

**Testimony before the House of Representatives
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Introduction

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to join other panel members in testifying before you this morning. InterAction is the country's leading coalition of American NGOs that engage in economic development and humanitarian assistance abroad. Our members work in every developing country. Many, but by no means all, have their roots in the country's churches and their headquarters are spread across the nation. One indicator of their public support is the 8.8 billion dollars in contributions the American public makes annually to support their activities. About a third work as implementing partners of USAID and the State Department, playing essential roles in the delivery of American government economic assistance and humanitarian relief abroad. Many also play a similar vital role in the implementation of programs administered by United Nations agencies.

InterAction and its members working in humanitarian relief have long-standing relations with the U.S. armed forces. Since the early nineties we have engaged with the military to help its members understand the culture and values of American humanitarian NGOs working abroad. We do this so that the interface hopefully will be positive when we find ourselves engaged alongside each other overseas. We address classes at the military academies and schools, participate in conferences hosted by the military, and occasionally role-play ourselves in command post exercises. We assigned liaison officers to Central Command headquarters during the first year of the war in Afghanistan and had a liaison officer assigned with the American military in Kuwait City in the months before the onset of the war in Iraq. In a two year negotiation process facilitated by the U.S. Institute of Peace, we agreed with the Pentagon on the text of *Guidelines for Relations Between U.S. armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments*, a document published in 2007 with the logos of InterAction and the Department of Defense.

I mention these details to make the point that humanitarian NGOs are not hostile to the military and appreciate the benefits of communications. At the moment we are helping an Army team edit the guidelines it is preparing on stabilization doctrine for the Army and the Marine Corps. Our CEO and I recently met with the Chief of Naval operations at his invitation for a lunchtime discussion about the Navy's Maritime Security Initiative in Africa. Last week in Nairobi we organized a meeting for Admiral Greene, Commander of CJTF-HOA, and his staff with NGOs to hear the our communities concerns about some of CJTF-HOA's activities in East Africa.

AFRICOM

As a Foreign Service Officer during my first career, I specialized in African affairs, ran embassies in which there were military missions, and for six years during the Reagan administration served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa with responsibility for

liaison with DOD on military issues affecting the continent. When we first learned of the administration's intention to create AFRICOM, I saw some advantages not apparent to all of my NGO colleagues. A single command for all of the continent except Egypt would mean one point of contact to obtain information and to seek to influence decisions and activities. Hopefully, it meant the Pentagon would take Africa more seriously and the post-Mogadishu reluctance to get some African laterite dust on military boots would dissipate. Over time, the new Command presumably would develop a cadre of genuine experts on Africa as some of the services had on the Middle East and other regions through the extended training programs for Foreign Area Officers in schools in the U.S. and in Africa.

A number of concerns surfaced as we listened to the rhetoric announcing the command and attended the early briefings. These concerns have been raised by InterAction in discussions with General Ward, Ambassador Yates, other senior members of the staff, and at meetings in Stuttgart. Against the backdrop of DOD Directive 3000.05 of November 2005 instructing the military to give preparation for stabilization operations running from peace to war the same priority as preparing for combat, talk of the military engaging in phase zero operations to forestall instability, AFRICOM's professed interest in promoting a whole of government approach to stability and security on the continent, and its intention to work on a regional level leave us with persistent concerns.

One concern is that the lines of responsibility and authority among AFRICOM, the National Security Council, State Department, and American embassies in Africa remain blurred. We believe the NSC and the State Department have the mandates within our government to set regional and sub-regional policies and to supervise their implementation. Dana Priest in her book "The Mission," describes how leaders of other Combatant Commands became super envoys, if not proconsuls, using their resources to create privileged relations with heads of state in their areas of responsibility. We believe local embassies are most appropriate as the primary interlocutors with sovereign governments. Aware that military personnel assigned to embassies by AFRICOM would be exempt from full chief mission authority, we wondered how long it would be before the 1,500 officers assigned to the new regional command would bureaucratically overwhelm State's outposts.

We also found some myopia in AFRICOM's apparent intentions. There appeared to be an assumption that preserving stability in Africa and responding to crises there were American responsibilities, or responsibilities AFRICOM would help African nations and regional organizations shoulder. Missing was any acknowledgement of the role of the United Nations, or of the fact that several European governments had local knowledge and entrée superior to ours in most African countries.

