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Jeff Drumatra

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Testimony of

JEFF DRUMTRA
Africa Policy Analyst

U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES

on

“RWANDA: GENOCIDE AND THE
CONTINUING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE”

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MAY 5, 1998

Background of USCR

I am Jeff Drumtra, Africa Policy Analyst for the U.S. Committee for Refugees. Thank you for conducting this hearing on "Rwanda: Genocide and the Continuing Cycle of Violence."

The U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that regularly monitors and assesses the plight of refugees and displaced people around the world, and their efforts to reintegrate or resettle when conditions permit.

USCR has conducted regular site visits to Rwanda during the past 15 years to document conditions, analyze the political environment, and offer informed policy recommendations. USCR staff have undertaken 12 assessment trips to Rwanda since 1994. USCR staff were on the ground days before the genocide began in April 1994 and repeatedly traveled into Rwanda to document the genocide as it was occurring. Our two most recent visits to Rwanda were in late 1997.

In the past four years, USCR has produced some 50 reports, action alerts, briefings, editorials, and public information advisories in an effort to help policy makers, the press, and the American public understand and respond to events in Rwanda. We published our most recent report, *Life After Death: Suspicion and Reintegration in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, in February 1998. We have distributed copies of that report to members of this Subcommittee. We can provide you with all USCR publications and documents pertaining to Rwanda if you wish.

Outline of Testimony

This testimony consists of five sections.

Firstly, an explanation of the purpose of this testimony and, we believe, of this hearing.

Secondly, a brief review of action and inaction during the Rwandan genocide.

Thirdly, a review of U.S. policy failures during the genocide.

Fourthly, a discussion of steps to improve U.S. response in the future.

And fifthly, a discussion of the legacy of genocide in current-day Rwanda.

I. Purpose of Testimony

Let's be frank. Many people—including perhaps some Members of this Subcommittee—find it odd to hold a Congressional hearing in mid-1998 about an event and a series of U.S. policy decisions that occurred four years ago in a small country that was of negligible strategic interest to the United States. Nothing we say here today can change what happened in Rwanda in mid-1994. Therefore some observers might view this hearing as an exercise in irrelevance as it regards the past, and an exercise in futility as it regards the future.

That sense of fatalism is understandable, but dangerous. A tragedy of epic proportions

occurred in Rwanda in 1994. It was the first legally defined genocide in the post-World War II world. U.S. leaders shamed themselves and degraded the highest ideals of our human race by their inaction during Rwanda's genocide. The mass murder in Rwanda was the most intense bloodletting in modern times.

USCR therefore participates in this hearing with several purposes. First, we want to help **make the historical record of the genocide as complete and accurate as possible.** This is the least we can do. Television cameras and journalists might be absent from this hearing—just as they were largely absent during the genocide itself—but we have to believe that history is listening and watching these proceedings. If our contemporaries ignore this hearing, at least we can provide a historical record for future generations.

Secondly, we believe our testimony at this hearing can help **identify U.S. mistakes during the genocide and assess why they occurred.** President Clinton acknowledged during his brief visit to Rwanda in March that the U.S. government “must bear its share of responsibility” for the Rwandan genocide. His acknowledgement was an important first step, albeit four years late. The task today, we hope, is to identify our nation's mistakes honestly, and demand higher standards in the future. Parliamentary inquiries have occurred in Belgium and France. It is time for the United States to look in the mirror.

Thirdly, it is probably fair to say that we all are participating in this hearing today because we want to **fulfill a responsibility to the dead victims of genocide.** Let us not shirk the uncomfortable truth: among the million people who lost their lives in Rwanda were hundreds of thousands of victims who died in part because specific U.S. officials refused to help them, prevented others from giving help, and refused even to acknowledge the need to help. That is the awful truth lurking behind President Clinton's statement in March that “we did not act quickly enough after the killing began,” and his confession that “we did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide.”

President Clinton told Rwandans that “we owe to those who died and to those who survived...our every effort to increase our vigilance and strengthen our stand against those who would commit such atrocities in the future.” Those are eloquent words, but are they more than empty rhetoric? This American nation and the international community must find a way to rebuild a credible commitment to the post-Holocaust ideal of “never again.” It is now clear that we as a nation did not really mean those noble words the first time. A fourth purpose here today should be to push, prod, urge, shame, or inspire our nation and its leaders—beginning with some Members of this Human Rights Subcommittee—to **dare to do better when the next awful moment of truth arrives elsewhere.**

Fifthly, it is our hope that this hearing will be one small step in helping to **restore commitment and integrity to international humanitarian principles and international law.** The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which the United States is a signatory, is nothing more than a scrap of paper unless principled leaders, beginning with our own U.S. officials, infuse it with life and commitment. This hearing will serve an important purpose if it gives us another opportunity to reflect on the fact that appalling evil occurs when world powers such as the United States dismiss our own highest principles as empty rhetoric.

