

Juba and Eastward

December 8th

Preaching about hell would have little effect on the people of Juba. They have experienced it here. It is doubtful to them, that it could be any hotter than Juba. Combine the heat with several million people living in a city with zero infrastructure and you get some idea of how miserable life can be.

We landed in the large MAF passenger plane in Juba at 2:00 pm in the afternoon. We were left to walk across the tarmac from the plane, about 500 metres to the terminal building. That sounds easy except the temperature was off the charts. We were lugging our carry-ons, cameras and a backpack along with a heavy suitcase. Let's not leave out the weaving in and out of various sized taxiing aircraft.

You cannot find a foot of paved road in Juba. It is now dry season. The dust is incredible. The UN has a large presence here and more vehicles than the TTC, few of which are being used. The UN creates a real problem, driving up prices for the locals as money is spent like water. The churches have seen the price of cement and building materials double. It makes it very difficult to complete the schools under construction, on budget.

We are staying in a unique 'hotel' on the edge of White Nile river. The Blue Nile is just as large and some distance away. It is an area that will be the cause of bloodshed again as there are known oil reserves throughout the area. The river is surprisingly large and fast flowing even so far from the mouth.

Most of the 'rooms' at the hotel are army surplus tents. We are staying in a 2 story prefab building. The walls and floors are relatively thin steel, but it is very nicely finished. You can hear every sound from the neighbours. \$120 per night but we had A/C for 3 hours!

We have chartered a small plane for the next few days. Mark and I will be covering the main centres all across the south to the Ethiopian border. We will be trying match the number landings to the number of takeoffs.

The landing strips in these towns are a story in themselves. Most just a dirt strip covered in weeds. In some of the towns we landed, we were met by a crowd of the locals. Arrivals are so rare it is a big deal. The plane was swarmed in a few places.

I grabbed my camera and took a walk through one of the communities in the area. The kids come running out yelling Ca-wa-ja Ca- wa-ja (white man, white man). In Lohutok, we landed and were greeted by a group of young boys with bows and arrows. It was a great source of entertainment for them to point the bows at you and watch you blink.



We landed at dusk and the boys were our only welcoming committee, so we packed up and began walking towards the village, some five kilometers away! It was something to be in the African bush, none of us (the pilot, Mark, nor I) knowing where we are going, with the sun going down quickly. 30 minutes into our walk, we hear the sound of a Massey Ferguson 135 tractor approaching with a trailer attached. Airport limosine, Lohutok style.

The night was hot. The whole town and surrounding area was covered in a carpet of animal droppings. Until the sun went down, the flies would not leave you alone. This was our first night in the Holiday Mud Hut. They had done their best with the bed and clean sheets, but A/C was lacking and there is just something about sleeping in a place with no door, especially with critters around.



I was about to send this trip report by email when we received word from the village Lokutok, we left less than 18 hours ago. Cattle raiders came and tried to steal the herd, probably guarded by the boy at left. (I took his photo just moments before we flew out). The young man was shot in the leg and the cattle stolen. Our partners, the church leaders, were trying to find some way to get him medical care but it is very difficult and remote. There is no vehicle in the entire area. We are still not sure if this boy will get the care he needs.

The next report, coming soon, describes one of the most incredible and moving places I have ever visited. It is near the town of Kuron close to the mountains bordering Ethiopia. We arrived at the landing strip which was also very remote from the town. Normally you are swarmed by the locals once they hear the plane circling to land. There was not a single person within sight of the landing strip. We waited in unbelievable heat for a short for 15 or 20 minutes until we spotted the dust from a small SUV racing toward us on the dirt road. Our driver, who we had to book many days previously as there are no vehicles in the area, arrived and took us to town. He said he was delayed because there was 'fighting' around the landing strip between two tribes warring over the area the day before we arrived, the Toposa and Jie tribes. Many were killed.

Nothing is certain in this area. One does not know what is going to happen at any moment. Life is an hourly struggle to survive for all the people who live here.

Phil Dempster
Somewhere in Southern Sudan

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