

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,  
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs**

*AFRICOM: Rationales, Roles, and Progress  
On the Eve of Operations*

A Statement by

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Representative Tierney, I am grateful for the chance to speak here today at this timely hearing on AFRICOM, and thank you for your leadership. I am also very appreciative of the care that the committee staff, David Turk, has taken in organizing this hearing on a rapid basis.

My colleague at CSIS, Kathleen Hicks, has provided excellent commentary on AFRICOM's strategic vision, its current and future missions, and the degree to which AFRICOM is a model of a "whole of government" approach. Over the past 18 months, Kathleen and I have collaborated closely on security assistance issues related directly to AFRICOM, and we will continue in that vein into the future. I wholeheartedly endorse the points contained in Kathleen's testimony.

I remain convinced that AFRICOM is a worthy, long-overdue step to bring about greater coherence, effectiveness and reliability in carrying forward U.S. security programs in Africa. It was not that long ago, in the aftermath of the October 1993 Mogadishu debacle and the subsequent Rwanda genocide begun in April 1994 that the U.S. administration supported by Congress mistakenly concluded that there should be minimal security engagement in Africa. Memories of that dark period have impaired U.S. standing in Africa and created doubt that the U.S. could be serious about direct security commitments on the continent. AFRICOM presents the opportunity to transcend the past and align U.S. security engagement with the steady rise of U.S. national interests in Africa's development, its governance and security, its public health, and its place in global energy and other markets.

In retrospect, it is clear that AFRICOM suffered setbacks in its preparatory and early launch phases. There has been persistent confusion over its mission, rationale, and core authorities and the challenges of integrating inherited programs from three separate U.S. regional commands have been routinely underestimated. AFRICOM's leadership struggles to overcome this inheritance, both in Africa and within the United States. I believe General Ward has made significant progress, and he and his team continue to gain strength. They deserve strong bipartisan support within Congress and from the Bush administration and the next administration that enters office in January 2009. It is important to U.S. national interests that AFRICOM succeed. That outcome is possible but not assured.

To build AFRICOM's legitimacy and credibility, the Administration would, in my opinion, be well advised to give priority to the following:

1. **Fix the broken interagency.** There is no meaningful on-going dialogue among DoD, AFRICOM, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, on resolving outstanding chief of mission authority issues. Instead there is a sullen standoff, mired in interpersonal and institutional recriminations. This is a



juvenile outcome that damages AFRICOM reputationally and feeds doubt in Africa, the United States and elsewhere. In my opinion, the divisions are not that formidable, and could be resolved through a negotiated memorandum of understanding and an active interagency dialogue, if there were the will to carry such a thing forward. This should be a top priority of the incoming administration.

2. **Fix the State Department's African Affairs Bureau.** AFRICOM cannot succeed if the State Department's policy leadership and staffing of U.S. embassies are chronically deficient. It is critical to increase the State Department's stake in AFRICOM and to acknowledge that the Department's Bureau of African Affairs is exceptionally weak and requires exceptional sustained action to fix. Most of the core U.S. security assistance programs for Africa, such as the ACOTA peacekeeping training efforts under Funds for Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), Foreign Military Finance (FMF), and Economic Support Funds (ESF) are managed through the Department of State. These programs need to be strengthened both through increases and improved expert oversight. Senior State Department leadership on Africa policy need larger travel budgets, if they are to have the mobility and flexibility to be effective diplomats. Over the past decade or longer, the African Affairs Bureau has suffered a steady erosion of staff capacity and morale, which feeds resentment and institutional insecurity. The next administration should launch a concerted, sustained effort to strengthen career incentives and work conditions in Africa. A top priority should be ensuring that the Bureau has stronger leadership, both in Washington and in U.S. embassies on the continent.
3. **Play to AFRICOM's core strengths and seize new opportunities.** AFRICOM should be judged according to its performance in those areas where it has the most to contribute and the highest comparative advantage. To perform in these areas will require substantially higher and better managed resources than currently available. What are those core areas?
  - (i) **Redouble our efforts to strengthen and professionalize African militaries.** African military establishments that respect civilian leadership and reward ethical behavior are potentially important partners of the United States. We must step up our support and training of these militaries to enable them to confront new and non-traditional security challenges.
  - (ii) **Build African peacekeeping capacities – and tie to the African Union and United Nations peace operations.** The administration and Congress should be commended for allocating \$150 million towards support of the AU/UN UNADMID deployment into Darfur, and for continued support of the ACOTA peacekeeping training exercises. Much greater effort should be made to link AFRICOM more directly to emerging multilateral peace operations in