Finally, we are participating in this hearing to help **understand and render wise assistance to post-genocide Rwanda.** We want to impress upon Congress, the Administration, and the American public that a phenomenal challenge is underway at this moment

in post-genocide Rwanda that may well be unique in human history. Rarely, if ever, in recorded history has a society attempted to live together again, side by side, in the aftermath of a genocide. It is a complex and sensitive situation. "We must work to remedy the consequences of genocide," President Clinton stated in Rwanda. He is correct. But it is not a task done easily or quickly. One purpose of this hearing, we believe, is to help channel U.S. policy in the proper direction.

II. Genocide Revisited: Review of Information & Inaction

Those of us in the West consistently emphasize that Rwanda's past and present leaders must be held accountable for their actions. We in the West are slower to acknowledge, however, that our own U.S. and other Western leaders also should be accountable for their actions and inactions, particularly at the time of the Rwandan genocide.

In order to impose proper accountability on our own leaders for ignoring Rwanda's mass murder as it unfolded, it is important to make one fact abundantly clear at this hearing: Almost as soon as the genocide began on April 6, the cold-blooded, systematic, calculated nature of the killing was identifiable and comprehensible to us in the West. U.S. officials cannot credibly excuse their own inaction by characterizing the situation in Rwanda as "confused" or "chaotic" or "beyond comprehension." Even as the genocide was occurring, the political motives behind the mass killings were within the scope of our Western understanding. Indeed, sources on the ground in Rwanda expressed alarm to USCR and to other international analysts in March and early April 1994 that hardliners in the government were on the verge of fomenting major violence.

Days after the genocide began, and throughout the long weeks of slaughter, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) regularly disseminated international alerts and analyses to inform U.S. policy makers and galvanize a response that never came. Following is a partial review of information and policy advocacy during the genocide, and the U.S. government's response to the horrific events.

Genocide Weeks 1-2

USCR conducted a public briefing on April 11 and stressed that the killings were an attempt by Rwandan hardliners to sabotage the country's peace process, rather than a spontaneous "tribal bloodletting." USCR wrote to the Administration on April 13 "to emphasize that the violence...is not simply due to ethnic differences." USCR's letter explained that the killings "were instigated...by hardline military and political elements determined to sabotage democratic reforms at all costs." USCR issued a public statement on April 14, reporting that "tens of thousands" were dead at the hands of "hardline political and military leaders in Rwanda...[who] have capitalized on internal ethnic divisions...to thwart democratic reforms and terrorize the population."

An op-ed by USCR published on April 14 warned that "it would be an unforgivable mistake to pass off the latest orgy of violence in Rwanda as simply another case of African tribal bloodletting that foreigners can never understand and are powerless to prevent.... Characterizing Rwanda's upheaval as the product of primordial ethnic hatreds misses the point of what is really happening there.... The real instigation of violence in Rwanda is shamelessly political, not ethnic." A USCR "Fact Sheet" published April 19 warned that Rwanda's "shift of violence to rural regions is ominous, since most Rwandans live in rural areas."

A handful of other U.S. organizations also sounded the alarm immediately and tried to explain the political nature of the killings and the need for an international response to stop the

massacres. One of the most notable was Human Rights Watch/Africa (HRW). “The carnage that has been inflicted over the past two weeks is neither random nor inevitable, and the United Nations can play a significant role in helping end it,” HRW wrote on April 19. HRW noted that “the campaign of killing was planned weeks before” it began.

U.S. Policy Response During the first two weeks of the genocide, the primary response of the U.S. government was to evacuate American citizens and close its embassy in Kigali.

Genocide Week 3

USCR conducted a joint briefing with HRW entitled “Insights Into Rwanda’s Crisis.” The April 21 briefing included one of the first eyewitness accounts by a Rwandan who had escaped the genocide. USCR staff took a team of CBS television journalists into Rwanda to provide one of the first American broadcasts of the killing and why it was occurring.

HRW issued an analysis on April 20 that Rwandan genocidaires were ousting moderate colleagues as part of a strategy to expand the killings into previously calm areas of the country. “Keeping the peace is not a goal of the authorities,” HRW explained. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimated on April 21 that perhaps “hundreds of thousands” were dead and that “the human tragedy in Rwanda is on a scale that the International Committee of the Red Cross has rarely witnessed.”

U.S. Policy Response During the third week of the genocide, the primary political and security response of the U.S. government was to strongly support the withdrawal of some 2,000 UN peacekeeping troops from Rwanda. The United States and other UN Security Council members—which, incredibly, included the government of Rwanda engaged in the genocide—pointedly refused to give a small number of remaining UN troops authority to stop the killings. U.S. officials argued erroneously that the mass killings were being caused by renewed warfare, when in fact the opposite was the case—the war was re-igniting because of wholesale, deliberate massacres. American officials called for a ceasefire between combatants and asked specific Rwandan military officials “to do everything in their power to end the violence.”

