

A Frontline Fellowship mission team conducting Evangelism Explosion courses in Sudan, was bombed by the Government of Sudan Air Force – at a church on Sunday morning. Dr. Peter Hammond, the Director of Frontline Fellowship, who was leading the team wrote this eye-witness report:

As we walked to the church just out of town for the Sunday morning service we could hear the unmistakable droning sound of an Antonov approaching. The people were somewhat nervous as the aircraft circled the town – presumably for reconnaissance.



At the birthplace of Christ, the city of Nazareth, the Director of Frontline Fellowship, Dr. Peter Hammond, was the first to be

"The Antonov is Coming!"

As we finished reading *Psalm 124:10*, "The Antonov is coming!" Everyone scrambled to evacuate the church. I was the

Church Targeted

All five bombs had landed within 100 metres of the church. The closest of that first batch was about 45 metres. As the church was the only structure in the area, it was plainly the target – especially on a Sunday morning.

I walked over to where the rest of the team were crouched in a bomb shelter to check that they were alright. Although they were shaken no one was injured. I could hear them praying in 3 different languages.

Then a series of shouts went up – *"The Antonov is returning!"* I ran over to the only other hole – which was also overcrowded – and tried to wedge in. Looking up I could clearly see the Antonov directly overhead. My heart seemed to stop as I then saw 3 bombs hurtling straight down on top of our position. The screeching sound of the falling bombs grew ever louder. The Antonov was still plainly visible at about 12 000 feet above us. The 3 bombs were almost on top of us.

Under the Bombs

I tried to crouch down, but the hole was so full of people that from the waist up I was exposed above the ground and unable to get under cover. *"Lord protect us"* was the prayer of my heart as I tensed for the impact.

I knew that the bombs would either land on top of us or very close by. There didn't seem to be any way to escape injury or death. The sound of the rushing wind was so loud and the whistling sound was reaching a crescendo when the bombs started hitting the ground and exploding right next to where we were crouched.



Christians dive for cover as the first bombs explode near the church. One bomb crashed right through a huge tree next to us and exploded in a large

Suddenly chunks of dirt and debris started hitting me and falling all over those of us in the hole closest to

The ground was still shaking. The ear splitting noise of the explosions was still reverberating in my ears.

I knew that I was still alive but I wasn't sure what had hit me or whether I had been injured. The explosion had been so close it didn't seem possible that I could have escaped being hit by flying shrapnel. I knew that it would take a while before I would register pain from an injury. Looking over myself I was relieved that I couldn't see any blood. But I was covered in dirt.

"Under the Shadow of the Most High"

As I stepped out of the hole I was overcome with the exhilaration of knowing that God had protected us. Moving quickly around to check who had been hit, I was amazed that no-one had been injured! Eight bombs had been dropped – all within 100 metres of the church, the closest landing less than 20 metres from where I had been crouching. We found hot shrapnel all around the church building and even by the road over 200 metres away – yet no-one had been hit! The American visitors who were about 40 metres from the closest bomb blast also had debris land on them.

Along with the incredible relief of being alive and in one piece came a whole series of other emotions: fear that the bomber could return; anger that Christians gathering at a church on Sunday morning could be targeted for aerial bombardment; doubt that we could continue with the Sunday morning worship service or complete the Evangelism clinic at that venue.

Scarred Trees – Unscarred People

The huge tree next to the hole where we had crouched for cover was blackened by the fire and the leaves were singed. Fragments of the bombs were all over the place. The tree was pock marked with shrapnel – how was it possible that we weren't?

Truly the Psalm we had read in church – just before the bombardment – had been fulfilled:

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord: 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust' . . . For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." □ Psalm 91:1, 2-11

A Sacrifice of Praise

Because of the real danger that the bomber could return, it was with some trepidation that we resolved to continue with the planned services. Soon the church was packed full of Christians worshipping the Lord. Before long the church was overflowing with over 300 people crammed in or listening from outside. It was a joyful and dynamic service – a real *"sacrifice of praise."*

I preached on John 1:29 – *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."* This was followed with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It was one of the most moving and meaningful services I have ever had the privilege of participating in.

"The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail"

It was a powerful illustration of the resilience of the steadfast Christians in Southern Sudan that within an hour of being bombed they were packing their targeted church to overflowing. Here was yet another example of the fact that Jesus Christ is building His church – and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt 16:18).

Later that same day, as we continued the Evangelism workshop, another Antonov bomber flew overhead. Everyone scattered as the aircraft came into view. However, after circling it headed away. It was probably on a reconnaissance mission to ascertain the effectiveness of the morning bombing raid.

The Blessings of Going The Second Mile

The next day, Monday, we concluded the Evangelism Explosion clinic with reviews, tests and awards. There was also a special rally and much celebration by the pastors, chaplains and teachers who had completed the course. While everyone was alert for every sound, we did not allow the bombing to prevent us from concluding the course properly. There was a great sense of God's presence and blessing. Plainly what the National Islamic Front government had meant for evil – God was using for good (Genesis 50:20).

During this 2 week mission trip our team of 7 presented over 160 lectures, sermons or messages. This included two Evangelism Explosion leadership training clinics (each 6 days in duration) for a total of 100 pastors, chaplains and teachers; a Teacher Training Course (for 80 primary school teachers); 15 film evangelism outreaches (including the Jesus film in Moru and Dinka Bor) and church services at 6 different congregations. We also delivered and distributed many hundreds more copies of the new complete Bible in the Moru language to schools, chaplains and churches.

Death toll Mounts

On 11 November, 7 people were killed and many injured when the government of Sudan air force bombed Narus in Eastern Equatoria.

On 21 November we received a report that 18 people had been killed and over 50 injured when the Sudan air force bombed Yei.

Keep on Praying

Please continue to pray for the Frontline mission team still in Sudan; for the Sudanese Christians who live under constant threat of bombardment; and for the Christian Liberty High School teachers and students who are completing repairs to the badly damaged school

buildings.

For Further Action

Please **inform your church** of these attacks and **request concerted prayer** for the suffering Christians of Southern Sudan.

Encourage your elected representatives to bring serious political pressure to bear on the National Islamic Front government in Sudan.

Please also **contact the Sudanese embassy or consulate nearest you**, and express your shock at these outrageous atrocities against Christian churches. Urge that those responsible for these ongoing human rights abuses and war crimes be stopped and brought to justice.

Dr. Peter Hammond

Related Resources:-

[**3 Films on Sudan on 1 DVD**](#)
[**Faith Under Fire in Sudan**](#)