



Exploring the U.S. Africa Command and a New Strategic Relationship with Africa

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I would like to thank the Chairman and the Committee for inviting me to testify here today on a topic that is a true innovation in our Africa policy and an unprecedented step forward in inter-agency cooperation, which provides a new vehicle for addressing security issues in Africa. I must say, first of all, that we in the State Department, and especially in the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, strongly support the creation of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). We believe AFRICOM will be an important asset in our overall African policy, and we welcome the Department of Defense's greater interest, resources, and participation in African issues.

The military has long been involved in African affairs through the U.S. European, Central and Pacific Commands, each of which has had responsibility for a portion of the continent. But now, with the creation of AFRICOM, Africa will finally be addressed as the unique and separate part of the world that it really is, with all areas of the continent, except of Egypt, under a single Unified Command. And Egypt, despite its vital historical role in Middle Eastern affairs, will not be ignored, but will be considered as a country of special concern for AFRICOM. All of Africa finally will get the full attention of one of our highest-ranking and most experienced senior military leaders, supported by a staff uniquely structured to meet the challenges of this part of the world. We in the State Department are pleased to see the nomination of General William Ward as AFRICOM's first Commander. He has the background and experience to lead this initiative and we look forward to working closely with him.

From the inception of AFRICOM, the State Department has been closely involved in the planning process, beginning last fall when the Department of Defense established its AFRICOM Implementation Planning Team. Both the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs assigned senior officers to this planning team, working with Department of Defense officials full time for many weeks to address the myriad of issues that arise when this type of major inter-agency collaboration is envisioned. Several other State Department bureaus also had officers participating, bringing functional expertise to key portions of the planning process. This process has largely occurred in an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration, with both Departments sensitive to the requirements and concerns of the other. The result, to date, is the development of a framework that is supportive of both U.S. foreign policy interests as well as our regional security objectives.

It is important to note that throughout this process we have seen no need to alter the current authorities that govern State/Defense collaboration in the field or in Washington. The Department of State will continue to exercise full foreign policy primacy and authority in Africa, and I am confident that no one in the Department of Defense disagrees with this. The Assistant Secretary for African Affairs will continue to be the lead policymaker in the U.S. Government on African issues, including regional security policy. Each Chief of Mission in the field in Africa will continue to act as the President's personal representative in the country to which he/she is accredited, and to exercise full authority over all the U.S. Government's peacetime activities. State therefore will continue to provide leadership for, and exercise authority over State's 47 embassies in the AFRICOM area of responsibility, with personnel on assignments of two or three years, whose responsibility it is to understand the host country government and people, and to both influence and implement foreign policy.

The Department of Defense and the U.S. military will continue to support the Department of State in the pursuit of U.S. foreign policy goals, while we at the Department State will continue to fully support the military in its efforts to promote the security and safety of the United States. We will work TOGETHER to promote security and stability in Africa. We all know that Africa cannot fully develop economically, politically, or socially where there is violence, the threat of terrorism, or fear about the security of legitimate governments and the people they represent. The continued violence in Eastern Congo at present offers an example of where AFRICOM could play an important role in building security, perhaps by providing training and material assistance to the legitimate military of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are not at war in Africa, nor do we expect to be at war in Africa. Our Embassies and AFRICOM will work in concert to keep it that way. We expect the largely civil-military activities of AFRICOM to help State strengthen regional security policies and their implementation. AFRICOM will draw upon our embassies in the field for most of the information it will use to guide its security cooperation programs and its overall interaction with Africa.

Throughout the process of creating AFRICOM, we have considered carefully the views and reactions of our regional friends and those from outside the region who have significant interest in Africa. A delegation of senior officials from the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development have already completed two extensive trips to Africa to consult with many key African states on AFRICOM and have found a generally positive reception in sub-Saharan Africa. We expect to conduct additional consultations with African states and with allies who have strong interest in Africa in the near future. Consultations are also ongoing with various international organizations and non-governmental agencies on AFRICOM. As one would expect with a subject of this importance and scope, the reactions have been varied and diverse.

There has been much written and rumored about AFRICOM over the past several months—where it will be located, how it will be structured, the degree to which there will be State Department and interagency participation. I want to make it clear that no final decision has been made about the location of AFRICOM's Headquarters in Africa, although it is AFRICOM's plan to establish an initial headquarters presence on the continent by October 2008. Until then it will be located in Stuttgart, Germany, not far from the European Command. The current thinking is there will be subordinate offices in several other places on the African continent as well, but those locations have not yet been determined. State will also provide officers to work in AFRICOM, including one of the two Deputy Commanders working for General Ward. A Senior State officer will be the Deputy to the Commander in charge of civilian-military affairs, coordinating those activities in AFRICOM with our policymakers in Washington and our embassies in Africa. The other Deputy Commander, a uniformed military officer, will be in charge of the purely military aspects of AFRICOM. The State Department will also provide another Senior officer who will serve as the Political Advisor for General Ward, so we will be well-represented on the AFRICOM leadership team. State and other civilian agencies will also provide a number of other officers to work in leadership, management, and functional positions as AFRICOM staff, in addition to traditional advisors. In addition, we expect to add staff in the Bureau of African Affairs who will assist in the interface with AFRICOM and its various elements.

The Department of State views the creation of AFRICOM as a major advancement in our comprehensive Africa policy and engagement strategy. It is the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration. It is, in many ways the marriage of State's expertise and authorities with the military's resources and security experience, and we are excited about it. I would be glad to take any questions that the committee might have.

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