Genocide Week 4

USCR issued a series of “Action Alerts” and a “Media Advisory” to draw attention to the accelerated killings in Rwanda and the political context for the massacres. A USCR “Action Alert” on May 2 made 13 recommendations to U.S. officials and other international policy makers to protect Rwandan civilians, demand accountability for the massacres, and diplomatically isolate Rwanda’s genocidaire government. USCR publicly urged the U.S. government “to declare formally that the massacres in Rwanda constitute genocide as defined under international law.” USCR called on the United States “to take the diplomatic and financial lead in the UN to return international peacekeeping troops to Rwanda.”

On May 3, USCR published, “Responding to the Rwandan Crisis: Declare Genocide, and Other Policy Steps,” which contained 14 policy recommendations. The document encouraged U.S. officials to “jam” extremist radio broadcasts emanating from Kigali that were fanning the genocide. It called for immediate humanitarian assistance inside rebel controlled areas of Rwanda, where tens of thousands of survivors and hundreds of thousands of other innocent civilians had congregated. It also urged U.S. authorities to strip Rwanda’s genocidaire government of official diplomatic recognition. A USCR media advisory on May 3 reported that an estimated 200,000 persons were already dead, and noted that American media had generally “mischaracterized” Rwanda’s massacres as “uncontrollable ‘tribal violence.’” The advisory stated that “it is important to understand that the slaughter in Rwanda was planned and consciously triggered by a privileged

clique of extremist political and military leaders.... The staggering massacre of Tutsi appears to be an organized, calculated attempt to erase all possibility of ever forming a multi-ethnic, broad-based political system.”

HRW continued to issue its own updates describing the campaign of bloodshed and reported that propaganda continued to air on Rwandan radio urging an intensification of the killings. HRW called on international officials to denounce the leading genocidaires by name. HRW observed that “a ceasefire between the warring parties is largely irrelevant to the mass slaughter of noncombatants being carried out throughout Rwanda...by the army and militia.”

U.S. Policy Response During the fourth week of the genocide, the U.S. government supported a UN Security Council presidential statement that condemned the violence in Rwanda. U.S. officials effectively blocked an initiative that would have bolstered the UN’s peacekeeping presence in the country.

Genocide Weeks 5-6

USCR conducted a site visit to genocide locations in Rwanda and interviewed survivors. USCR also assessed Rwanda’s massive humanitarian needs in areas no longer controlled by the genocidal government. “Militia gangs are roaming the...streets, their machetes in hand,” USCR reported. “They are killing any ethnic Tutsi they find. They are doing it at this moment, as we sit here. Just as they did it last night. And the night before that. And the week before that. And the week before that. And the week before that, all the way back to the night of April 6.” USCR stated that “this is genocide.... It is the genocide we in the West legally pledged under international law would happen ‘never again.’”

On May 16, HRW criticized the U.S. government for “effectively blocking” a UN vote that would send peacekeeping troops to Rwanda and pointed out that U.S. inaction at the UN was “allowing the slaughter in Rwanda to continue.” The organization emphasized that “the slaughter of 200,000 unarmed and unresisting civilians is...far more than a Rwandan problem. Given this extraordinary violation of the international laws...this catastrophe confronts the United States...with a moral imperative...”

U.S. Policy Response During the fifth week of the genocide, a secret report by the Defense Intelligence Agency stated that “there is an organized...effort of genocide being implemented.” During the sixth week of the genocide, the U.S. government and the UN Security Council formally agreed that new peacekeeping troops might be needed in Rwanda. But U.S. officials effectively blocked implementation by insisting on more weeks of study before allowing final approval. The UN resolution pointedly refused to characterize the killings as “genocide.”

Genocide Week 7

USCR concluded its site visit to Rwanda and conducted extensive public and private briefings for U.S. government officials, NGOs, and journalists in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. USCR cited flaws in U.S. government analysis of the killings. USCR recommended additional peacekeeping troops and explained how to deploy them effectively. Our agency reported “a dramatic need for medical services” for wounded civilians inside Rwanda, and recommended that U.S. humanitarian officials and NGOs could work safely in eastern zones of the country. We urged government aid officials to send an assessment team to Rwanda and repeated calls for the jamming of Rwanda’s “hate radio.”

Other human rights and humanitarian NGOs remained seized with the crisis and the daily loss of lives. HRW deplored U.S. restrictions on UN peacekeeping troops and urged “the United

States to immediately cease obstructing efforts to come to the aid of thousands of persons threatened by genocidal slaughter.” HRW and a UN investigator identified locations of large numbers of Rwandan Tutsi still alive and in need of protection. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which maintained medical staff in Kigali, decried inadequate actions by members of the UN Security Council. “We have known for a month what is going on,” MSF stated. “A clearly defined and targeted United Nations intervention is not an option for Rwanda. It is an obligation.”

U.S. Policy Response The U.S. government refused to allow its own aid officials to enter safe areas of Rwanda to assess humanitarian conditions. A “Situation Report” issued by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) neglected to identify the ethnic nature of the killing and failed to characterize it directly as “genocide.” The report described the violence as “indiscriminant massacres waged against the civilian population.”

