

U.N. official warns of Darfur's misery

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) - The United Nations humanitarian chief warned Tuesday of a catastrophic situation developing in Darfur unless international donors act soon to bolster a beleaguered African peacekeeping force in the Sudanese province.

"We either get good news in the next few weeks, or we have catastrophic news later," Jan Egeland told The Associated Press in a telephone interview.

He said a major international conference would be held in June somewhere in Europe to try to boost humanitarian aid and assistance for the peacekeepers.

Egeland was in Brussels to meet top officials at NATO and the European Union. He said military powers should provide more resources to improve transport, communications, logistics, training and planning for the African peacekeepers.

However, he warned against deploying a Western military force, as some politicians in the United States have suggested.

"We have to be careful to calibrate the humanitarian and security response so it doesn't provoke a reaction," Egeland said. "I'd like to see the African Union and the U.N. play the lead role there, NATO and other organizations can complement and very usefully complement our efforts."

A 7,300-member African Union force in place in Darfur has been largely unable to halt violence there despite a May 5 peace deal designed to end fighting that has killed nearly 200,000 people and displaced 2.5 million since 2003.

NATO and the EU have provided airlift, training and other back up for the peacekeepers and have offered more help to bolster the AU troops before they are due to hand over to a U.N. force in September.

Egeland said the Africans need more trucks and helicopters to move swiftly around the vast region. He said African nations also needed to provide more and better-trained troops and said the African Union should urgently bolster the force's mandate so it could better protect the local population.

"The African Union force has to be strengthened, it's them that we have to empower," Egeland insisted. "What can be provided by military organizations, by member states of the U.N. and NATO is very welcome."

He painted a grim picture of the situation on the ground despite the peace agreement which raised hopes of an end to Darfur's woes.

"I'm every morning bracing myself for more bad news coming out of Darfur," Egeland said. After reading the latest report from the region, "my hair was standing on my head," he said. "I got shivers reading that report, every single day there is an attack on humanitarian workers or civilians."

Egeland recently told the U.N. Security Council that the number of displaced people in South Darfur had tripled in the last four months to between 100,000-120,000. He complained local officials have blocked fuel deliveries and the movement of aid workers has been severely restricted.

In addition, areas of eastern Chad that border Darfur have been engulfed in turmoil, Egeland said. Aid groups have been forced to cut back staff and relief work because of insecurity and funding shortfalls.

Egeland said his talks at NATO and the EU were also to look at the wider use of the military to help in humanitarian situations. He said military units had proven very helpful during the Asian tsunami, last year's earthquake in Kashmir and the latest deadly quake in Indonesia.

Edelman

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United States lacks a disaster emergency health and mental health policy that extends help immediately to its citizens is unbelievable and intolerable. This huge system gap we can and must afford to fix right away. In fact, we can't afford not to. Raise your voice for Katrina's children and for your own families who may need help next.

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Reid: I won't take freebies

WASHINGTON (AP) - Reversing course, Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid's office acknowledged Wednesday night he misstated the ethics rules governing his acceptance of free boxing tickets and has decided to avoid taking such gifts in the future.

The Nevada senator still believes it was "entirely permissible" for him to accept ringside seats for three professional boxing matches in 2004 and 2005 from the Nevada Athletic Commission but has nonetheless decided to avoid doing so in the future, his office said.

"In light of questions that have been raised about the practice, Senator Reid will not accept these kinds of credentials in the future in or-

der to avoid even the faintest appearance of impropriety," spokesman Jim Manley said.

The announcement came after The Associated Press confronted Reid's office early Wednesday with conclusions from several ethics experts that the Senate leader misstated congressional ethics rules in trying to defend his actions.

The AP reported Monday that Reid accepted the free seats from the Nevada commission as it was trying to influence his support for legislation to create a federal boxing commission.

The state agency feared the legislation would usurp its authority to regulate fights and wanted to convince Reid there was no need for a federal body.

Reid voted to set up a federal commission, but Congress never enacted the legislation.

