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Testimony

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## FORCE STRUCTURE

# Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command

Statement of John Pendleton, Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management Issues





Highlights of [GAO-08-947T](#), a testimony to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

In February 2007, the President announced the U. S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), a Department of Defense (DOD) geographic combatant command with a focus on strengthening U.S. security cooperation with Africa, creating opportunities to bolster the capabilities of African partners, and enhancing peace and security efforts on the continent through activities such as military training and support to other U.S. government agencies' efforts. DOD officials have emphasized that AFRICOM is designed to integrate DOD and non-DOD personnel into the command to stimulate greater coordination among U.S. government agencies to achieve a more whole-of-government approach.

This testimony is based on the preliminary results of work GAO is conducting for the Subcommittee on the establishment of AFRICOM. GAO analyzed relevant documentation and obtained perspectives from the combatant commands, military services, Joint Staff, Department of State, USAID and non-governmental organizations. GAO plans to provide the Subcommittee with a report later this year that will include recommendations as appropriate. This testimony addresses (1) the status of DOD's efforts to establish and fund AFRICOM and (2) challenges that may hinder the command's ability to achieve interagency participation and a more integrated, whole-of-government approach to DOD activities in Africa.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-947T](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov).

## FORCE STRUCTURE

### Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command

#### What GAO Found

The Department of Defense has made progress in transferring activities, staffing the command, and establishing an interim headquarters for AFRICOM, but has not yet fully estimated the additional costs of establishing and operating the command. To date, AFRICOM's primary focus has been on assuming responsibility for existing DOD activities such as military exercises and humanitarian assistance programs, and DOD plans to have most of these activities transferred by October 1, 2008. DOD has approved 1,304 positions for the command's headquarters, and by October 1, 2008, plans to have filled about 75 percent, or 980 positions. Also, DOD plans to have 13 other positions filled by representatives from non-DOD organizations, such as the State Department. DOD is renovating facilities in Stuttgart, Germany, for interim headquarters and plans to use these facilities for the foreseeable future until decisions are made regarding the permanent AFRICOM headquarters location.

The initial concept for AFRICOM, designed and developed by DOD, met resistance from within the U.S. government and African countries and contributed to several implementation challenges. First, DOD has had difficulties integrating interagency personnel in the command, which is critical to synchronizing DOD efforts with other U. S. government agencies. DOD continues to lower its estimate of the ultimate level of interagency participation in the command. According to DOD, other agencies have limited resources and personnel systems which have not easily accommodated DOD's intent to place interagency personnel in the command. Second, DOD has encountered concerns from civilian agencies and other stakeholders over the command's mission and goals. For example, State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development officials have expressed concerns that AFRICOM will become the lead for all U.S. efforts in Africa, rather than just DOD activities. If not addressed, these concerns could limit the command's ability to develop key partnerships. Third, DOD has not yet reached agreement with the State Department and potential host nations on the structure and location of the command's presence in Africa. Uncertainties related to AFRICOM's presence hinder DOD's ability to estimate future funding requirements for AFRICOM and raises questions about whether DOD's concept for developing enduring relationships on the continent can be achieved.

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the Department of Defense's (DOD) efforts to establish the U. S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), a new geographic command that consolidates responsibility for DOD activities in Africa under one command. Previously, responsibility was split among the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific commands. Security challenges the U.S. faces in the 21st century are fundamentally different from the Cold War era, and non-warfighting security cooperation activities are an increasingly important aspect of U.S. national security policy.<sup>1</sup> U.S. government experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans over the last several years have demonstrated that U.S. government entities need to improve the coordination and integration of their activities. In recognition of these experiences and the increasing importance DOD is placing on non-warfighting activities, AFRICOM is intended to strengthen U.S. security cooperation with African nations, create opportunities to bolster the capabilities of U.S. partners in Africa, and enhance U.S. efforts to bring peace and security to the continent. AFRICOM officials have stated that ongoing and future DOD activities in Africa are and will be based on an overarching concept of "active security," which is defined as a "persistent and sustained level of effort focused on security assistance programs that prevent conflict in order to foster dialogue and development." In Africa, U.S. security assistance programs include a wide range of activities such as the sale of military equipment to African countries, combined military training exercises, humanitarian assistance, and programs to help prevent the spread of disease such as HIV/AIDs.

DOD officials have emphasized that AFRICOM is intended to be unique from any other combatant command because its focus is on strengthening stability and security in Africa and fostering a whole-of-government approach to help achieve this goal. In this regard, the command is intended to integrate DOD and non-DOD personnel to address security issues broadly, stimulate greater coordination among U.S. government agencies, and increase DOD's ability to execute its mission in support of overall U.S. government policy. Realizing this vision is a complex process,

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<sup>1</sup> Security cooperation activities are defined as military activity that involves other nations and are intended to shape the operational environment in peacetime. Activities include programs and exercises that the U.S. military conducts with other nations to improve mutual understanding and improve interoperability with treaty partners or potential coalition partners. These activities are designed to support a combatant commander's theater strategy as articulated in the theater security cooperation plan.

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involving not only the Department of Defense, but many other U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, multinational partners, and ultimately sovereign African countries. Previous GAO work suggests that implementations of large-scale transformations, such as AFRICOM, are complex endeavors that can take 5 to 7 years to complete, and DOD officials have stated that AFRICOM is evolving and will continue to change over the next several years. However, as AFRICOM approaches full operational capability<sup>2</sup> scheduled for September 30, 2008, fundamental issues that can play an important role in the success or failure of DOD's effort to establish this command should be addressed. Therefore, my testimony today will discuss two areas: (1) the status of DOD's efforts to establish the command and (2) challenges that can hinder the command's ability to achieve interagency participation and an integrated approach to DOD stability and security activities in Africa.