- Africa. These operations are integral to securing stability in Africa and enjoy high legitimacy among African leaders.
- (iii) **Integrate AFRICOM into priority post-conflict reconstruction.** Most significant in this regard are the U.S.-backed efforts to consolidate peace in Liberia and create a viable semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan. AFRICOM needs to be at the table in making each a success.
  - (iv) **Make a big push on maritime security.** The foundation is already in place in West Africa through the early programs of the Africa Partnership Station. Increasingly violent and lethal piracy, combined with huge loss of wealth and protein through rampant illicit fishing, weaken human security in both West and East Africa. AFRICOM has an opportunity to work with ready partner governments to build coastal surveillance and brown water coastal patrol forces.
  - (v) **Focus on Africa's food crisis.** Of the more than 30 countries that have experienced violent urban food riots this year, half have been in Africa. AFRICOM at little cost can initiate civil-military dialogues and exchanges on nutrition, food security, and how militaries are to cope responsibly with worsening cereal markets.
  - (vi) **Make public health a priority.** The Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) has created in this decade an impressive record of HIV/AIDS prevention activities across Africa. These can be enlarged through provision of antiretroviral treatment, laboratories and training to reach military communities, including families. A long-term public health vision for AFRICOM can leverage far more systematically the achievements of the U.S. medical research laboratories in Kenya and Cameroon, to the benefit of Africans; can strengthen the health status of African peacekeepers; and contribute in post-conflict settings like Liberia and Sierra Leone where neglected tropical diseases are widespread and where AFRICOM has potentially special access and expertise.
4. **Address terror threats through a more focused, realistic approach.** The United States' experience in Somalia in recent years has been sobering and instructive. We have pursued an excessively expansive definition of the threat posed by Islamist insurgents, combined with an open-ended alignment with the Ethiopian intervention and an overwhelming reliance on missile attacks. This approach has not succeeded; indeed, it has harmed the image of U.S. security engagement in Africa. However difficult it will be to achieve enduring, positive results in Somalia, a course correction is warranted. U.S. special operations directed at terror threats in Africa cannot be separated from the opinion environment in Africa in which AFRICOM seeks to win acceptance.

5. **Demonstrate AFRICOM's value-added to Africa's key emerging crises.** There is no point in AFRICOM keeping distant from crises that are of greatest immediate concern within Africa and among African leaders. Rather, it is critical that AFRICOM's leadership identify the discreet, concrete contributions that AFRICOM can make: in preparing contingency plans for a full chaos scenario in Zimbabwe (a real and increasing possibility); in curbing weapons trafficking and oil bunkering emanating from the Niger Delta that undermine regional stability and disrupts global energy markets; and in bolstering multilateral efforts to stabilize eastern Congo.
6. **Engage the Chinese.** There is a strong case for active U.S.-Chinese cooperation on peacekeeping in Africa, but resistance from both sides persists. Congress should act to amend the current U.S. statutory constraint, contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of FY2000 that bars cooperation with the People's Liberation Army except for humanitarian purposes. Both China and the United States have a rising interest in protecting their citizens and their investments in Africa and in strengthening African capacities to manage conflict, including airlift capacity, communications, command and control, and surveillance.

**Mr. Chairman,** I thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and look forward to our discussion.



