

INTERNATIONAL

Rebels want probe of UN Aid in Sudan

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 NAIROBI, Kenya — A Sudanese rebel spokesman urged donor nations Monday to investigate claims of inefficiency and corruption in the U.N. aid agency leading relief efforts in famine-stricken southern Sudan.

Pa'gan Amum, spokesman for the Sudan People's Liberation Army, accused Operation Lifeline Sudan, an umbrella organization for U.N. and private relief agencies, of hampering relief efforts in the south, where the rebels are fighting government troops.

"It is, therefore, no surprise that the response to the humanitarian crisis and famine in Sudan, especially Bahr el-Ghazal, is not showing the desired results," Amum told a news conference.

The southwestern province is the worst hit by the war-induced famine in Sudan. The

United Nations says of the 2.6 million needy Sudanese, 700,000 are in Bahr el-Ghazal.

UNICEF executive director Carol Bellamy acknowledged the possibility of inefficiency simply because of the operation's size. But, she said, the rebels have so far failed to provide information to back claims of corruption.

"I believe we have to take this seriously, but I have not, at this point, been shown any information to back up ... the allegation of corruption," Bellamy told a news conference in New York.

"This is an operation that is so big and multifaceted, that I think we have to almost do somersaults to ... try to keep looking for ways to make this more efficient," she added.

Amum's allegations came as the Rome-based U.N. World Food Program appealed Monday for an additional

51,150 tons of emergency food for the coming year. In April, the U.N. agency appealed for 93,500 tons it said was needed through April 1999.

The agency also asked for \$154.5 million to cover operational costs through next April.

A World Food Program official testified Wednesday before a congressional committee in Washington on the Sudan crisis.

Amum accused the U.N. aid agency of spending money on a "large and expensive bureaucracy of expatriates" at its base in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, in the northwestern Kenyan town of Lokichokio and in southern Sudan.

The operation in Lokichokio costs \$3 million a year to run, according to Operation Lifeline Sudan figures.

Amum also accused the aid

agency's employees of inflating the cost of food and supplies purchased in Kenya and Uganda in order to take kickbacks.

He denied claims the SPLA has diverted relief food to rebels, saying the food is distributed by aid workers and not the rebels.

"If that is happening, it is an individual doing it and not the movement," Amum said.

Amum also accused Operation Lifeline Sudan of delivering more food to government-held areas in southern Sudan than to those held by the rebels.

Sudan has been embroiled in a 15-year civil war in which southern rebels are seeking autonomy for Christians and animists from the Muslim north.

An estimated 1.5 million people have died in the fighting and accompanying famines.

Inquiry: Sierra Leone embargo was followed

Special to Sentinel-Voice

LONDON — British ministers did not have a policy of breaching the arms embargo on Sierra Leone, and violations resulted from repeated staff blunders, according to an official inquiry made public Monday.

The inquiry centered on arms shipments by a British company, Sandline International, to the forces of Sierra Leone President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, who had been ousted in a May 1997 coup.

Sandline said it had government permission to assist Kabbah, despite a U.N. arms embargo imposed on the West African nation. The embargo applied to Kabbah's forces even though the United Nations recognized his side as the legitimate government of Sierra Leone. Kabbah was restored to power in March by a Nigerian-led African force.

The inquiry's report, which was debated in Parliament on Monday, attributed failures to "management and cultural factors, but partly by human error, largely due to overload."

It noted that officials didn't know that the U.N. embargo applied to Kabbah.

"This ignorance arose from repeated, and partly systematic failures of communication," the report said.

"The picture painted by this report is of a Foreign Office in shambles," said opposition Conservative lawmaker Michael Howard in a parliamentary debate.

"We already knew that ministers contradicted each other and themselves, that officials contradicted one another and themselves and that telegrams were lost and faxes destroyed, but the detailed evidence in this report is almost beyond belief," he said.

The report faulted Foreign Office officials for not appreciating the sensitivity of the matter and not bringing it promptly to the attention of ministers.

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook blamed the problems partly on budget-cutting by previous Conservative governments.

He said staffing on the African desks at the Foreign Office had been cut from 430 a decade ago to 328 today.

Cook said he would create a sanctions enforcement desk to insure that arms embargoes are observed, and contacts with private military firms would be banned unless authorized.

Jones

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 former colleagues in the Air Force Reserve.

Witnesses at a confirmation hearing last week said Jones, as a Reserve pilot, almost ran out of fuel on one occasion, flew the wrong way on another and damaged his aircraft by scraping the plane's tail — twice on the same day.

