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Linda Thomas-Greenfield's
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"South Sudan's Broken Promise?"

Introduction

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. As you know, Special Envoy Booth is unavailable to testify today as he is in Addis Ababa working tirelessly on the peace process. I know that the subject before us is one about which you and other members of Congress care deeply.

Situation in South Sudan

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Engel, last week marked a major anniversary for South Sudan but one that few celebrated. January 9th marked three years since South Sudan's historic referendum for independence and nine years since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Today, South Sudan again is riven by conflict – not with Khartoum, however, but with itself. The title of today's hearing is "South Sudan's Broken Promise?" While appropriately framed as a question, those words accurately capture what has been unfolding in the world's youngest country, not just in the last few weeks but over many months.

The fact that South Sudan faces internal challenges is not in and of itself surprising – internal political tensions were building for months; political space was shrinking; intercommunal tensions are long-standing; and the country’s institutions are weak. Nonetheless, the speed of this is nothing short of astonishing. Days after hosting an international investment conference on December 4-5, political struggles at a party meeting on December 14th and a still unclear clash on the 15th erupted into devastating broader conflict that now grips the country. It is heart-breaking for the people of South Sudan and for us as Americans who have made an enormous investment in this country and who so want to see it escape the terrible cycles of violence that marked its past and that threaten to destroy its future.

This conflict is exacting a terrible price on the people of South Sudan, who already faced some of the most daunting development challenges in the world. The numbers are grim, and grow more so by the day. The International Crisis Group has estimated that more than 10,000 people may have been killed. For its part, the UN now believes that casualties are “much higher” than its earlier December 26 estimate of over 1,000. The simple fact is we don’t know the scale of the killing. We do know over 400,000 have fled their homes including 65,000 who have sought refuge in neighboring countries. There are reports of forced recruitment, sexual violence and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Political rivalries have taken on ethnic dimensions, atrocities are being committed, and men, women, and children are caught in the crossfire.

Lest there be any doubt, I would like to make crystal clear where we stand when it comes to this conflict. First, neither the United States nor the international community will countenance the armed overthrow of the democratically elected

government of South Sudan. Second, hostilities must stop, any and all violence directed at civilian populations must end, and those responsible for perpetrating abuses and violations must be held accountable. Third, this crisis will not be solved on the battlefield. Although fighting started less than one month ago, the roots of this conflict are much deeper, and resolution can only come through immediate and meaningful dialogue between the two sides and an inclusive reconciliation. Finally, all parties must permit immediate and unconditional humanitarian access to all in need, to the now hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese men, women, and children who are the real victims of this violence.

The United States has engaged in an all-out diplomatic effort to help bring an end to the fighting, with engagement by Secretary Kerry, National Security Advisor Susan Rice, Special Envoy Booth, Ambassador Page and other high-ranking past and present officials with President Kiir and former Vice President Machar as well as with the heads of state and foreign ministers in neighboring countries and around the world. We have:

- galvanized support to end hostilities and open a broader dialogue between the two sides;
- tracked reports of atrocities and called for accountability;
- sought to secure the release of political detainees now being held in Juba;
- supported the critical efforts of Sudan's neighbors to end this crisis; and
- taken significant steps to increase the capacity of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to carry out its mandate of civilian protection.

The immediate security situation remains critical – particularly for the thousands of civilians forced from their homes – and must be addressed. As the crisis began to

unfold, we proposed and the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution nearly doubling the authorized troop ceiling for UNMISS. In turn, we are now actively encouraging member states to provide additional troops and police units to the UN mission, including through the transfer of contingents from other missions in the region where they can be spared. As my colleague, Assistant Administrator Gast will discuss, we have just committed an additional \$50 million in emergency humanitarian assistance to bolster the response to pressing new needs arising from the crisis.

The President's Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, Ambassador Donald Booth – who, as I noted, could not be here to testify today because he is in Ethiopia – is actively trying to help resolve this crisis. Ambassador Booth has been in the region since December 22nd, working around the clock. He has met repeatedly with President Kiir and other officials, traveled to Jonglei state to meet with Dr. Machar, secured the first official visit with the group of political detainees in Juba, and sat down with local religious leaders and civil society members to help find a way out of this crisis.

In Juba, Ambassador Page and her team have led an extraordinary diplomatic effort under extremely difficult circumstances.

This is, as I said, an all-out effort on our part, and, especially given our special history in South Sudan, we are working closely with South Sudan's neighbors, through East Africa's Intergovernmental Authority on Development, who are spearheading mediation efforts.

A special summit on South Sudan was held at the head of state level just 12 days after the conflict began, and, thanks to robust engagement, representatives of both parties arrived in Addis for negotiations just a few days later. We are encouraged by IGAD's leadership in convening the parties and strongly support the efforts of former Ethiopian Minister Seyoum Mesfin and Kenyan General Lazaro Sumbeiywo to find a peaceful solution through political dialogue. Over this past weekend, Ambassador Booth traveled with the mediators and other members of the diplomatic community to Jonglei, South Sudan, where they met with Riek Machar to directly press him to enter into a cessation of hostilities immediately and unconditionally.

The IGAD-led negotiations offer the best hope for South Sudan and the region. An agreement to end hostilities will provide much needed time and space for dialogue to begin on the core political and governance issues that are at the root of this crisis. Both sides must recognize that there can be no military solution.

We have made clear to the rebels that we will not recognize a violent overthrow of a democratically elected government. At the same time, we have urged the government to open political space to allow for greater inclusion. The United States also strongly believes that the political detainees currently being held in Juba must be released. These individuals should join discussions in Addis to enlarge the chorus of those seeking constructive solutions to resolve this growing catastrophe. I would add that during a recent meeting between the IGAD negotiators and the detainees, they reiterated that their status should not prevent an immediate cessation of hostilities. Each day that the conflict continues, the risk of all-out civil war grows as ethnic tensions rise, more civilians are killed, injured, or forced to flee, the humanitarian situation grows more urgent, and those who have remained on the sidelines are increasingly pulled into the conflict.

In addition to calling for an end to the violence, dialogue, and the release of political prisoners in Juba, the United States is exploring the possibility of appropriate pressures against individuals on both sides who interfere with the peace and reconciliation process in South Sudan or are responsible for serious human rights abuses.

Let me conclude by saying that I am gravely concerned that the crisis in South Sudan has the potential to escalate even further. South Sudan's leaders on both sides are, I fear, breaking their promises to their own people. While we do not know the scale of atrocities that have been committed thus far, there is clear evidence that targeted killings have taken place, with Dinka killing Nuer, and Nuer killing Dinka. Countless civilians, including women and children, have become victims of violence perpetrated by both government and rebel forces alike. Each violent act threatens to return South Sudan to the cycle of conflict and destruction that South Sudanese of all ethnicities and backgrounds voted to end when they voted for independence in 2011.

But just as each act of violence may ignite retribution, each step towards peace offers the chance to rebuild. Breaking this cycle, and ensuring that Africa's newest nation continues to move forward rather than backwards, is of highest priority to the United States and the international community.

I want to thank you for your continued commitment to the people of South Sudan, and I look forward to your questions.