My comments are based on preliminary results of work we are conducting for the Subcommittee on the establishment of AFRICOM. We plan to provide the Subcommittee with a report later this year that will include recommendations as appropriate to address the issues we discuss today. To assess the DOD's efforts to establish AFRICOM, we obtained and analyzed relevant documentation, including AFRICOM's manpower, facilities, and funding requirements and periodic progress reports. To identify challenges that could hinder AFRICOM's ability to achieve interagency participation and an integrated approach to African security, we obtained information related to the initial and current plans for interagency representation in the command and AFRICOM's presence in Africa. We also obtained the perspectives of cognizant officials from the U.S. European and Africa commands and the related military service component commands in Europe as well as from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Forces Command, military service headquarters, Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Interaction, an organization representing U.S. based non-government organizations. We are conducting our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate

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<sup>2</sup> DOD defines AFRICOM's full operational capability as "the date USAFRICOM attains its ability to singularly or collaboratively (through the use of reachback or pre-arranged cooperative agreements) execute all Africa-based contingency plans, African components of existing regional war on terror operations orders, other operations; plan and conduct newly assigned missions with its defined area of responsibility; and develop new initiatives."

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evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Summary

The Department of Defense has made progress in transferring activities, staffing the command, and establishing an interim headquarters, but has not yet fully estimated the additional costs of establishing and operating the command. Since the President announced the establishment of the command, AFRICOM's primary focus has been on assuming the responsibility for DOD activities such as military exercises and humanitarian assistance programs, previously managed in Africa by the U.S. European, Pacific, and Central commands. DOD plans to transfer most of these activities to the new command by September 30, 2008, but at that point in time, DOD does not anticipate that AFRICOM will have the desired interagency skill sets, the ability to strategically engage with African countries beyond the established level, or the capacity to take on new initiatives. In addition, DOD has approved 1,304 positions for the command's headquarters, and by September 30, 2008, plans to have filled 75 percent, or 980 positions. Also, DOD plans to have 13 other command positions filled by representatives from non-DOD organizations. AFRICOM and Department of State officials told us that these interagency personnel at AFRICOM are intended to play a more significant role than interagency representatives at other commands (which have numbered from 5 to 7 individuals), because they will be integrated into the command headquarters' organizational structure. DOD is also renovating existing facilities in Stuttgart, Germany, to provide an interim headquarters for the new command at an estimated cost of \$40 million. However, this sum does not reflect the full cost of establishing the command, which DOD has yet to fully estimate, but has the potential to involve billions of dollars over the next several years. While DOD has taken important first steps in establishing the command and reaching the full operational capability milestone, DOD also recognizes that achieving its vision of a command that has significant interagency integration and is capable of building partnership capacity with African nations will be a work in progress for many years into the future.

The initial concept for AFRICOM designed and developed by DOD met resistance from within the U. S. government and African countries and contributed to several implementation challenges. First, DOD has had difficulties integrating interagency personnel in the command, which is critical to synchronizing DOD efforts with other U.S. government agencies.

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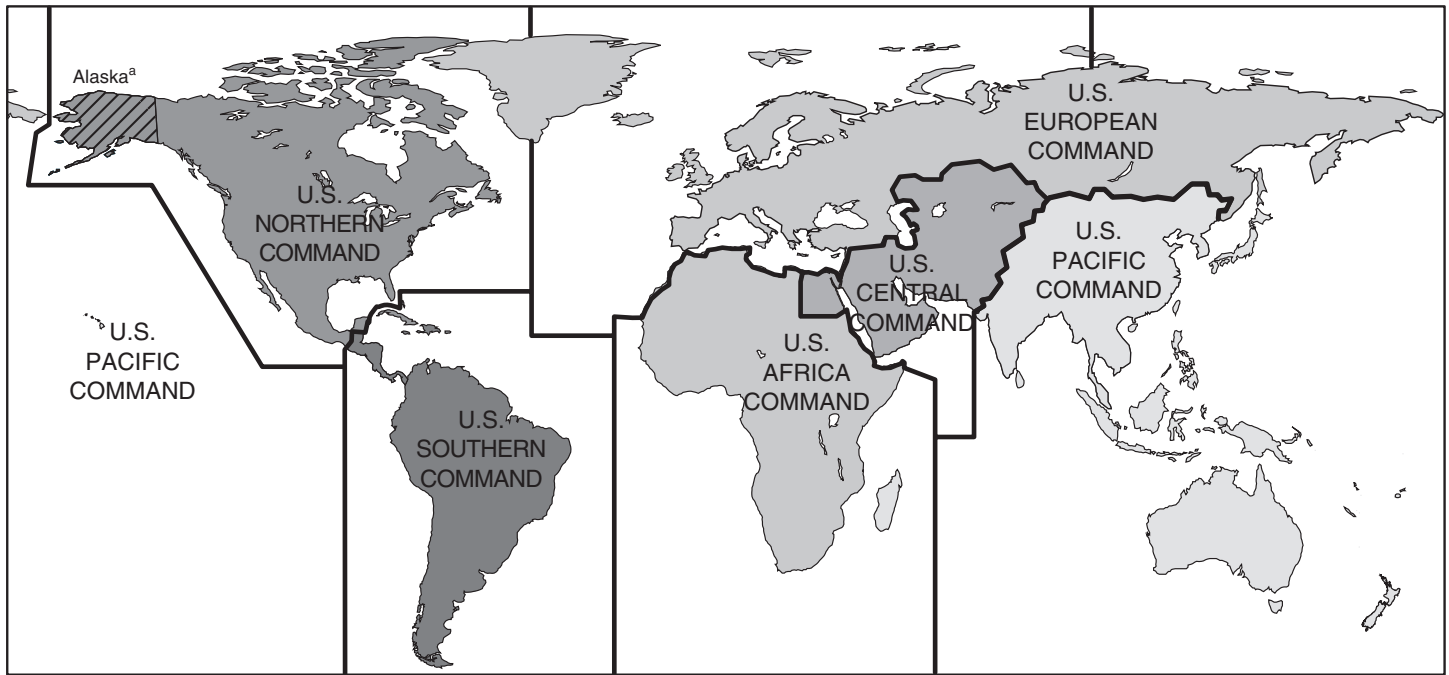
DOD continues to lower its estimate of the ultimate level of interagency participation in the command. According to DOD officials, other agencies have limited resources and incompatible personnel systems which have not easily accommodated DOD's intent to place interagency personnel in the command. Second, DOD has encountered some concerns from civilian agencies, African partners, and nongovernmental organizations over what the command is and what it hopes to accomplish. For example, State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials noted that the creation of AFRICOM could blur traditional boundaries between diplomacy, development, and defense, thereby militarizing U.S. foreign policy. If stakeholder concerns are not addressed, these concerns could limit the command's ability to develop key partnerships in carrying out its mission. Third, DOD has not yet reached agreement with the State Department and potential host nations on the structure and location of the command's presence on the continent of Africa. DOD officials have previously stated that a command presence within Africa was important because it would provide AFRICOM staff with a more comprehensive understanding of the regional environment, deepen their understanding of African needs, and help the command build relationships and partnerships with African nations, regional economic communities and associated regional standby forces. Although the question of presence is one that the command believes will resolve itself over time, uncertainties related to AFRICOM's presence hinders DOD's ability to estimate future funding requirements for AFRICOM and raises questions about whether DOD's concept of developing enduring relationships on the continent can be achieved.

