LETTERS

Opposition to peacekeepers prolongs Sudan's suffering

To the editor:

We were astonished to read Keith Harmon Snow's and Dimitri Oram's guest column (Gazette, Sept. 15) opposing a United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur, considering that the only alternative is to stand by and allow the government of Sudan; its mercenary army, the janjaweed militia; and various rebel groups to continue to butcher civilians indiscriminately. Last week, Jan Egeland, the U.N.'s humanitarian chief, warned that without vastly improved security in Darfur, hundreds of thousands of people who are entirely dependent on humanitarian aid agencies for their survival would be left with absolutely nothing, as aid organizations continue their steady withdrawal due to increased violence.

The op-ed also contained misinformation. The authors refer to the humanitarian crisis in northern Uganda as the "worst in the world." Yet Jan Egeland and many humanitarian actors have noted significant improvements in northern Uganda as a result of a ceasefire that began last month and the current peace talks taking place in southern Sudan.

The rebels in southern Sudan were not primarily Christian, but followers of traditional African religions. There is no evidence of petroleum reserves in Darfur: there is no oil exploration, no production infrastructure, no seismic or geological evidence of petroleum reserves, and no oil companies claiming any petroleum finds.

And finally, the authors, donning their proverbial tin-foil hats, offer no evidence whatsoever to support their claim that the United States Air Forces are providing "logistical and strategic support" to the janjaweed militias — which, since May 2003, have been attacking and burning villages, and killing and raping civilians from the three major black African tribes — the Fur, Massalit, and Zaghawa — in Darfur. Far from supporting the decimation of these tribes, the U.S. has declared the situation in Darfur a genocide and is advocating for U.N. intervention.

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