His former squadron commander said he resisted suggestions to stop flying and

had to be grounded and given a desk job, an account Jones challenged in testimony to the committee.

Other witnesses said Jones accepted \$88-a-month flight pay bonuses from the Air Force long after he stopped flying, inflated his number of flight hours in job descriptions, made political use of his uniform and pressured enlisted men and women to buy Amway household products from him.

His relationship with a bond firm that helped finance an airport expansion in Miami was under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission. "I have no doubt he's a good and decent man," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

"The question is, is this individual capable of inspired leadership? This is the wrong candidate at the wrong time."

Chairman Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), was the only one of

the Armed Services Committee's 10 Republicans to support Jones.

"I do not believe that anyone has been able to prove that Mr. Jones knowingly sought to misrepresent his credentials, to defraud the government, or to mislead this committee," Thurmond said.

All eight Democrats and Thurmond voted for the motion; the remaining nine Republicans opposed it.

Gun Control

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 became public.

"I'm not ready to say it's the death blow yet, but with all the bad publicity things are getting worse and worse," independent political strategist Don Rose said.

Fitzgerald can also remind voters of Moseley-Braun's 1996 visit to the late Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha, whose regime was labeled as one of the most brutal and corrupt in

Africa.

Moseley-Braun says the trip was a mistake but has been overdramatized.

Illinois most often elects candidates who, like Moseley-Braun, support legal abortion. Democrats hope Fitzgerald's strong opposition to abortion will limit his support, especially among women.

Independent women voters were crucial and gun control was a central issue when

Democrat Dick Durbin beat conservative Republican Al Salvi in Illinois' 1996 Senate race.

But Fitzgerald says legalizing concealed weapons isn't radical — more than 30 states allow it. Fitzgerald wouldn't allow anyone to get a concealed-carry permit without 50 hours of training.

A 1992 backlash among women voters over the Clarence Thomas nomination

to the Supreme Court propelled Moseley-Braun to the Senate. How they view her after so many problems could be decisive this fall.

Clearly, some will stand by her.

"Somebody's trying to beat an issue that's already dead," said Lorna Brett, president of the National Organization for Women's Chicago chapter. "People are tired of all this mudslinging."

WORLD BRIEFS

VICTIMS OF HAITI'S 1991 MILITARY VIOLENCE STILL SUFFERING

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (IPS) — Thousands of people in Haiti continue to suffer the effects of brutal repression during the 1991-1994 military regime, according to an official report released in early July. The 115-page report titled "Dossiers of Victims for Reparations Policy," was issued by the Bureau of Tracking and Investigation, an organization created by Haitian officials to assist coup victims. The document presents an overview of how victims are coping and makes some proposals for relief. It maintains that, as a group, these individuals remain deeply affected by their experiences and are indelibly marked by the violence, fear and the isolation they had to endure. Those most battered by the experience come from the poorest sections of Haitian society. The report underlines the psychosocial, medical and psychological consequences of repression. The many deaths and disappearances had tragic repercussions: horrific acts of violence engendered feelings of impotence, lack of control and fatalism, the report said. The report underscored the need for reparations saying they are needed on the medical, juridical, economic and symbolic realms. The report stressed that if Haiti's democratic and social institutions are revitalized, such reparations have an impact.

WOMEN RELEASED FROM WITCHES CAMP REFUSE TO GO HOME

GAMBAGA, Ghana, (IPS) — More than 100 women, branded as witches by their communities were recently set free from a camp where many have lived for most of their adult lives. However, instead of stepping out and enjoying their new freedom, the women, ranging in age between 30 and 75, have refused to go home. "We will not go anywhere. We are safe here," said Assana, the 70-year-old leader of the group. She has been at the "witches" village in Gambaga for over 30 years after being chased out of her home village "for being responsible for the death of a child." Assana came to Gambaga, because the Rana (chief) is reported to have powers to cleanse anybody with "such evil powers." He has been accused of trapping the women and keeping them against their will. "You can see I am not preventing any of them from leaving. I did not go for them. They came to seek refuge under my powers and I welcomed them," said Chief Gambagarana Wuni. Gambaga has been a refuge for more than 100 years for women declared witches by their communities in the northern regions of Ghana and in parts of neighboring Burkina Faso. These women are accused of causing death, the impotence of their husbands, and some have even been blamed for outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, meningitis, measles, and tuberculosis. To escape from being beaten to death by their communities — a traditional form of punishment often meted out to women who are declared witches — the women came to Gambaga on their own, or were brought by relatives.

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