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## Background

The President has established, and DOD operates geographic combatant commands to perform military missions around the world. Geographic combatant commands are each assigned an area of responsibility in which to conduct their missions and activities (see fig. 1 below). Combatant commands are responsible for a variety of functions including tasks such as (1) deploying forces as necessary to carry out the missions assigned to the command; (2) coordinating and approving those aspects of administration, support (including control of resources and equipment, internal organization, and training), and discipline necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command; and (3) assigning command functions to subordinate commanders. Combatant commands are supported by Service component commands (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) and Special Operations Command. Each of these component commands has a significant role in planning and supporting operations.

**Figure 1: Geographic Combatant Commands' Proposed Areas of Responsibilities on September 30, 2008**



Source: GAO presentation of DOD data.

<sup>a</sup>The state of Alaska is assigned to the U.S. Northern Command's Area of Responsibility. Forces based in Alaska, however, may be assigned to multiple commands.

On February 6, 2007, the President directed the Secretary of Defense to establish a new geographic combatant command to consolidate the responsibility for DOD activities in Africa that have been shared by U.S. Central Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. European Command.<sup>3</sup> AFRICOM was officially established on October 1, 2007, with a goal to reach full operational capability as a separate, independent geographic combatant command by September 30, 2008. Full operational capability was defined as the point at which the AFRICOM commander will accept responsibility for executing all U.S. military activities in Africa currently being conducted by the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific commands; have the capability to plan and conduct new operations; and have the

<sup>3</sup> AFRICOM's area of responsibility will include the African continent and its island nations, with the exception of Egypt. Egypt will remain within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility, and AFRICOM and U.S. Central Command will have overlapping but distinct relationships with Egypt, which will be addressed under separate memoranda of agreement.

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capability to develop new initiatives. AFRICOM's mission statement, which was approved by the Secretary of Defense in May 2008, is to act in concert with other U. S. government agencies and international partners to conduct sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy.

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## DOD Has Focused on Transferring Existing Activities from Other Commands to AFRICOM

Since the President announced the establishment of AFRICOM, DOD has focused on building the capabilities necessary for AFRICOM to systematically assume responsibility for all existing military missions, activities, programs, and exercises in the area of responsibility it is inheriting from the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific commands.<sup>4</sup> From the outset, AFRICOM has sought to assume responsibility for these existing activities seamlessly, without disrupting them or other U.S. government and international efforts in Africa. To accomplish this task, AFRICOM officials created a formal process to manage the transfer of activities it initially identified as ongoing within AFRICOM's area of responsibility. These range from activities to combat HIV/AIDS to programs that provide training opportunities for foreign military personnel and include the two largest U.S. military activities in Africa, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa<sup>5</sup> and Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara.<sup>6</sup> DOD plans to transfer most activities to the new command by September 30, 2008. The areas of responsibility and examples of activities being transferred to AFRICOM from the U.S. European, Central and Pacific commands are presented in figure 2. In cases involving State Department-led activities where DOD plays a primary role in its execution, such as the International Military Education and Training program, AFRICOM is assuming only the execution of the program from other combatant commands—the State Department still maintains overall authority and responsibility for the program.