Genocide Weeks 8-9

USCR continued to contact U.S. officials to share findings of our site visit to Rwanda and urge specific U.S. measures. USCR emphasized that the emerging refugee crisis outside Rwanda should not distract American officials from addressing ongoing genocide inside Rwanda.

USCR published a lengthy analysis in the *Washington Post* on June 5 indicating that a quarter-million to a half-million people were already murdered, but that “hundreds of thousands of Tutsi trapped in Rwanda can still be saved.” USCR again urged U.S. leadership for rapid deployment of international troops, and predicted that many genocidaires would cease the massacres “at the first sign of UN troops.” USCR stated that it was “hard to believe that Clinton would want to go down in history as the president who timidly allowed the clearest case of genocide that the world has seen in 50 years to proceed on his watch without taking action to stop it.” Our analysis noted that U.S. officials “have refused to call it genocide because the word ‘genocide’ carries heavy legal obligations under international law.” USCR repeated its call for rapid U.S. humanitarian aid to survivors and other innocent civilians inside Rwanda and argued that “the U.S. State Department...should not allow diplomatic legalisms about sovereignty to slow assistance to civilians who are in need in rebel-controlled areas.”

HRW published a report reviewing the first two months of genocide and the international response. The report noted that various American officials had condemned the killings but concluded that leaders had taken “no effective response to the genocide.” An HRW situation update on June 6 estimated “500,000 people [were] slain...in the last eight weeks” and stated that “the United States led the effort to withdraw UN peacekeepers at the start of the crisis, just at the moment when reinforcement and effective action by these troops could have limited the disastrous loss of life.” The overall U.S. response to the genocide continued to be “tardy and weak,” the organization stated.

U.S. Policy Response The United States joined other UN Security Council members in giving final approval for deployment of UN troops. The troops did not arrive, however, until nearly two months later. U.S. officials repeated their pledge to give 50 armored personnel carriers to UN troops already deployed in Rwanda, but imposed restrictions that delayed delivery more than a month. Several U.S. officials began to describe the killings as genocide. The U.S. government stated it was “deeply distressed” that Rwanda’s hate radio broadcasts continued to incite massacres, and U.S. officials requested that “responsible parties...bring these broadcasts to an immediate halt.” U.S. policy makers refused to jam the broadcasts, however.

Genocide Weeks 10-11

USCR conducted a third site visit to genocide sites in Rwanda, accompanied by a ranking staff member of the U.S. Senate. USCR conducted a briefing for Congressional staff in Washington and urged policy makers to take specific steps to ostracize Rwanda's genocidal government and respond to the killings by implementing the Genocide Convention. USCR urged Congress to push for rapid deployment of international troops with sufficient mandate to top massacres and arrest perpetrators. USCR warned that official investigations into the genocide should proceed quickly to lay the groundwork for trials and punishment.

USCR joined with an affiliated NGO to publish an "Action Alert" on June 8 that called for "U.S. resources to support an Africa peacekeeping force. The President must announce that the funds have been set aside [and] the equipment is available..." The document reminded that "although as many as a half-million lives may have already been lost, the massacres continue...[and] many lives may still be saved" if the U.S. would provide urgent support for a protection force.

A coalition of NGOs and religious organizations urged the U.S. government to "publicly recognize that the atrocities in Rwanda constitute genocide" and to provide leadership and resources to facilitate immediate deployment of international troops "sufficient to protect potential victims and prevent further mass killings." The NGO coalition stated that it was "appalled that the United States lacks the political courage" to respond appropriately to the genocide.

HRW criticized the U.S. government for forbidding its officials to describe the Rwandan killings as "genocide," as alleged by the *New York Times*. "How can this be defined as anything except genocide?" HRW stated. "The United States has not provided any protection to the helpless victims." In a letter to President Clinton on June 10, HRW criticized U.S. delays in providing vehicles needed by UN troops in Rwanda. "As the genocide enters its tenth week and approaches as many as half a million victims, further delay in providing the matériel and troops needed to protect the innocent is immoral and unconscionable," HRW stated. The agency identified locations in Rwanda where religious personnel awaited rescue.

An official of the Oxfam organization stated that "during the past months of slaughter, the United States has been the key player in halting action on Rwanda, creating a series of excuses and inventing problems that do not exist."

U.S. Policy Response U.S. officials conducted the government's first assessment trip inside Rwanda since fleeing the country when the genocide began. U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda, David Rawson, explained that the United States refused to characterize the massacres as genocide because "as a responsible government, you don't just go around hollering 'genocide.'" U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher questioned whether there was "any particular magic in calling it genocide..." In private discussions, Ambassador Rawson told USCR that Rwanda was a "Hutu country" and that the United States was reluctant to jam Rwanda's hate radio broadcasts because "the U.S. has always stood for freedom of the airwaves."

