Testimony of
Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson
The Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State
before
The House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights
September 13, 2012
"Peacekeeping in Africa"

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity

to speak about peacekeeping in Africa today. As members of the Committee are

aware, President Obama's recent Presidential Policy Directive identified our

efforts to advance peace and security on the continent as one of the four pillars of

the Administration's Africa strategy. This is an area where we have witnessed

both significant progress and major challenges over the past decade. Angola,

Mozambique, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have progressed from

periods of prolonged civil conflict to new eras of relative peace and stability.

Nonetheless, this progress remains fragile in many countries, and all too many

states are still mired in serious conflict, including Somalia, the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan. Moreover, as illustrated by the

ongoing situation in Mali, the fragile nature of democratic institutions on the

continent means that even relatively stable countries can quickly unravel into

conflict.

If we are to assist our African partners in achieving a more democratic, prosperous, stable, and secure Africa, we must address these conflicts. Conflict destabilizes states and borders, stifles economic growth and investment, and robs young Africans of the opportunity for an education and a better life. To address these conflicts, we need well-resourced UN, African Union (AU), and regional peacekeeping operations. That is why the topic of this hearing is so vitally important.

My colleague, Assistant Secretary Brimmer, will be focusing on the UN element of peacekeeping in Africa, and therefore I want to focus my testimony on the efforts of the African Union and sub-regional organizations to develop their own peacekeeping capacities and conduct operations in support of peace and security objectives on the continent. I also want to discuss U.S. Government efforts to strengthen African peacekeeping capacity at the regional, sub-regional, and national levels.

The African Peace and Security Architecture

The founding of the African Union or "AU" in 2002 brought with it the promise of a more robust African regional architecture that would one day be capable of addressing and coordinating responses to the myriad challenges facing the continent. This newfound promise extended to the area of peace and security,

where the AU set forth a vision for an African Peace and Security Architecture. Partially modeled after the UN and other regional organizations, this architecture is designed to enable the AU to act as an active and dynamic adjunct to the work of the UN in its mission to maintain international peace and security. The centerpiece of this architecture is the AU's African Standby Force (ASF), which is composed of five regional standby brigades ready to respond to a range of contingencies, from providing support to political missions, to robust military interventions to prevent genocide. The five brigades are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force, the Eastern African Standby Force, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Brigade, the Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC), and the North African Standby Brigade Capability (NARC).

All four sub-Saharan African brigades have taken initial steps towards becoming operational, including setting up headquarters, identifying pledged units from member states, and conducting multinational exercises. The North African Standby Brigade has made considerably less progress towards achieving full operational capability, and progress may be further delayed by the events of the Arab Spring.

The ASF remains a work in progress. The five brigades are in varying stages of readiness. None of the brigades is currently capable of conducting the

range of operations contained within the ASF's mandate without significant external support in the form of financial resources, training, logistical assistance, and equipment. While most of the brigades have identified sites for their mandated logistics depots, they either have made no progress in establishing the depots themselves, or have not fully stocked their depots to address the range of contingencies. Capacity at the level of AU headquarters, specifically the Peace Support Operations Division, to manage and direct the force remains limited due to resource and staffing constraints.

AU and Regional Operations

Although the ASF remains a work in progress, the AU and sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS have not stood idly by in the face of persistent conflict. In fact, in many cases, the AU and the sub-regional organizations have proven to be more responsive than the broader international community in terms of addressing conflict quickly. The AU deployed its first peacekeeping operation to Burundi in 2003 in support of the international effort to end the long-running civil war there, and this helped set the stage for a successful follow-on UN operation in 2004. In 2004, a larger and more ambitious mission, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), was deployed in response to the horrific conflict gripping Darfur. Despite the immense challenges and obstructions that faced the troop contributors in the mission area, AMIS helped to set the conditions and prepare the ground for

the deployment of a larger and more complex UN-AU hybrid operation, UNAMID, which remains deployed in Darfur to this day. The AU-authorized, Tanzanian-led intervention in Comoros in 2008 was another example of the region stepping up quickly in response to a regional security challenge.

Somalia best demonstrates the valuable role the AU can play in terms of regional peacekeeping. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has now been operating for more than five years in the most volatile conflict environment on the continent. The AU troop contributors, including Uganda, Burundi, and Kenya, have paid a high price in terms of lives and national treasure. But the progress AMISOM has achieved since its modest beginning in 2007 is remarkable.

Over the past five years, AMISOM has gradually extended its area of operations from a small enclave near the international airport in Mogadishu to encompass all of Mogadishu and the surrounding towns. It has done so with support from the UN in the form of the logistics support package provided through the UN Support Office for AMISOM. AMISOM is now in the process of deploying to additional regions in southwestern Somalia, and the recent incorporation of Kenyan forces into AMISOM has further extended the mission's reach. The UN Monitoring Group reported in June 2012 that the Somali terrorist group al-Shabaab "has suffered dramatic reverses over the past year, experiencing

military defeats, the loss of territory and the erosion of its revenue base, setbacks that have exacerbated rifts within the group's senior leadership." This is directly attributable to the success of the African-led AMISOM. It is no exaggeration to say that through AMISOM, the AU has given Somalia and its long-suffering people their best chance for sustained peace and stability in over a generation.

African sub-regional organizations have also played an important role in responding to armed conflicts on the continent. In particular, ECOWAS has repeatedly shown that it can help to reestablish stability and set the stage for follow-on UN peacekeeping operations within West Africa, as it did in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Economic Community of Central African States – usually referred to by its French acronym CEEAC – has also made a small but notable contribution to regional peace and security by deploying the mission known as MICOPAX to the Central African Republic under the auspices Central African brigade of the ASF - FOMAC - since 2008. The Eastern Africa Standby Force, which is supported by 10 East African countries, is currently supporting AMISOM through the deployment of staff officers to AMISOM's headquarters in Mogadishu.