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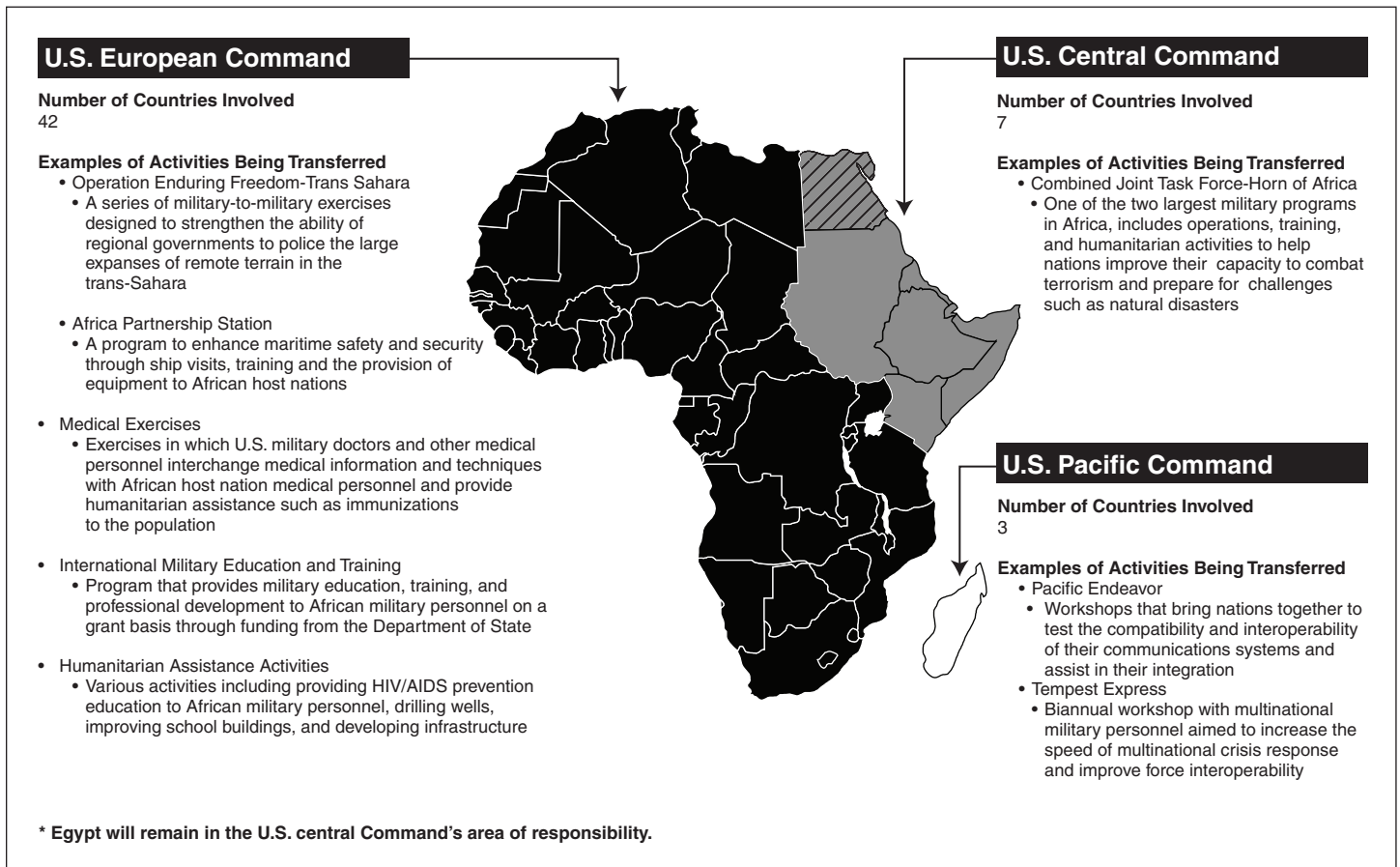
<sup>4</sup> For simplicity, we refer to these missions, activities, programs, and exercises collectively as “activities.”

<sup>5</sup> The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa was formed to work with Horn of Africa governments to promote capacity building, support professionalization of militaries, and counter the proliferation of terrorism.

<sup>6</sup> Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara is designed to strengthen the ability of regional governments to police large expanses of remote terrain in the Trans-Sahara



**Figure 2: Areas of Responsibility and Examples of Activities Being Transferred to AFRICOM from Other Combatant Commands**

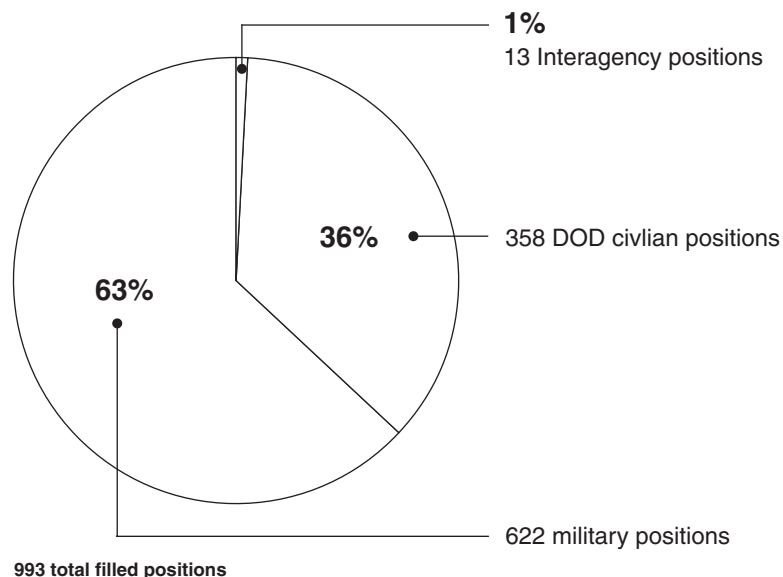


Source: Copyright © Corel Corp. All rights reserved (map); GAO presentation of DOD data.