Reid told Las Vegas reporters on Tuesday he would continue to accept such tickets and did not believe he did anything wrong even though fellow Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who joined him for one of the fights, decided to reimburse \$1,400 for his seat.

Reid said he believed it was appropriate to accept the free tickets because the gifts were from his home state and that McCain, had to reimburse because he was from out of state.

Senate ethics rules generally allow senators to take gifts from any state, not just their home state.

But they specifically warn

against taking normally permissible gifts if the giver may be trying to influence official action.

Manley said Wednesday night that Reid "misspoke when he said the rule applies only to senators who represent the state agency." But he added he believes Reid still could ethically accept the tickets.

"It was therefore entirely permissible for Senator Reid — a senator from Nevada — to have attended a major Nevada sporting event as a guest of Nevada officials," Manley said.

Several ethics experts disagreed, criticizing Reid's rationale that he felt obligated to take the tickets to ensure

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Lights

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to come together to fight the legalized racism of the time to bring Las Vegas back to its earlier promise of equality and opportunity for all. It is not taught that Benny Binion, one of the most influential casino owners in Las Vegas, was part of this fight and used his power to change Las Vegas' racial landscape for the better.

Geran said she wrote the book because, "I knew growing up how Blacks contributed to the city, but I never saw it advertised or publicized or taught. That bothered me. So, I wrote this book."

She continued, "Actually, I was encouraged by my aunt to write it. I tried to avoid writing the book by doing a documentary, but I knew had to move beyond that and write this book about my aunt."

Her aunt, Magnolia Bailey, was from Lexington, Miss., and in 1943, while enjoying a cold beer, was



Magnolia and Jimmy Neal, her sixth husband.

urged by her friend to join him and his cousins in a new place called Las Vegas. She drove out with a Bible, a silver flask and a handgun — and never looked back.

The book traces not only her experiences from 1943 to 1960 but also the migration

of hundreds of Blacks that came in the 1920s and '30s to work on the Boulder Dam project (later renamed Hoover Dam) and came seeking work in the industrial plants in Henderson in the 1940s.

The book details the rise

of local Black entertainment in the mid 1950s with its accompanying racism and the break from segregation beginning in the 1960s.

Bailey was a strong, proud woman who spoke about the thriving, predominantly Black, Historic Westside and some of its notable businesses, like the New Town Tavern and Moulin Rouge Casino and Hotel, the site where the desegregation agreement was signed.

Geran is working on her second book about African-Americans in Las Vegas from 1960 to the present.

Her advice to aspiring writers is to "make it more commercial and stick to the truth." Geran explained that her technique was to use Las Vegas as "a sparkling backdrop" in her true stories about the triumphs of pioneer entertainers and residents.

"Beyond the Glimmering Lights" is available at Borders, Barnes and Noble and other book sales outlets or by calling 387-5260.

Walters

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Hispanic voters could contribute to an electoral tsunami that would change the politics of government and make possible many of the policies that

they need.

The message here is twofold. Black leaders need to support the Hispanic mobilization more forcefully and from the perspective of the

interests of their community, especially those who are most affected by the growing presence of the Hispanic population. In this, they must help to craft a respectful agenda that is the glue of a strong and effective coalition.

Then, as the Hispanic mobilization continues, it needs to consider expanding its agenda. I am aware of the debate within that community over this tactics, but it should not be considered just a tactic, but a grand strategy

for achieving long-term objectives. It may be that in the urgency of the moment, a narrow agenda is best to fuel organizing, but at some point soon, Hispanics should join ranks with the low-wage American working class and push hard in the direction of change. In this respect, the demand for citizenship has a price.

Ron Walters is the director of the African-American Leadership Institute.

Conscience and Action" and to learn more about ways you can help, including contacting your congressional representatives right now about ensuring health and mental health care to Katrina's victims and Disaster Relief Medicaid to prevent such suffering in future disasters, visit www.childrensdefense.org.

Marian Wright Edelman is president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund.