



REFLECTIONS

Two Rivers Run Through It

BY SCOTT R. RIEDMANN

I awoke this morning to the undulating rhythm of the Muslim call to prayer, summoning all those within earshot to bow down and give praise to God. How hypnotic it can be to hear a call that you don't comprehend but fully understand. Meaning isn't necessary; only faith is required.

The sky is pinkish-orange, creating the perfect backdrop for this siren song. I look down from my balcony and see some of the faithful shuffling to the mosque. Others pray in the street or wherever they happen to be at the time. This is morning in Khartoum.

On the way to work, I am shielded from the intense glare of the desert sun, hidden behind dark, smoky windows. The faces I pass cannot see my examination of them. They only see my large white SUV. Donkey carts shuffle along. Tea ladies sell glasses of hot liquid laden with sugar. This roadside delight helps drive out the chill of the desert night.

The car takes me past the Blue Nile, one of two rivers that run through Khartoum. The Blue Nile and the White Nile converge to become the great one.

How lost one feels in such a place, a place filled with extreme devotion — an unquenchable thirst for salvation. Their faith flows like the rivers that

Scott R. Riedmann joined the Foreign Service in 2000. He is currently deputy consul general in Nairobi, having also served in Quito and Merida. He wrote this article while on TDY in Khartoum.

*There are two currents
flowing in Khartoum:
devotion to a religion
that is peaceful and
loving, and resentment
of what the West
represents, what
it imposes.*



dissect this city and is as relentless as the dust that shrouds it. Their religion is peaceful and loving. The truly faithful know this.

Despite the overt religious devotion, there are some whose faith is not so gentle, not so pure. Their hearts are not filled with peace, but with anger. They crave retribution, cruel and swift, for some crime that only they understand. Their anger melds into the dominant feeling; it covertly converges with the more peaceful idea, blending and becoming part of the larger sentiment that surges through the heart of this city and its people.

I sit in my office, at the embassy, and the clamor begins on the street. Outside, men in white gowns and women robed in black chant and scream and throw whatever they can find at us — but not us really, just the idea of us. Be gone! Get out! Just go!

One morning I visit the Omdurman Souk, a local market, as the vendors are gearing up for the day. They

rarely see foreigners here; it's not a tourist destination. They don't pay much attention to me, but go on about their business selling — python-skin shoes, camel-hair rugs, donkey whips, teapots and gold jewelry.

A gentleman comes up to me from inside a shop. "Come," he says. "You are welcome here."

I know he is right. My instincts have not alerted me that there is danger. He and his friends smile and bid me good day. They are curious to know about me. Why do I venture to where few of my kind come? We share tea and exchange pleasantries as well as two people can with limited capabilities in each other's language. He shakes my hand and wishes me "peace."

As I leave the market a group of young men spot me and begin saying things I don't understand. Their eyes are not kind; they are brimming with frustration and anger. But they don't threaten me. They just don't want me there, in their market, in their country, in their thoughts.

Driving away I realize that, like the two Niles, there are two currents flowing here: devotion to a religion that is peaceful and loving, and resentment of what the West represents, what it imposes. While I may disagree with the latter's validity, the former is all but certain. These two currents come together and become something different, a stronger potion. Like the two rivers that become one, these feelings intertwine. They become lost in each other, forming something new. ■

- ◆ *Same High Option*
- ◆ *Same Personal Customer Service*
- ◆ *Expanded Benefits*

FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN

New for 2007

- ✓ Limited weight management program including prescriptions
- ✓ Second opinions through eCleveland Clinic for qualifying diagnoses for treatment received outside of the U.S.
- ✓ Prescriptions purchased outside of the U.S. not subject to the deductible

Same for 2007

- ✓ Foreign claims not subject to reasonable and customary determination
- ✓ No translations needed
- ✓ High option benefits anywhere in the world
- ✓ Web-based customer service feature, including e-mail

Foreign Service personnel and civil service employees of DOS, AID, FAS and FCS are eligible to enroll in the Foreign Service Benefit Plan.

AMERICAN
FOREIGN
SERVICE
PROTECTIVE
ASSOCIATION
FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN
1716 N STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20036-2902
(202) 833-4910 - Fax: (202) 833-4918
E-MAIL: health@afspa.org
WEB SITE: www.afspa.org

The Foreign Service Benefit Plan is sponsored by the American Foreign Service **Protective Association**.

Underwritten by Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company
This is a brief description of the features of the Foreign Service Benefit Plan. Before making a final decision, please read the Plan's Federal brochure (RI 72-001). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the Federal brochure.



If this is your

WORLD

this is your insurance plan.

The “all-risk” AFSA Insurance Plan.

Specifically designed for members of the American Foreign Service Association on active duty abroad.

It doesn't matter where in the world you are assigned, the AFSA Plan covers you wherever you are stationed outside the United States. Unlike most insurance programs, which refuse to offer coverage at many foreign posts, and others which charge a hefty premium for hazardous territories, the AFSA Personal Insurance Plan will cover you and your personal effects at the same low rate. Through the plan, you can also get comprehensive moving insurance, personal liability insurance, fire and catastrophe coverage and itemized valuable articles protection.

AFSA coverage is worldwide, whether on business or pleasure. And, should you have a problem, we provide simple, fast, efficient claims service that begins with a phone call, fax or letter, and ends with prompt payment.

You have enough to worry about. Let us take care of your insurance. Send for your free brochure with built-in application today. Or, fax or call our AFSA Desk for immediate answers to your questions.



AFSA Desk, The Hirshorn Company

14 East Highland Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19118

www.hirshorn.com

Phone: 215-242-8200 or 800-242-8221 • DC area: 202-457-0250 • Fax: 215-247-6366