

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Hearing on “South Sudan’s Broken Promise?”
January 15, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

“As noted by our hearing title – South Sudan’s Broken Promise? – the pledge the government of South Sudan made to its people and the world may be slipping away. In recent weeks, a political power struggle and outbreak of fighting has led to the loss of thousands of lives. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese have been displaced. With both sides digging in their heels, there is no end in sight.

The people of South Sudan sacrificed for decades to achieve independence. That makes the latest round of fighting – largely attributable to their leadership’s unwillingness to build an inclusive and viable South Sudan – all the more infuriating. Indeed, it appears that the greatest threat to South Sudan post-independence is South Sudan itself.

This is a depressing picture for many in Washington. It’s safe to say that, were it not for the U.S. government’s sustained engagement, including a massive investment from Congress, South Sudan would not be Africa’s newest nation. During this critical period, then-Senator John Kerry played a key role on behalf of the Administration, declaring that “we helped midwife the birth of a new nation.” The U.S. is proud of our role in this historical event.

But the sad truth is that this crisis is no surprise. During the 1990s, much of the fighting was among southerners themselves, with competing factions showing blatant disregard for human rights. Since South Sudan’s independence, experts have been sounding the alarm about rising internal tensions: the entire cabinet was sacked, journalists were assassinated and humanitarian aid workers were expelled. A 2010 threat assessment by the Director of National Intelligence found that “mass killing or genocide” was “most likely to occur in Southern Sudan” over the next five years.

In fact, Ranking Member Engel and I sent a letter to President Kiir last summer. We warned that, “in the absence of marked improvement in the rule of law, and in the presence of continued violence we fear South Sudan may be headed toward a longer and entrenched period of instability.”

Despite these warnings, I am afraid that our investment and diplomatic success may have skewed the judgment of the U.S. government on more than one occasion. For example, in 2012, when the U.N. Security Council proposed instituting sanctions against South Sudan for corruption and human rights abuses, the Administration reportedly led the effort to block their consideration. There was no tough love when needed.

I understand the Administration is now considering a proposal to target those political leaders responsible for the latest atrocities. It's about time. And it's useful to remind the leadership of South Sudan that significant U.S. assistance is at stake. Forceful actions are needed before this new country is completely torn apart.

Failing to resolve the current crises will cost countless human lives and all but guarantee state failure in a strategically important region. But U.S. standing in Africa is also at stake. If we don't leverage our considerable influence to help resolve this crisis, our ability to influence events on a continent of increasing economic, political and security importance will surely shrink.

At the end of the day, resolving this crisis is first and foremost the responsibility of the South Sudanese. Leaders must put their country first. History will remember – for better or worse – the actions they take in the coming days and weeks.”