Since the initial establishment of the command in October 2007, AFRICOM has also sought to staff its headquarters, which will include DOD military personnel, DOD civilian personnel, and interagency personnel. Officials explained that staffing the command's positions is the most critical and limiting factor in the process for assuming responsibility for activities in Africa because activities cannot be transferred without personnel in place to execute them. DOD has approved 1,304 positions (military and DOD civilian) for the command's headquarters, of which about 270 military positions are being transferred from other commands. By September 30, 2008, DOD plans to have filled 75 percent, or 980 of these positions. In addition, DOD plans to have 13 command positions filled by representatives from non-DOD agencies. As a result, on September 30,

2008, 1 percent of AFRICOM headquarters positions will be filled by representatives from non-DOD organizations (see fig. 3). At this point, the number of interagency representatives in AFRICOM headquarters will be only slightly more than the number of representatives in other geographic commands, but AFRICOM has been designed to embed these interagency personnel at all levels in the command, including in leadership and management roles.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 3: Projected Composition of AFRICOM's Headquarters Manpower for September 30, 2008 (as of Jul 2008)**



Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

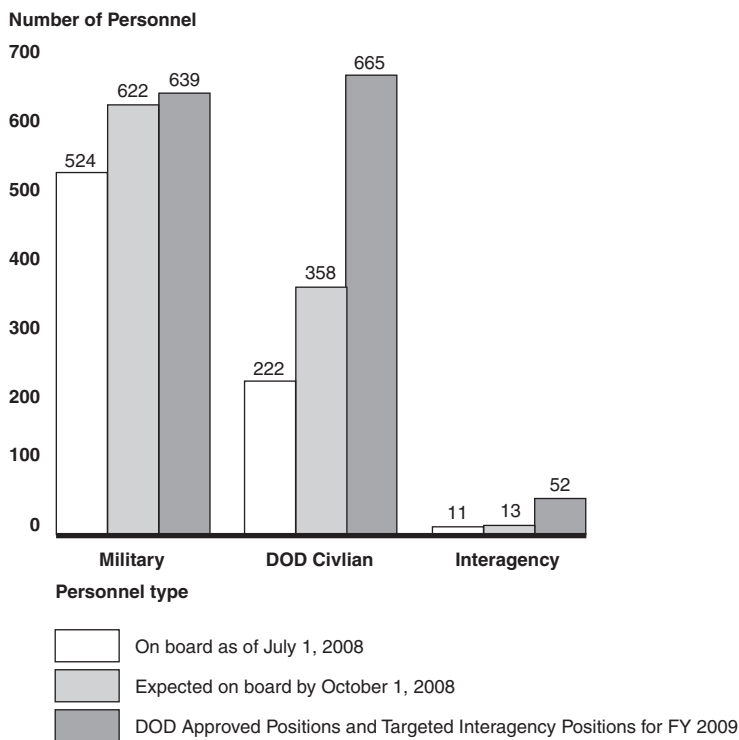
While AFRICOM expects to fill 622 (97 percent) of its military personnel positions by September 30, 2008, it only expects to fill 358 (54 percent) of its DOD civilian positions, and 13 out of 52 (25 percent) targeted interagency positions by this time.<sup>8</sup> DOD officials explained that unlike

<sup>7</sup> We have previously reported that interagency coordination groups in the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific commands had ranged from 5 to 7 non-DOD representatives. See *Military Operations: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning*, GAO-07-549 (Washington, D.C.: May 31, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Recently, DOD officials have indicated that the notional goal of 52 interagency positions for the command is now being reassessed and may change based on input from other agencies as they learn more about the AFRICOM and the role non-DOD personnel will be asked to perform within the command.

military positions, hiring civilians may include conducting security clearance investigations and overcoming the logistics necessary to physically relocate civilians overseas as well as other administrative requirements. Figure 4 compares the positions DOD has approved for AFRICOM, the targeted interagency positions, the command's progress in filling them as of July, 2008, and the progress it expects to make by October 1, 2008.

**Figure 4: Staffing Progress at AFRICOM Headquarters (as of Jul 2008)**



Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

In order to meet infrastructure needs, AFRICOM is renovating existing facilities in Stuttgart, Germany, to establish an interim headquarters at a projected cost of approximately \$40 million. DOD also projects an investment of approximately \$43 million in command, control, communications, and computer systems infrastructure to enable AFRICOM to monitor and manage the vast array of DOD activities in Africa. Decisions related to the location of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and the overall command presence in Africa will be decided at a future date; therefore, DOD expects the command will operate from the interim headquarters in Germany for the foreseeable future.

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In total, DOD budgeted approximately \$125 million to support the establishment of AFRICOM during fiscal years 2007 and 2008 and has requested nearly \$390 million more for fiscal year 2009. This does not reflect the full cost of establishing the command over the next several years, a cost that is projected to be substantial and could range in the billions of dollars. For example, although DOD has not fully estimated the additional costs of establishing and operating the command, AFRICOM officials said that as the command is further developed and decisions are made on its permanent headquarters, it will need to construct both enduring facilities and meet other operational support requirements. DOD's preliminary estimates for the command's future infrastructure and equipping costs over the next several years exceed several billion dollars, excluding the cost of activities AFRICOM will be performing.

The progress AFRICOM intends to make in establishing the command by September 30, 2008, will provide it a foundation for working toward DOD's goal to promote whole-of-government approaches to building the capacity of partner nations. However, AFRICOM officials recognize the command will need to continue to develop after its September 30, 2008, milestone to move beyond episodic security cooperation events to more strategic, sustained efforts. The AFRICOM commander has described the command as a "...listening, growing, and developing organization." In addition, senior DOD officials told us that on September 30, 2008, DOD does not anticipate that AFRICOM will have the desired interagency skill sets, the ability to strategically engage with African countries beyond the established level, or the capacity to take on new initiatives.