Challenges Facing AU Peacekeeping

These examples demonstrate the level of political will that underlies the commitment of the AU, the sub-regional organizations, and member states to peacekeeping on the continent. These experiences also demonstrate the immense array of challenges facing African peacekeepers. These challenges include increasingly dangerous and complex conflict environments in which African peacekeepers are serving, and systemic weaknesses within African militaries and the regional organizations themselves.

AMISOM best exemplifies the danger and complexity of mission environments. In no other mission on the continent are peacekeepers facing such a challenging operational environment. While the mission has succeeded in driving al-Shabaab further from Mogadishu and surrounding towns, al-Shabaab remains a dangerous enemy that possesses the will and the capability to wreak havoc across southern and central Somalia. In confronting AMISOM, al-Shabaab has utilized an array of tactics that mirror those facing U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, including increasingly sophisticated improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, and sniper fire.

With respect to systemic weaknesses, a lack of resources has proven to be the most significant obstacle to effective African peacekeeping missions. The AU and sub-regional organizations remain dependent on support from the donor community for a broad range of mission requirements, including training,

equipment, logistics support, and salaries. Oftentimes, AU member states lack the trained personnel or equipment required to conduct specialized tasks, such as combat engineering, logistics resupply, medical support, and vehicle maintenance. The limited mission planning and management capabilities at AU headquarters can sometimes reinforce the tendency of individual country contingents to plan and execute operations with only minimal or ad-hoc coordination with the contingents from other troop contributors.

How the United States is Helping to Address these Challenges

While these challenges are significant, I can assure the Committee that we are committed to helping our African partners overcome them. Our peacekeeping assistance programs, which are primarily funded through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) and the broader Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Account, focus on addressing the capability gaps of our African partners, as well as strengthening the ability of our African partners to plan, train for, deploy, and sustain peacekeeping operations on their own. These deployment support and capacity-building activities are executed through a close partnership between the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

This whole-of-government commitment is most evident in the case of AMISOM. Since 2007, the U.S. Government has provided more than $355 million

for equipment, training, and logistical support to AMISOM troop contributors, to help AMISOM overcome the threat of al-Shabaab and safeguard the Somali political process. We have tailored this support to meet the unique challenges of the AMISOM mission. For instance, the peacekeeping training provided through the Department of State's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program has been expanded and lengthened for AMISOM troop contributors, and covers topics such as protection of civilians, human rights, countering improvised explosive devices, maritime security, and mechanized infantry operations. The Department of Defense is contributing complementary, specialized counterterrorism training and equipment under Section 1206 authority, including combat engineering training and equipment, Raven unmanned aerial vehicles, and secure communications.

Our joint support is not restricted to just AMISOM, however. We are heavily engaged in building African peacekeeping capacity at three different levels: at the level of the AU's headquarters, at the level of sub-regional organizations, and at the level of individual member states. Through GPOI, we have provided a peace and security advisor to the AU's Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) since 2005 to assist the AU in its effort to develop the ASF, as well as office equipment to support daily operations at the PSOD. The Department of Defense has provided training to AU staff on managing defense resources, and

is helping the AU to develop a communications network that links the headquarters to the regional brigades.

We are also providing targeted assistance at the level of sub-regional organizations and the ASF brigades designed to help bring those brigades closer to full operational capability. Through GPOI, we have provided extensive support to ECOWAS and its standby brigade, to include advisory assistance, communications equipment, logistics training, support for ECOWAS multinational exercises, and assistance to ECOWAS' regional training centers.   In East Africa, ACOTA offers staff officer training for member states that comprise the East African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG), and U.S. Africa Command provided support for the EASBRIG's first major exercise in Djibouti. Our engagement has been more limited with the other three brigades, but we are still supporting their development through bilateral train-and-equip initiatives in their respective member states.

The military units of African member states that receive U.S. training and equipment participate in ongoing operations and can contribute to the success of the ASF. These units have the greatest positive impact on African peacekeeping. ACOTA is the centerpiece of our effort to build capacity and self-sufficiency in partner countries by training and equipping battalions and other units that are deploying to active peace support operations.   ACOTA, which is funded primarily through the Global Peace Operations Initiative, succeeded the earlier Africa Crisis

Response Initiative in 2004. Sixteen member states from across the continent are active partners in the ACOTA program, and the program has directly trained over 229,000 African peacekeepers just since 2005. More importantly, ACOTA conducts a "train-the-trainer" program building a cadre of host nation trainers/instructors who are taking a leading role in conducting pre-deployment training for their own contingents. U.S. Africa Command is also making a significant contribution at the bilateral level, not only through the course of normal military-to-military engagement, but also by participating in ACOTA events through the provision of military mentors and trainers, and conducting specialized logistics training activities through programs such as the Africa Deployment Assistance Partnership Team (ADAPT).

Conclusion

We will continue to work closely with our partners on the continent and in the donor community to build the capacity of the AU, sub-regional organizations, and individual member states to conduct peacekeeping operations more effectively and thereby contribute to global efforts to address fragility. Should we falter in our commitment to developing African peacekeeping capacity, the consequence will be heavier burdens on the international community as a whole, whether through the deployment of more UN "blue-helmet" operations, or even direct military intervention in cases where national security is at stake. We strongly believe that

the only way to achieve sustainable, long-term stability on the continent is to provide our African partners with the tools needed to bring about that stability themselves.

I want to thank the Committee again for the opportunity to address this important issue.