



U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration
“Along the Border” – November 25, 2009

Scott Gration

U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan

Washington, DC

November 25, 2009

As our UN helicopter landed in Muglad, the large crowd of locals and tribal elders quickly approached our small plane. We were quickly ushered into a meeting hall, where we listened intently as the Misseriya tribal elders spoke passionately about their community’s concerns.

Muglad is a major town in Southern Kordofan, Sudan, and one of the ancestral areas of the Misseriya. It is just north of the Abyei region of Sudan, an area on the North-South border that has been a hotbed of tension and conflict. Ongoing disputes about the boundaries of this area led to a recent decision this year by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Hague outlining the final boundaries. I was in Abyei when this decision was handed down, and I returned to the region last week to listen to the people from the area about how they’ve received this decision, including the nomadic Misseriya tribe and the Ngok Dinka, whose traditional homeland is the Abyei Area. Having heard from Ngok Dinka leaders earlier that day, it was time to hear directly from the Misseriya. They made it clear that they were highly concerned about the PCA ruling, voicing their distress that Misseriya land had been taken away.

There has been a lot of misinformation about the PCA decision. Reports that the demarcation commission would build a wall on the border are not true, and reports that the Misseriya would be denied access are also false. In fact, the decision specifically grants access rights to the Misseriya and does not dictate the construction of any sort of barrier.

It is crucial that Sudan and the international community work to implement the ruling of the PCA. It is important that the demarcation of the border get underway, and it is also crucial that, as decided by the PCA, the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka both are guaranteed access rights to the Abyei region. It is fundamental that we respect the rights and the needs of those who call Abyei and the surrounding areas home.

On this trip I also made a visit to Darfur. I traveled to El Fasher, North Darfur’s capital, and then on to El Geneina in West Darfur near the Chad-Sudan border. I met with UNAMID leaders and others to monitor the status of the security situation and related issues along the border. Ending the tension and the conflict on the border is crucial in bringing peace to Darfur. Additionally, with national elections in Sudan coming up in April 2010, I also took the opportunity on this trip to visit voter registration sites in Khartoum, Abyei, and Darfur. I look forward to sharing more of my observations from my trip in the following days.

Thank you for your continued interest, Scott.