

Statement by
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before the
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
House Committee Oversight and Government Reform

on
**National Security, Interagency Collaboration, and Lessons from
SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM**

July 28, 2010

Chairman Tierney, Ranking Member Flake, Distinguished Members of the
Committee:

Thank you for inviting the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM) to share with you the Department of State's perspectives and direct experience with U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). I am pleased to be seated next to colleagues from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Defense with whom our Assistant Secretary Andrew Shapiro meets almost weekly to review security assistance policy and reform.

Let me note that, in my 20 years of working with DoD in various capacities, I have never seen a better level of communication and cooperation between State and DoD. This is not only led from the top – by Secretaries Clinton and Gates – but extends through all levels of both organizations, nurtured by our common experience on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our Role and the GAO Report

As the Department of State lead on global strategic policy matters with the Department of Defense (DoD), the PM Bureau has been intimately involved in the stand-up of AFRICOM and the transformation of SOUTHCOM into what they were calling an “interagency oriented organization.”

We co-chaired, with the African Affairs Bureau, an internal working group to offer guidance to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) well before AFRICOM officially was born. We later co-chaired with the Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau a similar working group to work with SOUTHCOM on its reform issues. In both instances, we shared the chair with the regional bureaus so they could consider the impact of the Combatant Command changes on regional policies while PM reviewed the institutional consequences.

To support the GAO reports your subcommittee commissioned on AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM, bureau representatives met with the GAO to provide early guidance on the assumptions and again before releasing its recommendations. Ultimately, we concurred with both reports, believing they captured the issues well.

First and foremost, allow me to say that we fully support the missions and efforts of AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM. These are outstanding institutions where we interact regularly with quality professionals who contribute to U.S. national security largely by helping our foreign partners bring security, stability, and even humanitarian assistance to Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

AFRICOM

In the case of AFRICOM, the GAO rightfully acknowledges that its report assesses the performance of a COCOM that is not even two years old. It documents challenges with AFRICOM's public rollout before the Combatant Command had clearly defined its mission or decided whether it should be headquartered in Africa.

After General Ward took command, AFRICOM welcomed the Department of State's input and furthered developed its mission statement to where it now states it will work with other U.S. government agencies through military programs, activities, and operations to support security engagement and U.S. foreign policy. On finding a permanent location for AFRICOM's headquarters, Secretary Gates opted to defer the decision until AFRICOM established itself, built its operations, and became more comfortably known to our African partners.

We believe AFRICOM has taken considerable strides to reach out to the interagency as it develops. In 2006, DoD invited a multifaceted team from various bureaus in State and USAID to help clarify the mission and structure of the newest command. In 2007, AFRICOM appointed one of our active ambassadors to serve

as Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities, an unprecedented role that ensures high-level State participation in planning activities aimed at partnering with African states to develop their security capacity. Since the assignment of the first Foreign Policy Advisor, or POLAD, to AFRICOM in 2008, we have provided eleven additional Foreign Service Officers to the Command and its components. Currently, State provides to AFRICOM a Deputy to the Commander, a POLAD to the Commander, five POLADS to component commanders, and – starting this year – five mid-level officers to work in various Directorates of the Command.

We already are beginning to see great success at the operational level. I lead, for the U.S. government, diplomatic efforts to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. AFRICOM temporarily provided a ship to conduct operations off the Horn of Africa, which offered assistance in transferring pirate suspects as decided by interagency processes, and counter-piracy reconnaissance and surveillance with unmanned air assets (UAVs) based out of Seychelles. Also, CJTF-HOA facilities in Djibouti frequently are used to fulfill logistics requirements for operational units. Our POLADs at CENTCOM and AFRICOM have been coordinating closely on sensitive counter-piracy operational issues.

Our collaboration with AFRICOM in maritime security issues is a good example of a true partnership. We continue to work together to evolve U.S. maritime engagement in Africa from one of individual, isolated efforts to a more comprehensive and sustained approach. Early and close collaboration for programs such as the Africa Partnership Station and Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership contributes to a whole-of-government approach.

The Africa Partnership Station is a strategic program designed to build the skills, expertise, and professionalism of African militaries, coast guards, and mariners. We actively work with AFRICOM in all phases of this very successful and well received program, including planning and execution. AFRICOM also conducts the Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership, which is a combined operation between the U.S. Coast Guard and host nation law enforcement detachments that deploy from U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels to support enforcement of the host nation's maritime domain.

Our programs are developing our partners' maritime enforcement capabilities to: better respond to piracy, illegal fishing, illegal dumping, illegal immigration, terrorist activity, and trafficking in drugs, arms, and persons; protect their natural resources; and participate in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian and disaster relief, and stability operation initiatives. Our collective efforts

continue to develop and support a comprehensive approach that encompasses maritime governance, criminal justice, defense, safety and security, response, and the economy.

AFRICOM is actively contributing to the Global Peace Operations Initiative, or GPOI, by providing military mentors and trainers on the African continent to supplement contract peacekeeping trainer teams provided under the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) Program, as well as leading specialized training activities such as counter-improvised explosive device (IED) training for units deploying to Somalia. The range of AFRICOM-led training activities under GPOI is also expanding to include training and technical assistance to the African Union and regional standby brigades. Both AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM have full-time government personnel and full-time contractors dedicated to the planning, management, and execution of GPOI-funded programs.