In addition to DOD's efforts to establish the combatant command, the military services and Special Operations Command are also working to establish component commands that will be subordinate to AFRICOM.<sup>9</sup> They are in the process of developing organizational structures and determining facilities, personnel, and other requirements, such as operational support aircraft, that have yet to be fully defined, but could be challenging for the services to meet. For example, personnel requirements for each component command range from approximately 100 personnel to more than 400, and Army officials said they will likely face difficulties in filling positions because many of the positions require a certain level of

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<sup>9</sup> AFRICOM will have four service component commands and a Theater Special Operations Command. They are: U.S. Army Africa (USARAF); U.S. Naval Forces, Africa (USNAVAFRICA); U.S. Marine Forces, Africa (USMARFORAFRICA); U.S. Air Forces Africa Command (USAFAC); and Special Operations Command, Africa (SOCAFRICA).

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rank or experience that is in high demand. At the time that AFRICOM is estimated to reach full operational capability (September 30, 2008), only two component commands (Navy, Marine Corps) are expected to be fully operational. The Army, Air Force, and Special Operations component commands are expected to reach full operational capability by October 1, 2009.

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## DOD Faces Significant Challenges to Achieve Its Transformational Vision of AFRICOM

The initial concept for AFRICOM designed and developed by DOD met resistance from within the U. S. government and African countries and contributed to several implementation challenges. First, AFRICOM has had difficulties in filling interagency positions in the command, a difficulty that could limit its ability to facilitate collaboration with civilian agencies. Second, AFRICOM has encountered concerns from civilian agencies, African partners, and nongovernmental organizations over what AFRICOM is and what it hopes to accomplish. If not addressed, these concerns could limit AFRICOM's ability to develop key partnerships in carrying out its mission. Third, DOD has faced difficulty attaining agreement with State Department and potential host nations on the size, composition, and location of AFRICOM's presence on the continent of Africa. Uncertainties related to AFRICOM's presence hinder DOD's ability to estimate future funding requirements for AFRICOM and raises questions about whether DOD's concept of developing enduring relationships on the continent can be achieved

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## Limited Interagency Participation to Date

DOD's first challenge to achieving its vision for AFRICOM is in integrating personnel from civilian agencies into AFRICOM's command and staff structure. According to AFRICOM, strategic success in Africa depends on a whole-of-government approach to stability and security. A whole-of-government approach necessitates collaboration among federal agencies to ensure their activities are synchronized and integrated in pursuit of a common goal. Integrating personnel from federal civilian agencies is intended to facilitate collaboration among agencies, but AFRICOM has had difficulties in filling its interagency positions.

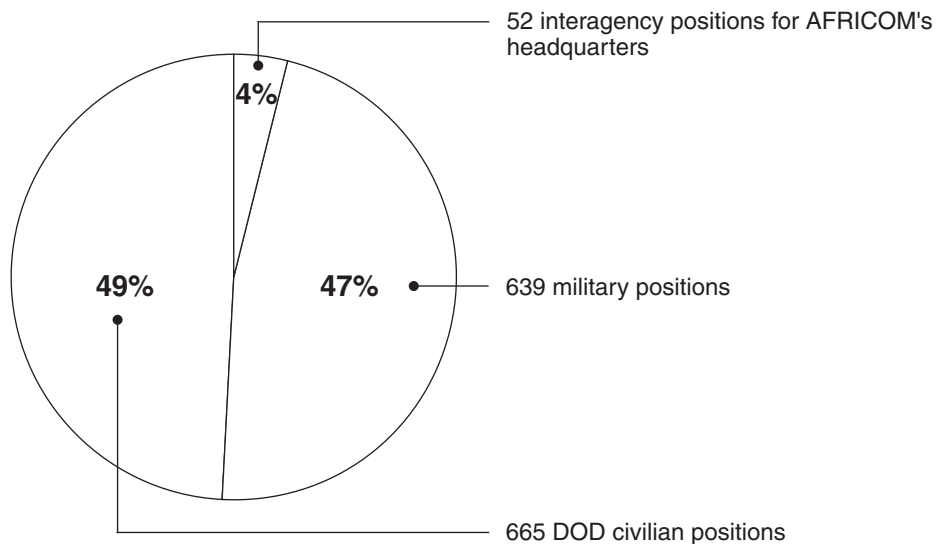
Unlike liaison positions in other combatant commands, AFRICOM has been designed to embed personnel from non-DOD agencies in leadership, management, and staff positions at all levels in the command. For example, AFRICOM's Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities, one of two co-equal Deputies to the Commander, is a senior Foreign Service officer from the Department of State. By bringing knowledge of their home agencies, personnel from other agencies, such as

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the USAID and the departments of Treasury and Commerce, are expected to improve the planning and execution of AFRICOM's plans, programs, and activities and to stimulate collaboration among U.S. government agencies.

Initially, DOD established a notional goal of 25 percent of AFRICOM's headquarters' staff would be provided by non-DOD agencies. According to State officials, however, this goal was not vetted through civilian agencies and was not realistic because of the resource limitations in civilian agencies. Subsequently, AFRICOM reduced its interagency representation to 52 notional interagency positions and as displayed in figure 5, would be approximately 4 percent of the AFRICOM staff. As previously discussed, however, DOD officials have indicated that the target of 52 interagency positions for the command will continue to evolve as AFRICOM receives input from other agencies.

**Figure 5: Projected Composition of Manpower for AFRICOM's Headquarters When Fully Staffed (as of Jul, 2008)**



1,356 total positions  
Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

Even with a reduction in the number of interagency positions, according to DOD officials, some civilian agencies have limited personnel resources and incompatible personnel systems that have not easily accommodated DOD's intent to place interagency personnel in the command. AFRICOM is looking to civilian agencies for skills sets that it does not have internally, but many of the personnel who have these skills sets and experience

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outside of DOD are in high demand. Officials at the State Department, in particular, noted their concern about the ability to fill positions left vacant by personnel being detailed to AFRICOM since it takes a long time to develop Foreign Service officers with the requisite expertise and experience. In fact, according to State Department officials, some U.S. embassies in Africa are already experiencing shortfalls in personnel, especially at the mid-level. DOD officials also said that personnel systems among federal agencies were incompatible and do not readily facilitate integrating personnel into other agencies, particularly into non-liaison roles. In addition, many non-DOD agencies have missions that are domestically focused and therefore will need time to determine how best to provide personnel support to AFRICOM. To encourage agencies to provide personnel to fill positions in AFRICOM, DOD will pay the salaries and expenses for these personnel.

As previously discussed, while DOD has focused initially on establishing AFRICOM's headquarters, the services and Special Operations Command are also working to establish component commands to support AFRICOM, but the extent of interagency participation at these commands has not been fully defined. Neither OSD nor AFRICOM has provided guidance on whether AFRICOM's component commands should integrate interagency representatives, and among the services, plans for embedded interagency personnel varied. The Army has proposed including four interagency positions in AFRICOM's Army service component command, U.S. Army, Africa. Officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Forces Command, Marine Corps, and the Air Force stated that component commands would receive interagency input from AFRICOM headquarters and embassy country teams. One OSD official added that the level of interagency input at the headquarters was sufficient because component commands are responsible for executing plans developed by the combatant command headquarters where interagency personnel would be involved in the planning process.

In the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Execution Roadmap, *Building Partnership Capacity*, DOD recognized the importance of a seamless integration of U.S. government capabilities by calling for strategies, plans, and operations to be coordinated with civilian agencies.<sup>10</sup> One of AFRICOM's guiding principles is to collaborate with U.S. government

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Defense, *Building Partnership Capacity, QDR Execution Roadmap* (May 2006).

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agencies, host nations, international partners, and nongovernmental organizations. AFRICOM officials told us that they had not yet developed the mechanisms or structures to ensure that their activities were synchronized or integrated with those of civilian agencies to ensure a mutually supportive and sustainable effort, but would turn their attention to this synchronization after October 2008. Barriers to interagency collaboration, however, could arise as AFRICOM develops mechanisms, processes, and structures to facilitate interagency collaboration, since both AFRICOM and the agencies will likely encounter additional challenges that are outside their control, such as different planning processes, authorities, and diverse institutional cultures. For example, according to State and DOD officials, the State Department is focused on bilateral relationships with foreign governments through its embassies overseas, while the Defense Department is focused regionally through its geographic combatant commands. With relatively few interagency personnel on the AFRICOM staff, such coordination mechanisms could be critical for the command to achieve its vision.

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### Stakeholder Concerns Regarding the Command's Mission

DOD's second challenge to achieving its vision for AFRICOM is in overcoming stakeholder concerns of the command's mission. This could limit its ability to develop key partnerships. Since its establishment was announced in early 2007, AFRICOM has encountered concerns from U.S. civilian agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and African partners about what AFRICOM is and what it hopes to accomplish in Africa. Many of the concerns from U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and African partners stem from their interpretations of AFRICOM's intended mission and goals. Although DOD has often stated that AFRICOM is intended to support, not lead, U.S. diplomatic and development efforts in Africa, State Department officials expressed concern that AFRICOM would become the lead for all U.S. government activities in Africa, even though the U.S. embassy leads decision-making on U.S. government non-combat activities conducted in that country. Other State and USAID officials noted that the creation of AFRICOM could blur traditional boundaries among diplomacy, development, and defense, thereby militarizing U.S. foreign policy. An organization that represents U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations told us that many nongovernmental organizations shared the perception that AFRICOM would militarize U.S. foreign aid and lead to greater U.S. military involvement in humanitarian assistance. Nongovernmental organizations are concerned that this would put their aid workers at greater risk if their activities are confused or associated with U.S. military activities. Among African countries, there is apprehension that AFRICOM will be used as an



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opportunity to increase the number of U.S. troops and military bases in Africa. African leaders also expressed concerns to DOD that U.S. priorities in Africa may not be shared by their governments. For example, at a DOD-sponsored roundtable, a group of U.S.-based African attachés identified their most pressing security issues were poverty, food shortages, inadequate educational opportunities, displaced persons, and HIV/AIDS, while they perceived U.S. priorities were focused on combating terrorism and weakened states.

One factor contributing to persistent concerns among U.S. government agencies, non governmental organizations, and African partners is the evolution of how DOD has characterized AFRICOM's unique mission and goals. Between February 2007 and May 2008 AFRICOM's mission statement went through several iterations that ranged in its emphasis on humanitarian-oriented activities to more traditional military programs. According to an official from an organization representing nongovernmental organizations, the emphasis on humanitarian assistance as part of AFRICOM's mission early on contributed to their fears that AFRICOM would be engaged in activities that are traditionally the mission of civilian agencies and organizations. Additionally, the discussion of AFRICOM's mission evolved from highlighting its whole-of-government approach to referring to it as a bureaucratic reorganization within DOD. When articulating its vision for AFRICOM, DOD also used language that did not translate well to African partners and civilian agency stakeholders. For civilian agencies use of the words "integrating U.S. government activities" led to concerns over AFRICOM's assuming leadership in directing all U.S. government efforts. Likewise, DOD's use of the term "combatant command" led some African partners to question whether AFRICOM was focused on non-warfighting activities. State Department officials said that they had difficulty in responding to African concerns because of their own confusion over AFRICOM's intended mission and goals.