As we engaged in dialogue with those being assigned to AFRICOM, it became evident that there were very few real Africanists among them. It was not surprising given the Pentagon's previous aversion to engagement on the continent, but it was and is worrisome. As Ellis describes in "The Mask of Anarchy," Africa is not Kansas – its cultures motivate behaviors hard to foresee if local societies are seen only through western prisms.

From the standpoint of humanitarian and development agencies, AFRICOM's intention to take over the portfolios of CJTF-HOA and the Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership of EUCOM, and perhaps replicate them elsewhere, is disturbing. As part of the so-called Global War on Terrorism, both of these programs have military personnel undertaking humanitarian and economic development projects that mimic those of the NGOs as they try to win the hearts and minds of Africans in the command's area of responsibility.

We appreciate the participation of U.S. military forces in responding to natural disasters when they can deliver equipment not otherwise immediately available to local responders or international relief agencies. The military helicopters flown off a carrier in Aceh after the Tsunami and delivered to Pakistan after the earthquake enabled relief workers to reach vulnerable villagers cut off by broken bridges and landslides. But the military should be in a supporting role. AFRICOM's intention to set up a center in Nairobi where it would engage African and foreign relief agencies on disaster response appeared to be usurpation of the primary roles our government gives USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration Affairs in disaster response. The current status of that proposal is unclear to me.

Based on the reporting from colleagues in the field, it appears that the development programs conducted by CJTF-HOA and under the auspices of the Trans-Sahara Partnership, sometimes undertaken by soldiers in civilian clothing despite the agreed guidelines, are once more blurring the lines between civilian aid workers and the military. This puts the civilian aid workers at risk where the military are seen by the local population and insurgents as supporting an unpopular national government, as in Ethiopia's Ogaden region and in northern Uganda. Activities along the Kenya-Somali border, where innocent civilians have become collateral damage as American gun ships and cruise missiles seek out accused terrorists, combined with U.S. support for Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia, have provoked conflict rather than eased it. And humanitarian workers are being murdered and taken hostage in Somalia at such a rate that NGOs are considering withdrawing from the country as the specter of famine once more arises.

To the best of my knowledge no evaluation of the impact of these projects has been conducted on either a technical or political level. Anecdotal reports, including some published, suggest that soldiers assigned tasks for which they have no expertise in environments about which they cannot expect to learn much in brief assignments are being ripped off by local contractors, have drilled wells and constructed schools and clinics of unproven benefit and sustainability, and seem unlikely to change how the USG is viewed by local population, who recognize that their motivation is military rather than developmental. One justification given for these programs is that they are inexpensive as AFRICOM has only a modest budget for them. But with the Pentagon intent on seeing all U.S. combatant commanders given access to the \$ 1 billion Congress has provided commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq, these programs may not remain modest for long.

This surfaces another AFRICOM concern related to his core mission of training local security forces. In countries with fragile political structures where the USAID mission may have been closed what message are we transmitting about our priorities if the largest aid program, aside perhaps from relief of refugees and IDPs, is to be equipment and training for the local military?

THE SIXTH FLEET

The Sixth Fleet has its own agenda for Africa and it is not clear to me how Partnership Station Africa relates, or will relate to, to AFRICOM. Maritime security training for west and central African navies, coast guards and other forces may have some enduring benefit. Those invited aboard to receive medical treatment will be grateful, and those listening to band concerts will be entertained. But these activities, and the transport of commodities for cooperating NGO, are not serious development interventions promising sustainment. One wonders why the Navy is not intervening where there is a critical need for its ships to be escorting food shipments, largely paid for by USG, through the pirates swarming off the coast of Somalia.

CONCLUSION

Secretary Gates is stating with increasing frequency a position adopted by InterAction's board after issuance of DOD Directive 3000.05 and National Security Presidential Directive 44: "The lack of capacity within the U.S. government to undertake non-combat stabilization operations should be cured by providing civilian departments with the required additional mandates and resources."

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to participating with other panel members in hearing your comments and in responding to your questions.