Genocide Week 12

USCR concluded a site visit to Rwanda and briefed U.S. officials and NGOs in Washington D.C. regarding findings and recommendations. USCR informed authorities that killings continued in Rwanda, but at a slower pace.

USCR issued an "Advocacy Action Alert" on June 27 offering 19 policy recommendations. The "Action Alert" specified six exact sites where trapped Rwandans awaited protection by

international troops, reiterated the need to jam extremist radio broadcasts inciting massacres, and urged international efforts to arrest suspected genocidaires still in Rwanda, in refugee camps, or traveling internationally. "Many militia leaders are escaping and pose a security risk in refugee camps..." we warned. USCR stated that "shamefully passive" U.S. officials should declare Rwanda's genocidal regime illegitimate and should "acknowledge reality and declare that the massacres in Rwanda constitute genocide as defined under international law." The United States' failure "to confront the genocide constitutes a massive moral failure by the Clinton Administration and an historically shameful abdication of moral leadership by the United States," the agency stated.

The UN Commission for Human Rights issued a special report on June 28, based on an on-site investigation. The UN report declared that "genocide" had indeed occurred in Rwanda. The investigators reported that the massacres "being perpetrated at present are unprecedented in the history of the country and even in that of the entire Africa continent. They have taken on an extent unequalled in space and time." UN investigators said they were "absolutely certain" that the killing "appears to be well-orchestrated." The report concluded, "The massacres are all the more horrible and terrifying in that they give the impression of being planned, systematic, and atrocious.... Whole families are exterminated... No one escapes, not even newborn babies." The report noted that the local radio station "does not hesitate to call for the extermination of the Tutsi, and it is notorious for the decisive role that it appears to have played in the massacres. It is known as the 'killer radio station,' and justifiably so."

U.S. Policy Response During the twelfth week of the genocide, the U.S. government voted in the UN Security Council to authorize deployment of French troops to Rwanda. U.S. officials continued to argue that jamming Rwanda's hate radio would violate international telecommunications law.

Genocide Week 13

USCR continued to brief U.S. officials about findings and recommendations from a recently completed visit to Rwanda. An editorial published by USCR reminded that "we should not lose sight of the fact that the horrible atrocities...in Rwanda are still occurring.... Terrified civilians who have sought refuge are still in dire danger." USCR issued a "Rwanda Fact Sheet" recommending stronger U.S. efforts to speed UN troops to Rwanda. USCR called for increased medical and other humanitarian aid inside Rwanda and urged the U.S. government to provide diplomatic and resource support for rapid human rights documentation of the genocide in preparation for eventual trials of genocidaires.

A coalition of 14 NGOs, including USCR, issued a "Statement on Rwanda Crisis" on June 30. The coalition stated that "the most pressing issue facing the United States today regarding Africa is the apparent lack of policy toward the ongoing genocide in Rwanda." The statement urged the U.S. government to: "provide immediate logistical and financial support for an African peacekeeping force"; "take immediate action to shut down" hate radio broadcasts; and "acknowledge that the killing of several hundred thousand Rwandans is the result of a planned, systematic genocide."

U.S. Policy Response During the thirteenth week of genocide, the U.S. government joined with other UN Security Council members in authorizing a "Commission of Experts" to analyze genocide evidence.

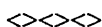
Genocide's Final Weeks

USCR issued a public advisory on July 12 drawing attention to the recent report by the UN Commission on Human Rights investigating Rwanda's genocide. "The report warrants special attention," USCR said. USCR issued a July 20 statement urging humanitarian and diplomatic support for Rwanda's new government in the aftermath of the genocidal regime's military defeat. "Failure to respond adequately to the humanitarian needs inside Rwanda...will unnecessarily reinforce the dependency and exile of refugees outside the country," the statement advised.

USCR joined other NGOs and UN officials on a site visit to Rwanda and neighboring countries in late July; the visit included the so-called French Zone in southwest Rwanda, where French troops were deployed and genocidaire leaders continued to circulate. On July 29, we published an "Advocacy Action Alert" with 16 policy recommendations, and warned that the newly exiled regime of genocidaires "continues to disseminate its propaganda in the refugee camps, terrorizing Hutu refugees..." USCR recommended that UN troops disarm genocidaires in the refugee camps and detain them. "Remnants of the former regime appear to be preparing for a future invasion of Rwanda. These hardline elements must not be permitted to continue their ways in Zaire," USCR advised.

As the genocide subsided, a UN human rights official decried the international inaction: "It seems...quite difficult to admit that in this century you can have a massacre of up to a half a million people with everyone watching."

U.S. Policy Response As the campaign of genocide drew to an end (later resumed and continued into 1998 on a different scale), the U.S. government on July 15 withdrew official diplomatic recognition from the Rwandan government that had perpetrated the genocide. One week later, U.S. Ambassador Rawson returned to Kigali to meet with officials of the new government.



