Mr. President, it is disheartening

to be back on the floor of

the Senate again to talk about the

looming humanitarian catastrophe in

the Darfur region of Sudan. Despite the

partial peace agreement signed in May

between the Sudanese Government and

one rebel faction, the 3-year civil war

in Darfur has intensified in recent

months. By any account, the situation

is rapidly deteriorating.

Today, Darfur faces a more complex

and brutal environment where rebel

groups have splintered, and one has

joined forces with the Sudanese Army,

strengthening jingaweit militias that

have long used rape, murder and mayhem

to gain control of the region.

On August 28, Sudanese Government

forces launched a major offensive in

Darfur to finish off any opposing

rebels, in direct violation of the Darfur

Peace Agreement and cease-fire accord.

As a result, tens of thousands more civilians

have been forcibly displaced,

bringing the total to more than 2 million

people. And, of course, for those

who have been displaced, disease and

dysentery are rampant, causing the

death rate to increase.

Relief organizations that have not already

left the region face near impossible

hurdles to reach hundreds of

thousands of desperate people in need

of food, water, and medical attention

who are also vulnerable to the intensifying

and indiscriminate aerial bombings.

It is a scene straight out of Hell.

The well-intentioned, 7,000-member

African Union peacekeeping force is

understaffed, under-equipped, and has

been unable to stop the violence in

Darfur. The fact is they don’t even

have the communications, airlift, mobility,

or support that most military

would have. Estimates of the number

of people who have died from war and

disease in Darfur range as high as

450,000. That is 75 percent of the population

of my own State of Vermont.

The United Nations Security Council

adopted Resolution 1706 that would replace

the African Union force with a

much larger U.N. force empowered to

protect civilians. The Sudanese Government

not only rejected the resolution

but demanded that the African

Union withdraw from the country after

its mandate expires at the end of this

month.

While the United Nations, the African

Union, and most of the international

community are united in support

of a larger U.N. peacekeeping

force, the government in Khartoum has

repeatedly refused. I think they probably

fear that the U.N. can pose a challenge

to its own ability to act with impunity

and its own ability to carry out

murder and mass extinction of people.

It is ludicrous that a lone despot, Sudan’s

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir,

can obstruct the deployment of a U.N.

peacekeeping force to stop genocide

from continuing in his country. He has

even gone so far as to threaten to attack

any U.N. force that enters Sudan.

This is a man who has made it very

clear he supports the genocide and will

try to stop anybody who wants to bring

a halt to it.

Despite the Bush administration’s

diplomatic efforts in pressing for urgent

international intervention to ease

the Darfur crisis, China and Russia

managed to thwart passage of a stronger

U.N. Security Council resolution.

And on August 20, the Arab League

Committee on Sudan backed the Sudanese

President’s refusal of a U.N.

peacekeeping force. They further

distanced themselves from any responsibility

for the situation in Darfur. It

is amazing. People are dying. People

are being killed. They are being raped.

They are being murdered. They are

being starved and they are dying of all

kinds of diseases. Nobody takes responsibility.

All the forces that can do

something about it—Russia, China, the

Arab League, Sudan itself, that could

stop this—wash their hands of it.

The diplomatic inertia on Darfur is

illustrative of just how much America’s

credibility and influence has eroded

in the eyes of the world, largely because

of our misguided policy in Iraq.

We can’t threaten anybody. We can’t

cajole anybody. We have lost our credibility.

We have squandered the trust

and confidence of our allies, particularly

those in the Arab world, and now

the administration’s leverage with

which to solve other regional and global

crises has weakened. Darfur is one

example. The impasse over Iran’s nuclear

program is another.

It is tragic how much damage this

administration’s policies have caused

to America’s leadership on so many

issues that require the cooperation and

support of other nations. The price in

Darfur is an emboldened Sudanese regime

that has managed to defy U.S.

diplomatic pressure and the deaths of

thousands of innocent people. Urgent

and immediate action is essential to

save Darfur from further catastrophe.

First, the President will today finally

appoint a Presidential Special

Envoy to Sudan. Many of us here, myself

included, called for the designation

of a Special Envoy for Sudan for

months, so this long overdue decision

is welcome.

Secondly, although the African

Union troops are too few and lightly

equipped to stop the violence, they are

serving as witnesses for the rest of the

world at a time when the government

in Khartoum commits atrocities and

makes it more difficult for humanitarian

organizations and journalists to

operate.

The United States and other nations

must continue to support the African

Union until a U.N. peacekeeping force

is deployed, knowing that could take 4

to 6 months.

There should be no doubt that our

first priority is to get U.N. peacekeepers

on the ground as soon as possible.

But in the interim, if African

Union troops are forced to leave at the

end of September, the last line of protection

will be lost and an even worse

period of lawlessness and slaughter will

begin.

Third, the administration should call

upon the European Union and United

Nations Security Council to impose financial,

travel, and diplomatic sanctions

against the Sudanese leadership,

rebel forces, and others responsible for

the atrocities in Darfur.

Fourth, we must increase diplomatic

pressure on countries friendly to Khartoum—

particularly Russia, China,

members of the Arab League—to use

their influence to convince Sudan to

support a United Nations peacekeeping

force. If they don’t, Russia, China, and

members of the Arab League also have

to bear complicity for genocide. Unfortunately,

these are the same countries

where our own influence has weakened

dramatically over the past 5 years.

Fifth, the administration should urge

all United Nations member states to

accelerate implementation of Security

Council Resolution 1706 for the deployment

of U.N. peacekeepers to Darfur.

The White House should be working

vigorously to persuade other countries

to commit troops and funds for the

U.N. force.

Finally, in circumstances such as

these, the United Nations should be

empowered to deploy troops to prevent

the mass murder of civilians, irrespective

of stubborn, self-serving opposition

of the government of the country.

When a country’s corrupt, abusive

leader, lacking any legitimate mandate

from the people, flagrantly violates

U.N. resolutions and a cease-fire agreement

and embarks on a scorched Earth

campaign which threatens the lives of

countless innocent people, the U.N.

should be able to go in.

If Darfur was not in Africa but it was

in Europe, we would have responded

differently. Although belated, our response,

as the leader of NATO, to the

ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia

put a quick end to that ethnic

cleansing.

Darfur is on a different continent,

but the forcefulness of our response to

genocide should not depend on where

genocide occurs or the race or ethnicity

or nationality of the victims.

Human beings are dying, irrespective

of their color or their ethnicity or

their nationality. The United States

should stand up and do all we can to

stop genocide.

I have no illusions about the difficulties

of ending this conflict, nor do I

question the sincerity of those who

tried. But the efforts so far have been

woefully inadequate. The situation

calls for more intensive, sustained,

high-level attention than our country

and other countries have provided so

far. It is genocide whether it is White

people or Black people, whether it is

Europeans or Africans. Genocide is

genocide.

I yield the floor.