

Darfur peacekeepers struggle for ground

by UPI

KHARTOUM, Sudan -- The largest international peacekeeping force joining U.N. forces with African Union troops in Darfur faces several logistical hurdles, regional officials said. A joint AU/U.N. force took the place of an African Union contingent Jan. 1 with 26,000 security officials slated to join its ranks. But only 9,000 of those are on duty and the rest won't make it until the end of the year, The New York Times said Monday. Sudan also placed limits on the mission, worrying the international community was acting as a colonial overseer. Khartoum ultimately signed onto the deal in the face of increasing pressure from the world body. Sudan won concessions, however, on the makeup of the force and the extent of the mission in Sudanese territory. This delayed the deployment because African troops lack the abilities of more conventional forces. Restricting the force further are the tough standards imposed by the United Nations. With AU troops forced to even buy their own paint for their helmets and little manpower to do much else, the international force, once hailed as the world's largest, is struggling to even get off the ground, the Times said. "The international community had two choices -- get a peace accord and deploy the mission after, or send the mission anyway," U.N. Special Representative Rodolphe Adada, of the Congo Republic, told the Times. "It chose the latter. But how do you keep the peace when there is no peace to keep?"

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