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April 21, 2008

Ambassador Richard Williamson
U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan
U.S. Department of State

Dear Ambassador Williamson:

I am writing out of concern regarding reports that suggest that the State Department is preparing to negotiate with the Sudanese regime and may in fact outline additional incentives to encourage Khartoum to allow peacekeeping forces into the Darfur region. These incentives reportedly may include normalizing relations with Sudan and removing the regime from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

As a Senator who has long been gravely concerned by the genocide in Darfur and who has repeatedly called for the Bush administration and the international community to exert increased pressure on the Sudanese regime, I categorically oppose any strategy that would simply placate Khartoum, and I urge you to reverse course. The Sudanese regime has proven to be murderous and oppressive and any agreement to allow certain peacekeepers into Darfur, though positive, will not be nearly enough to demonstrate that Khartoum has ceased to terrorize its people or deserves to be treated as any other friendly government. Furthermore, the Sudanese regime time and again has verbally agreed to allow peacekeeping forces to enter Darfur only to stall and stonewall their deployment. We must remain on guard for Khartoum saying one thing and doing another.

Instead of this strategy to instantly reward the Sudanese regime for baby steps, it must understand that the only acceptable outcome is a long-term, demonstrated commitment to peace and equality within its borders. As such, it will take a dedicated international effort to stop genocide and oppression in Sudan. This will include more pressure from nations like China, which has a unique economic relationship with Sudan that it can leverage into a cessation of the bloodshed.

I urge your urgent consideration of this matter and expect that the negotiating strategy outlined in recent news reports will be scrapped.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator