

# Panel says: Confront China about weapons flowing to Sudan

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—A federal religious freedom watchdog panel is urging President Obama to step up efforts to maintain the fragile peace between northern and southern Sudan.

The [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) asked the White House to appoint a Special Envoy to Sudan and to confront China over the flow of weapons into the war-torn country.

Sudan's largely Christian south and Muslim north reached a tentative peace deal in 2005 after 21 years of brutal civil war. Commission members say the United States needs to take an aggressive role in ensuring compliance with Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Specifically, the commission urged special attention on infrastructure and economic needs in southern Sudan, and greater religious freedom protection for non-Muslims in northern Sudan, which is governed by Islamic law.

The International Criminal Court is expected to issue a warrant for Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, on war crimes and the deaths of 300,000 people in the country's western Darfur region.

In a related move, 12 members of Congress appealed to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to confront China over the import of arms to Sudan, where China has substantial oil interests. Commission members agreed with the appeal to Clinton.

"Quiet diplomacy is not enough. China should be forcefully reminded ... of

its obligations to refrain from any action, particularly the provision of weapons and military training, that contributes to the violence, and to pursue all economic and diplomatic means toward obtaining peace," the letter said.

The commission hopes policy changes are implemented by the 2011 referendum in southern Sudan.