Finally, AFRICOM is actively participating in broader USG efforts to combat sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and AFRICOM has provided funds for military training and construction of health facilities in DRC, complementing current State and AID efforts.

SOUTHCOM

While AFRICOM was forming, SOUTHCOM was reforming. Arguably, SOUTHCOM's interagency focus has been far more forward-leaning than AFRICOM's. SOUTHCOM looked to support State and USAID-led activities in rule of law development, and countering narcotics and criminal gangs, as well as in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

To genuinely empower his role, SOUTHCOM dual-hatted our POLAD into a Civilian Deputy to the Commander. His presence, as a senior diplomat with considerable regional expertise, enables SOUTHCOM to take into account a broader range of cross-cultural factors in its planning and implementation of activities. As Civilian Deputy, Ambassador Paul Trivelli has been tasked by the Commander with oversight of strategic planning, security cooperation policy, public affairs, strategic communications and outreach to the NGO and business communities.

The number of POLADs at SOUTHCOM has increased to eleven positions, expanding our ability to interact with SOUTHCOM headquarters and its Component Commands. Our POLADS are performing invaluable work – as both

“action officers” and advisors – in such areas as sensitizing their Commands to the cultural and political “pitfalls” of the countries of the region, aligning embassy and COCOM priorities and programs, and shaping the Combatant Command’s humanitarian assistance programs. POLADs also help draw together diplomacy, development, and defense – the “3Ds”— by working collaboratively with USAID Senior Development Advisors on situations such as development, humanitarian crises, and peacekeeping operations. Their interagency outreach was critical to SOUTHCOM’s ability to successfully undertake Operation Unified Response following Haiti’s devastating January 2010 earthquake.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

As with all Combatant Commands, we continue to work to align SOUTHCOM’s and AFRICOM’s vast resources and capabilities behind policies and activities properly led by civilian agencies, whether rule of law development or even military assistance. In the vast majority of cases, combatant commands will support implementation of foreign policies by the State Department. But there are instances when our foreign and defense policies do not cleanly mesh. This is not necessarily an alarming occurrence as one should expect healthy differences between our mission sets, if not our culture. Indeed, I might be more worried if we agreed all the time!

In such cases, however, we do try to ensure that misinformation is not the cause of any misalignment. We encourage free and full exchanges of information between the State Department and Combatant Commands at all levels, recognizing that it is basic to any whole-of-government effort. When policy issues do arise, we ensure that OSD is looped in and leads for DoD so the issue can be properly settled here in Washington. We have seen this occur more frequently with AFRICOM, but we understand and appreciate that the Combatant Command is young and still gaining experience.

Exchange tours – i.e., opportunities for State and DoD officers to fill a position in the other organization – are valuable not only for the organizations in which they serve, but for the overall strength of both Departments, and for the professional development of the officers. We have expanded the POLAD program from 20 officers five years ago to more than 80 today. We have concluded a new MOU with DoD that sets a new goal of exchanging 110 officers in each direction each year; this has been signed at State, and we look forward to it being approved by DoD as soon as possible.

We must be careful to ensure that such assignments are not seen as a substitute for interagency coordination, but as a means to facilitate coordination and improve policy formulation. A mid-level State officer assigned to a component commander cannot give “State Department approval” to a particular proposal, anymore than a Colonel assigned to an office in State can give approval on behalf of all of DoD.

An enduring solution to de-conflicting policy differences is through interagency planning and increased State participation in DoD planning processes so we can all anticipate and address where our intent and activities might diverge. Robust participation in DoD planning processes helps to ensure we are aware of and address such differences early on. My Bureau coordinated State participation in the development of AFRICOM’s and SOUTHCOM’s Theater Campaign Plans, ensuring their strategic planning documents were fully informed of U.S. foreign policy objectives and State Department activities. The State Department has established planning relationships and joint exercises with AFRICOM, SOUTHCOM, and other Combatant Commands to ensure whole-of-government reconstruction and stabilization planning efforts. The Joint Staff has been very helpful in opening opportunities for State participation in combatant command planning processes.

I participated myself last year in AFRICOM’s security assistance planning conference. As the GAO report notes, the range of funding sources for assistance is wide and complex; it can be confusing for military personnel as well as State personnel. I agree with the report that it is important to build up an expertise within the Command on the major security assistance programs managed by State (particularly FMF and IMET), and on the appropriate coordination and division of labor in areas such as counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism, where State, DoD, and law enforcement agencies each have specific programs and responsibilities.

In conclusion, I would agree that the creation of AFRICOM was a very good idea. Our relationship and coordination with them continues to trend in a positive direction. With SOUTHCOM, we have always had an excellent relationship. If you were to ask me if much had changed since moving to directorates and then back to the J-code system, I would say not. That relationship steadily trends very positively. The big difference with SOUTHCOM is the increasing number of interagency personnel embedded in and helping to guide SOUTHCOM activities in support of State Department policies and activities. We see that continuing to improve as the program becomes more institutionalized.

In our view, the Department of State and USAID are reaching levels of consultation, cooperation, and collaboration with the Department of Defense not seen previously. With the challenges we face today, effective collaboration is essential, and we will continue to develop and leverage improved means of communication to ensure our collective efforts are mutually supporting and reinforcing.

Thank you.