**As UN Leaves Congo Rape Questions Unanswered, DSS in Hiding, E-mail Withheld**

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August 26, 2010

The Inner City Press

*http://www.innercitypress.com/drc7rapes082610.html*

UNITED NATIONS, August 26 -- While the UN Security Council belatedly expressed outrage at the mass rapes in the Eastern Congo and the inaction of the UN Mission MONUSCO, the UN continued to spin and dissemble and try to deflect blame.

Inner City Press asked the outgoing head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes about the statement by the NGO International Medical Corps that it told OCHA on August 6 about the rapes, not August 12 as the UN has previously said. Video here, from Minute 13:31.

 Holmes replied that UN peacekeepers “can't be behind every bush,” and chided Inner City Press not to focus on MONUSCO, but rather on the FDLR (or Mai Mai) rebels. But $1 billion a year is being spend on MONUSCO, to protect civilians.

 And what about IMC's statement it told OCHA on August 6? Holmes said the OCHA was informed by IMF, but he wasn't sure about the date.

 Amid reports, taken up in the Security Council on Thursday morning, of a July 30 UN Department of Safety and Security e-mail circulated throughout MONUSCO that the rebels were in the area and that it was not safe for humanitarians, Inner City Press asked UN spokesman Martin Nesirky to release the e-mail, and others to show how frequent such warnings are. Video here, from 46:07.

 Nesirky replied “I don't think we need to count individual e-mails,” before predicting that DSS will not release it. Inner City Press asked for a briefing by DSS chief Gregory Starr, who has yet to hold a press conference since assuming his Under Secretary General job. I'm sure he and his people heard your request, Nesirky said. Yeah, sure.

 Nesirky read from transcriptions of the August 25 comments by MONUSCO chief Roger Meece, like a defense lawyer trying to beat a perjury charge, as one correspondent later put it. But there are more and more questions about what Meece told the Press - and, at least indirectly, the Security Council.

Inner City Press asked Russia's Vitaly Churkin, this month's Council president, about the closed door briefing given by the UN's Raisedon Zenenga. Video here, from Minute 2:27. Churkin said there were many questions unanswered.

Inner City Press asked if the Council discussed what type of communications equipment -- satellite phones and flares have been Inner City Press' suggestions -- might have prevented the mass rapes, and might help in the future. Video here, from Minute 4:12.

Churkin wouldn't describe the discussions, but Susan Rice did, in response to questions from Inner City Press. From the US Mission transcript, video here --

Inner City Press: ...there was in fact, DSS email saying rebels, where does it say that MONUSCO didn't in fact go-we were told that on August 7 they went on a patrol in another direction away from the villages. What does the U.S. think of that and what steps should be taken?

Ambassador Rice: The U.S. is asking, and I asked myself, that very question, based on the New York Times report, if there was in fact some understanding of insecurity or rebel presence, what response did MONUSCO take and what response should they have taken. And we await the answer to that question.

Inner City Press: What about that email?

Ambassador Rice: We didn't ask for the email. I'm less interested in, you know-I believe there was such an email. I have no reason to doubt it. The question is, you know, what was done in response and why...

Inner City Press: On DRC, what does the U.S. think that MONUSCO could do in terms of communicating with civilians? People talked about satellite phones, flares, what are the ideas you have? And on Sudan, it's up to you. The Sudan question is just the Government of Sudan or the local authorities have said they want to move the Kalma camp to another location. What does the U.S. think of that and of the expulsion of UN personnel from West Darfur, including for distributing rape detection kits as is alleged from the UNHCR people in West Darfur? Does the US-what's the response to I guess the moves of local authorities to make those expulsions.

Ambassador Rice: Focused on Congo. We did discuss, and I myself raised in the form of brainstorming, some possible ideas for how to enhance communication between remote villages where there's no cell phone coverage and you know, a company forwarding operating bases of MONUSCO. And I don't want to put any of them out as considered proposals, but certainly radios and satellite phones are among the tools out there that could conceivably be utilized. How feasible they are, whether the radio coverage in dense bush is feasible, at what distance, whether the costs of cell phone-or satellite phone-usage are prohibited, I don't have the answers to those. But those are the kinds of ideas certainly that members of the Council are starting to generate. We expect further insights and ideas from MONUSCO and we're going to come back to this and insist that there be both a greater understanding than I frankly feel exists in the Council as to the extent and the limitations of MONUSCO's ability to communicate with outlying villages and then some very specific steps that can be taken to enhance that communication.

 As noted, Inner City Press also asked and Susan Rice also answered questions on Sudan, which we will separately report on. Watch this site.