Sen. John Kerry stops in Sudan

by UPI

KHARTOUM, Sudan -- U.S. Sen. John Kerry was not expected to meet with Sudan's embattled president Thursday during his visit with government leaders in Khartoum, officials said.

The Massachusetts Democrat and 2004 presidential candidate was expected to meet with Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha and other government officials, but not President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes he allegedly committed in the nation's Darfur region, Voice of America reported.

Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he would discuss humanitarian issues as well as topics related to the conflict in Darfur, in which at least 300,000 people have died since 2003.

Yasser Arman, a member of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement political bureau, said Kerry's visit would help push implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the war between the north and south regions of the country.

"Sen. Kerry is adding another angle of the Congress and of the legislature of the United States. ... He would also be trying to strengthen peace and democracy in Sudan," Arman told VOA.

Kerry's visit also will impact the implementation of the peace agreement, Arman said.

"Absolutely, he would add his voice which is a strong voice to the need of implementing the CPA and honoring the commitment from the National Congress side," he said. "And he will help both parties and most importantly he would also be visiting Darfur and that would bring more focus on the issue of Darfur and the issues of the CPA."

Copyright Â© 2009, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Sen. John Kerry stops in Sudan by UPI