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## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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### Interviewee Background

Dr. Shaloff has been with INR since 1984. Initially he worked as a West Africa analyst and since 1988 he has concentrated on East Africa, with a particular focus on Sudan. [U]

### Sudanese Politics and Leadership

Sudan has had serious internal problems since its 1956 independence and has been struggling with a civil war since 1983. The country, the largest in Africa, has nine neighbors and therefore, "what it does impacts much of Africa." [U]

The northern portion of the country is Arabic by language and culture while the southern half is populated by members of traditional religions along with some Christian groups. The current government, led by Omar el-Bashir, took power in a 1989 coup. Bashir led the coup out of fear that the sitting government might compromise the implementation of Islamic (Sharia) law with its peace negotiations with southern rebels. [U]

The current government, the National Islamic Front ("NIF") is an authoritarian regime that makes some pretenses at democracy. It takes an extremely hard line against the main rebel group operating southern Sudan, the Southern Peoples' Liberation Army ("SPLA"). Historically, the NIF has adopted a radicalized Islamic vision, which keeps the attention of many countries in the region. [U]

Egypt has a great interest in Sudan based on its concern for assured, unlimited access to Nile water. As a result, Egypt initially welcomed the NIF, which was seen as a stabilizing force. Relations, as discussed below, chilled after an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's life. [U]

In the early 1990's, real power in the NIF was wielded by radical "spiritual leader" Hasan Turabi. Turabi, often seen as a behind the scenes player, wanted to transform Sudan into the "vanguard of the Islamic world." Under Turabi's influence, Sudan established ties

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with Iran and sought to destabilize some of its moderate neighbors. Turabi definitely possessed an "Islam vs. 'Them'" outlook and "did not want to take direction from other Islamic leaders." This attitude, along with Sudan's harbouring of those who conducted the failed 1995 assassination of President Mubarak, alienated a number of Islamic countries. [U]

While Turabi was focusing on exporting radicalized Islam, his NIF rival President Bashir (who was perceived to have formal, but not real, power) focused on consolidating power within Sudan. In late 1990/early 2000 the NIF went through a power struggle after Turabi attempted to take away Bashir's power (i.e. ability to name regional governors). Eventually, in May 2000, Turabi was deposed from his position as "Speaker". As a result, Turabi then created the Popular National Congress Party later that summer.<sup>1</sup> [U]

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#### **Sudan as a Terrorist Sanctuary**

Under Turabi's influence in the early 1990's, Khartoum made a number of contacts with radical Islamic countries, such as Iran, and organizations, such as Hamas. Soon, the country was offering radicals a "sanctuary";

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Two other important acts led to the increased presence of terrorists in the early 1990's. In 1990, Khartoum opened the borders to any Arab and this "easy and open admittance system" allowed many radicals to enter Sudan. At roughly the same time the NIF created the Popular Defense Force ("PDF"), a militia group that showed more vigor in combating the southern rebels than did the regular Sudanese army. The PDF had Jihadi underpinnings and close contacts with Iran's Revolutionary Force. Soon the PDF had established training camps that were eventually were used by terrorist groups. Shaloff saw the PDF as "working with the 'nasties'" such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Abu Nidal and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. [C]

Shaloff mentioned an on-going debate as to the level of Khartoum's knowledge and support of terrorist groups. It was "not always clear who [in the Sudanese] government knew" of terrorists activities during the early 1990's.

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In 1995, a failed attempt on Mubarak's life brought additional pressure on Khartoum. The three suspects fled Ethiopia to Sudan and the U.N. passed sanctions, in January 1996. After failing to extradite these individuals, the U.N. passed additional sanctions against

<sup>1</sup> Turabi is later arrested in February of 2001 for signing a memorandum of understanding with the SPLA. [U]

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Khartoum in April 1996 (limiting travel for Sudanese and placing restrictions on Sudanese diplomats) and again in August of 1996. While these sanctions were never fully implemented or enforced [redacted] his international isolation polarized the NIF. The NIF split into two camps: 1) those who felt it necessary to continue support for radicals (led by Turabi) and 2) those seeking to reduce support (led by Bashir). [U]

After the Mubarak assassination attempt, Bashir did make some moves against terrorists. For example, he tightened up border controls and [redacted]

[redacted] But even if Sudan made a sincere attempt to stop the problem, the country was too big to police and could never be "pure". "The government didn't know everything and could not control everything" Shaloff said. Even if borders were tightened, there was always a sympathetic official "to open up the back door" for a terrorist group. [C]

Shaloff said that in the summer of 1996, the government was withdrawing support from many of the terrorists camps in the country and by 1998 they "were pretty much out of the business." But some PDF military camps still remain. [C]

### Sudan and UBL/Al-Qaeda

Shaloff said UBL entered the country at the time when Khartoum had an open door policy towards Muslims and when it was in need of funds. Sudan had an "imperiled economy" and was "dependent on the sympathy of others." This made it extremely easy for UBL to enter the country in 1991. [U]

By the mid 1990's Sudan was giving UBL a number of construction contracts which gave him legitimate reasons (and cover) for residing in Sudan. In return for his contribution, UBL received sanctuary and was easily able to bring his followers into the country. [U]

### USG Approach

In the early 1990's the USG was particularly concerned with Abu Nidal because of their attacks on Americans and the British. EIJ and Eritrean Islamic Jihad also worried the USG. From 1991- 1995, "UBL was not at the top of the list" he said.<sup>2</sup> By the mid 1990's UBL was getting more attention but he was still seen as a bankroller and not an operational leader—"we still don't see him as threatening us." Shaloff also noted that generally, terrorism was an important issue in relations with Sudan during the early 1990's; however, it "was not the primary issue." [U]

In 1995 and 1996, after the UN/US sanctions and the withdrawal of personnel from Embassy Khartoum, Sudan tries to relieve pressure from the US. By now, terrorism was a big issue, but UBL is just part of that mix. In early 1996, [redacted]

<sup>2</sup> Shaloff first heard the name UBL in the early 1990's when he was described as a terrorist financier. [U]

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Regarding the expulsion of UBL, Shaloff said, "I don't think we had any sense then that the Sudanese were offering to hand UBL over to us...or that we wanted to take UBL." Shaloff said that he was still not seen as a threat to the U.S. - "he was not a big fish." [U]

Because pressure continued to build on Sudan, they wanted to rid themselves of UBL.

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Shaloff believed that Bashir would have been reluctant to turn UBL over to any country that would prosecute him. [S]

After UBL's departure, Shaloff indicated that the USG wanted to make sure his people left as well and that his business interests were shut down. Shaloff noted that "caretakers" remained to look after UBL's interests. He said that currently there may be some people in the country connected to UBL, but that it is not a large number. [S]

Shaloff also summarized the USG approach to Sudan as employing "sharp sticks and stunted carrots." Sudan had a large list of demands to meet before Washington would make a first step. He also said Sudan made a number of "come and see" offers relating to the training camps, in the mid 1990's, but of course access would only be granted to sanitized areas. Many people were dubious of Sudan's sincerity of cleaning up the problem. He believed that Sudan would always make promises if under duress and they "will do the minimum to deflect pressure." [E]

**Miscellaneous**

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He said that there was a large amount of sensationalized reporting about Sudan by antagonistic neighbors. This was dangerous

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He believed that Berger, Lake and Susan Rice all took the Sudanese issue seriously. [U]

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