 212,000 are IDPs, 20,000 are refugees in Cameroon, and the remaining are refugees in southern Chad. The majority of these refugees are from the northwestern part of the country.

Attacks on civilians are widespread in both Chad and CAR and have left thousands of civilians without livelihood, shelter, or food. Scorched earth tactics are becoming common. Because of limited staff and insecure humanitarian corridors, providing services to civilians has become increasingly difficult.

There are fewer reports of inter-ethnic violence in CAR, though it should be noted that the northeast part of the country is ethnically distinct and geographically cut off from the rest of the country. The bulk of attacks on civilians seem to occur in the northwest part of the country, and perpetrators include the CAR military, presidential guard, military deserters, bandits, and rebel groups.

U.S. Efforts to Address Humanitarian Needs

Security is the sine qua non for humanitarian access and adequate response to the protection and assistance needs of civilian populations, including refugees and IDPs. The international peacekeeping force envisioned for Chad and CAR will have the protection of civilians, including by use of force if necessary, as its primary mandate. As discussed above, the United States is actively engaged to make this force a reality.

The U.S. has continued to facilitate the work of human rights organizations and NGOs working to protect refugees in Chad. Through regular meetings with high-level officials in Chad and the CAR, we also continue to raise concerns about the deteriorating

security situation and human rights abuses committed by government security forces, particularly abuses against the displaced and other vulnerable populations.

The USG is the largest single humanitarian donor in the region. A concerted focus on the Darfur refugees in eastern Chad starting in 2004 brought conditions in what are now 12 camps close to international humanitarian standards under extremely difficult logistical conditions in a large area where finding water has been very challenging. The gains of the last two years are threatened by the current instability. The CAR refugees in southern Chad have not received the same level of international support. Only within the past year have the needs inside the CAR begun to gain necessary international attention.

Humanitarian funding for FY 2006 for Chad included \$4 million for emergency supplies, relief commodities, programs to address food insecurity, water and sanitation programs, income generation activities, and nutrition assessments for Chadians affected by the presence of refugees and for IDPs; \$23.8 million in emergency food assistance, (in addition to the \$2.7 million in non-emergency food assistance that we provide), \$610,000 for humanitarian radio programs, and \$45 million to support refugee and IDP camps and programs and to provide security for the refugee camps.

Humanitarian funding for FY 2006 for CAR includes \$565,000 in emergency food assistance and \$350,000 for programs to respond to the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) supplemental 2006 appeal for conflict victims. PRM support for ICRC and UNHCR programs in Africa will have also benefited those in CAR. We expect these numbers to increase significantly in FY 2007.

In January and February of 2007, assessment teams from USAID traveled to conflict-affected areas in Chad and CAR to assess conditions for IDPs, analyze humanitarian capacity, and determine potential program areas. The teams made several recommendations on how to improve humanitarian assistance, including increasing donor coordination with other bilateral and multilateral donors, pre-positioning essential relief stocks, expanding emergency water and sanitation interventions, and bolstering food aid programs. We are now determining how best to utilize available resources to implement these recommendations.

The United States is committed to doing our full part to protect civilians in Chad and the Central African Republic and to mitigating factors leading to regional instability. There are no easy solutions. Both the proximate and institutional causes of instability are complex and require that we consult closely with the rest of the international community as well as the governments of Chad and CAR, which we have committed to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, for your interest and for giving me the opportunity to brief you on this very important matter.