This lengthy summary is far from exhaustive. USCR and other NGOs made many efforts not mentioned here to inform and prod U.S. officials toward effective action that never materialized. The purpose of this compilation is to make the record crystal clear that the U.S. government cannot say now that it did not know or understand what was happening then.

Yet that is exactly what President Clinton now claims. President Clinton told Rwandans during his visit there in March that he personally "did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which [Rwandans] were engulfed by this unimaginable terror." Mr. Chairman, this is an extraordinary statement.

If we take the President at his word, then we are left to believe that our massive U.S. government—with all its intelligence gathering, analytic capacity, diplomatic contacts, and massive resources—suffered a monumental failure by neglecting to inform adequately its own leader about the clearest genocide the human race has seen in nearly 50 years. Mr. Chairman, a governmental communications breakdown of that magnitude is worthy of close examination by Congress, the State Department, the National Security Council, the Pentagon, and other pertinent arms of the U.S. government.

An alternative explanation is that weak U.S. policies and the glaring lack of strong moral leadership during the Rwandan genocide stemmed not from a lack of knowledge, but from a lack of interest and political will.

III. U.S. Policy Failures During the Genocide

The above review suggests numerous failures of U.S. policy. Government leaders from the beginning refused to acknowledge that a true genocide was occurring in Rwanda. This massive failure—or refusal—to recognize genocide and respond appropriately against it was a shameful moment and produced policies that were politically ineffectual and at times counterproductive. For example:

- U.S. officials and other world leaders refused to invoke the Genocide Convention, which would have provided a legal framework to take action against the mass murders in Rwanda. The non-response to the killing may have effectively permanently eviscerated the Genocide Convention as a component of international law.
- U.S. leadership in support of the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping troops as soon as the genocide began effectively condemned hundreds of thousands of Rwandans to certain death and gave the killers confidence that the world community would allow the genocide to proceed uninterrupted.
- Even after the United States government reversed course and belatedly agreed to authorize additional UN peacekeeping troops, U.S. officials delayed the troop deployment for months, effectively giving the killers in Rwanda a grace period to complete their campaign of genocide.
- U.S. officials allowed their own bureaucratic technicalities to delay delivery of 50 armored vehicles for more than a month to several hundred UN peacekeepers who remained in Rwanda. The poorly equipped UN soldiers saved the lives of thousands of Rwandans; more vehicles and other basic equipment might have helped save tens of thousands of additional lives at no significant cost or danger to the United States. Unwilling to commit U.S. soldiers or to deploy additional UN troops rapidly, the failure to send urgently needed basic military equipment displayed a lackadaisical attitude by U.S. officials that was careless and mean-spirited.
- The United States and other world powers refused repeated entreaties to shut down the propaganda radio broadcasts of Rwanda's genocidaires even though the vehement broadcasts were clearly pivotal in inciting and sustaining genocide. The continued broadcasts helped create a new humanitarian emergency by encouraging the exodus of more than 1 million Hutu Rwandan refugees into neighboring Congo/Zaire.
- The U.S. government continued to grant diplomatic recognition to the genocidaires during their entire campaign of slaughter. This reluctance by U.S. officials to break diplomatic relations sent the wrong message to extremists in Rwanda and to repressive regimes elsewhere in the world.
- The U.S. and other world powers failed to disarm or arrest genocidaires at their weakest moment, during their retreat to refugee camps in neighboring countries. This set the stage for new rounds of bloodshed and regional instability that continue to this day, seriously crippling Rwanda's recovery.
- Although some branches of the U.S. government appeared to welcome information and analysis from NGOs during the genocide, many State Department officials appeared uninterested in receiving outside analysis, based on USCR's experience. While near the Uganda-Rwanda border, for example, Ambassador Rawson refused USCR's request that he travel with USCR into secure areas of Rwanda to see first-hand the impact of the genocide. Failures such as this might have compounded the State Department's lack of urgency and uncreative policy making.

- U.S. humanitarian officials, including experts at OFDA, did not conduct assessment trips into secure areas of Rwanda until the eleventh week of the genocide. This slow reaction impeded aid to genocide survivors and war victims inside the country, many of whom were suffering from horrific wounds and trauma.
- By failing to acknowledge in a forthright manner that genocide—the ultimate crime against humanity—was occurring in Rwanda, U.S. leaders did not properly educate the American public about what was happening and why. As a result, much of the public remains largely ignorant to this day about the historic nature of the awful events that took place in Rwanda, and the lessons that should be learned from Rwanda's tragedy.