Another factor contributing to concerns over AFRICOM's mission and goals can be attributed to unclear roles and responsibilities. Although DOD has long been involved in humanitarian and stability-related activities, AFRICOM's emphasis on programs that prevent conflict in order to foster dialogue and development has put a spotlight on an ongoing debate over the appropriate role of the U.S. military in non-combat activities. Consequently, civilian agencies are concerned about the overlap of DOD missions with their own and what impact DOD's role may have on theirs. DOD is currently conducting a mission analysis to help define roles and responsibilities between AFRICOM and civilian agencies operating in

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Africa, but broader governmentwide consensus on these issues has not been reached.

An additional factor contributing to U.S. government perceptions that AFRICOM could militarize U.S. foreign policy is in part based on DOD's vast resources and capacity compared to the civilian agencies. Civilian agencies and some African partners are concerned that the strategic focus AFRICOM could bring to the continent would result in AFRICOM supplanting civilian planning and activities. One USAID official told us that an increase in funding executed by AFRICOM could change the dynamic in relationships among U.S. federal agencies and in relationships between individual U.S. agencies and African partners.

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## Uncertainty about DOD Presence in Africa

DOD has not yet reached agreement with the State Department and potential host nations on the structure and location of AFRICOM's presence in Africa. Initially, an important goal of AFRICOM was to establish a command presence in Africa that would provide a regional approach to African security and complement DOD's representation in U.S. embassies. AFRICOM is planning to increase its representation in 11 U.S. embassies by establishing new offices to strengthen bilateral military-to-military relationships. It is also planning to establish regional offices in five locations on the continent that would align with the five regional economic communities in Africa. DOD, however, has faced difficulty reaching agreement with the State Department on AFRICOM's future presence on the continent. Therefore, AFRICOM will be based in Stuttgart, Germany, for the foreseeable future and plans to focus on increasing its representatives in embassies until decisions on the structure and location of AFRICOM's presence are made. In testimony to the Congress in March of this year, the AFRICOM Commander stated that he considers command presence in Africa an important issue, but states that it is not considered a matter of urgency.

DOD officials have previously stated that the command's presence in Africa was important. Specifically, DOD officials have indicated that the structure and location of AFRICOM's presence in Africa is important because being located in Africa would provide AFRICOM staff with a more comprehensive understanding of the regional environment and African needs. Second, having staff located in Africa would help the command build relationships and partnerships with African nations and the regional economic communities and associated regional standby forces. Enduring relationships are an important aspect of building African partner security capacity and in successfully planning and executing programs and

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activities. Third, regional offices are intended to promote a regional dimension to U.S. security assistance through their coordination with DOD representatives who manage these programs in multiple U.S. embassies. As DOD continues to evolve its plans for a presence in Africa and decisions involving presence are delayed, DOD officials have indicated that other coordinating mechanisms may be established as a substitute for a physical presence on the continent.

In addition, senior DOD officials have stated that preparing budget estimates for future fiscal years is difficult without an agreed upon AFRICOM presence on the continent. For example, although DOD requested \$20 million in fiscal year 2009 to begin establishing the presence in Africa, AFRICOM has not been able to identify total funding requirements for headquarters infrastructure and operations in Africa. Furthermore, a senior official from the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation stated that AFRICOM's future presence in Africa was one of the most important policy decisions that could affect the ability of the department to estimate future costs for the command. For example, in developing the fiscal year 2009 budget request, DOD estimated the costs to operate the interim headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, was approximately \$183 million, but these costs may change significantly, according to DOD officials, if the headquarters were located in an African country with more limited infrastructure than currently available in Stuttgart, Germany. Therefore, without an agreed-upon U.S. government strategy for establishing AFRICOM's presence on the continent of Africa that is negotiated with and supported by potential host nations, the potentially significant fiscal implications of AFRICOM's presence and impact on its ability to develop relationships and partnerships at the regional and local levels will remain unclear.

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## Concluding Observations

As AFRICOM nears the October 2008 date slated for reaching full operational capability, DOD is working to shape expectations for the emergent command—both inside and outside the United States. Confronted by concerns from other U.S. agencies and African partners, AFRICOM is focused on assuming existing military missions while building capacity for the future. The ultimate role of AFRICOM in promoting a whole-of-government approach to stability and security on the continent is still uncertain, but initial expectations that the command would represent a dramatic shift in U.S. approach to security in Africa are being scaled back. Two key precepts of the command—that it would have significant interagency participation and would be physically located in Africa to engage partners there—will not be realized in the near term.

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Looking to the future, the difficulties encountered in staffing the command, sorting out the military's role in policy, and establishing a presence in Africa are emblematic of deeper cultural and structural issues within the U.S. government. Having such a command will likely help DOD focus military efforts on the African continent, but the extent to which an integrated approach is feasible remains unclear. Over the next few years, DOD intends to invest billions in this new command—including devoting hundreds of staff—and sustained attention will be needed to ensure that this substantial investment pays off over time.

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Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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## **GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments**

For questions regarding this testimony, please call John Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this testimony. Other key contributors to this statement were Robert L. Repasky, Tim Burke, Leigh Caraher, Grace Coleman, Taylor Matheson, Lonnie McAllister, and Amber Simco.

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