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In addition, Mr. Chairman, we would like to draw your attention to a little-noticed report, *Lessons From the Rwanda Experience*, published in March 1996 by 20 major humanitarian donor governments, including the United States, and 18 international humanitarian assistance agencies. The report laid several specific failures at the doorstep of U.S. policy makers:

- “By omission and commission, the role of the United States was critical.... By not utilizing its capacity to act, and its formal leadership role in the United Nations, the U.S. must take considerable responsibility for the overall failure of the UN to respond” in a timely manner, the report stated. “...By acts of omission, the United States ensured that neither an effective national response nor a collective UN effort to mitigate the genocide materialized.”
- “In the shadow of Somalia, the American and UN observers misinterpreted events on the ground [in Rwanda] and exaggerated difficulties into an impotence to respond effectively,” the report stated.
- “Even such a concrete and seemingly clear-cut issue as hate radio was too problematic for the international community to deal with,” the report concluded. “Although the vitriolic *Radio Milles Collines* clearly qualified as harmful and attacked even members of the diplomatic corps in Kigali, there was no decision to take forceful measures to silence it. Both the French and American ambassadors opposed such action. [U.S.] Ambassador Rawson claimed that Radio Milles Collines was the best radio for information, and its euphemisms were subject to many interpretations.”
- “The idea of jamming the radio was discussed in a preliminary fashion” within the U.S. government, the report said. But jamming never occurred in part because “the United States was in principle wedded to a broad view of freedom of speech.”

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Mr. Chairman, a thorough and truly revealing probe of U.S. government failures during the Rwandan genocide should include in-depth testimony by officials who were in key decision-making and fact collection positions during mid-1994. That roster would include former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa George Moose, former U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda David Rawson, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Prudence Bushnell, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs John Shattuck, USAID Administrator Brian Atwood, former Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Nan

Borten, former National Security Council Director for Africa Donald Steinberg, former DCM to Rwanda Joyce Lieder, as well as numerous others. And, Mr. Chairman, the question must be asked, what did the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States do in a timely way to force an effective response to the genocide?

It is regrettable that none of these people are testifying at this hearing. Their remarks would be extremely valuable in identifying mistakes and why those mistakes occurred. Someday their voices should be heard if we are serious about strengthening U.S. policy making in moments of crisis.

IV. Steps to Improve U.S. Policy Making and Response

It is the view of USCR that the failure by the United States and the international community to respond appropriately to the Rwandan genocide in 1994 was not in any way, shape, or form a failure caused by poor information or inadequate technology. Our private discussions with U.S. officials and others during and after the genocide indicate that key parts of the U.S. government had a good understanding of what was occurring on the ground in Rwanda. Therefore, post-genocide discussions about the lack of "early warning" or similar defects are disingenuous, mere smokescreens to divert attention from the obvious fact that U.S. policy makers simply chose not to act.

The U.S. media's general failure to report accurately what was occurring during the genocide only facilitated the morally vacuous approach adopted at the time by the Clinton Administration. With the American public confused and distracted, the Clinton Administration was free to make a choice not to respond in any meaningful way to stop genocide.

That choice by U.S. officials did not end when the genocide "ended" in mid-1994. The U.S. choice to remain passive continued throughout the next two years, as genocidaires rearmed in eastern Congo/Zaire and resumed the genocide inside Rwanda. Once again, there was no lack of understanding among U.S. officials about what was occurring in the refugee camps-cum-military bases in Congo/Zaire. American authorities who needed to know, knew. Some NGOs took the dramatic step of withdrawing from the camps in eastern Congo/Zaire on moral grounds, citing the control exerted in the camps by genocidaires and the resumption of military activity. Throughout the refugee period of 1994-96, U.S. authorities chose the course of inaction. The U.S. strategy was to wait for the situation on the ground in Central Africa to change itself, in hopes that U.S. policy makers would be presented with a painless set of new policy options. As the situation in the region continued to deteriorate into worsening bloodshed during 1996, the Rwandan government took action to pursue its own national security interests, with all of the controversial implications that action precipitated.

Mr. Chairman, U.S. policy toward Rwanda during 1994-96 was more frequently wrong than right, more irresponsible than responsible. President Clinton seemed to offer an apology of sorts during his visit to Rwanda, and he indicated that the U.S. government would "improve...our system." But what does this mean? It remains unclear what changes, if any, are being put in place. In any case, how does one instill political backbone where one is lacking, or insert a moral compass when the government's is broken?

Part of the answer, we believe, is through accountability. The U.S. Committee for Refugees encourages this Subcommittee to promote the creation of a commission to study the

performance of the U.S. government pertaining to the genocide during the 33 months beginning January 1994. The mandate of the commission should be to depose, under oath, U.S. officials—many of them cited above—and others as necessary. The commission should identify the political and moral failures within the U.S. government that led to such tragic consequences, and to formulate mechanisms for better accountability to help mitigate against such gross failures in the future. Such a commission, composed of public and expert members, should report to Congress and the American people early next year.

Belgium and France have initiated special inquiries in an effort to understand their governments' roles during the 1994 genocide. Today's hearing might be the start of a U.S. inquiry, but a single hearing lasting a few hours is hardly sufficient in time or in scope to thoroughly consider our own government's role. The United States of America, the world's only superpower, the essential leader within the UN, the country that regularly judges the actions of other nations, should itself be held to the highest standard of accountability. Individual American officials should be accountable for the decisions they made during the fatefully bloody weeks of 1994 and afterwards.

We at USCR believe that the appointment of a commission composed of official and public participants to review thoroughly U.S. actions and inactions in 1994 is appropriate. Indeed, it appears essential in order to educate and help the American people our own future leaders understand our society's massive failure to respond to genocide, the ultimate crime against humanity.

V. Genocide's Legacy in Rwanda Today

This Subcommittee has indicated that one purpose of this hearing is to examine "continuing cycles of violence" in Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

For a fuller discussion of this matter, we refer you to our report, *Life After Death: Suspicion and Reintegration in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, published in February 1998. The report examines the attitudes and psychology pervading Rwandan society four years after the genocide, as well as security issues, governance, problems of land and housing, the economy, health needs, food shortages, demographics, and other issues. The report contains 15 policy recommendations. Copies of *Life After Death* are readily available from the U.S. Committee for Refugees.

Rarely in human history has a society insisted that all its people live together again, side by side, in the aftermath of genocide. That is, however, the task at hand in Rwanda. The people of Rwanda are attempting to do what few societies in recorded history have ever done. In response to the Armenian genocide earlier this century, the international community carved out an independent nation for the Armenian people. After the Holocaust, the world created a sovereign Jewish state, Israel. After the "killing fields" of Cambodia in the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians permanently resettled in other countries. In modern-day Bosnia, ethnic cleansing has produced defacto separation.

Post-genocide Rwanda, however, is charting a dramatically different course. The country and its people are trying to endure as one after being torn apart by an attempt to annihilate an entire group. The challenge is, arguably, unique in modern times. Rarely has any society of any age suffered genocide, civil war, massive refugee flight, hate propaganda, a culture of impunity, ongoing insurgency, and still managed to emerge intact.

Deep concern about personal safety has become ingrained in Rwandans. The armed insurgency by genocidaires—primarily in the northwest but occasionally erupting in other pockets of the west—costs large numbers of lives and poisons attitudes nationwide. Counterinsurgency offensives by the government military, the RPA, have killed innocent civilians as well as genocidaires. Many Tutsi view the insurgency as proof that the campaign of genocide continues against them, that they are still being preyed upon in their own country. Many Hutu fear that they might be victimized by revenge killings, detention, or other injustices.

This is the context for the current cycle of violence in Rwanda. Estimates of the death toll in 1997 varied widely, from 3,000 to 8,000, or more. International organizations, including the UN Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, have limited their own presence in Rwanda's northwest conflict area due to fears about staff safety. USCR conducted two site visits to northwest Rwanda late last year, and traveled to rural areas deep in the conflict area. The paucity of regular first-hand reporting of northwest Rwanda's bloodshed is a major problem for the international community, and has intensified the sense of isolation felt by many local residents who believe the international community has abandoned them.

It is important to stress, Mr. Chairman, that there is another, more hopeful, side to this bleak picture of violence. Rwanda's insurgency and the most egregious abuses by the RPA primarily occur in the northwest corner of the country. By any measurement, the majority of Rwanda remains relatively free of wholesale violence. Citizens in most areas of the country are struggling to cope with social tensions in peaceful ways.

Unfortunately, the international community tends to oversimplify Rwanda. Many foreign observers initially overestimated how quickly Rwandans could "reconcile" after the genocide of 1994 and massive refugee repatriation of 1996-97. More recent conventional wisdom threatens to dismiss Rwanda incorrectly as a "lost cause." On the contrary, the people of post-genocide Rwanda are engaged in one of the most complicated social phenomena in human history. They have not yet succeeded, but they certainly have not yet failed. Rwandans' efforts to live together again deserve the fullest and wisest support the United States can provide.

Recommendations to U.S. policy makers regarding current-day Rwanda:

- Sustain U.S. financial and diplomatic support for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.
- Help maintain a UN arms monitoring program in the region to enforce the existing arms embargo against the former government of Rwanda.
- Encourage Rwandan government's prosecution of abuses by RPA soldiers, particularly in the northwest.
- Work with Rwandan officials, other Central African leaders, and UNHCR to improve adherence to international refugee law and norms of refugee protection, which have been dangerously eroded in the region.
- Provide aid that is flexibly tailored to the needs of different areas of Rwanda and different segments of the Rwandan population.

- Provide full funding for the Administration's proposed Great Lakes Justice Initiative to strengthen Rwanda's still-overwhelmed justice system.
- Make more resources available to Rwandans to facilitate individual counseling and national social dialogue in the aftermath of the genocide and to lessen current social tensions.
- Provide resources and encouragement to help make Rwandan government more proactive in identifying and resolving property disputes which otherwise threaten to build resentment among many Hutu residents.
- Provide funding to conduct thorough assessments of Rwandan resettlement sites to ensure that chosen sites can adequately support new populations.

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We thank you Mr. Chairman, and Congresswoman McKinney, and all other Members of this Subcommittee, for your interest in the well-being of the Rwandan people.

