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Crisis Prevention: USAFRICOM, Partnerships, and the US Army

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These views reflect those of the authors and not the United States Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Africa and US National Interests

Though US President Barack Obama has yet to produce his own National Security Strategy, his recent trip to Africa – and the travels of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – surely indicates that African peace and stability will feature prominently in his administration’s foreign and security policies. The prior administration, anticipating increased interest in Africa, established United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) as a Department of Defense (DOD) response to the “whole of government” approach. The command was designed to strengthen US security cooperation with African states and their militaries, although there has been concern that this approach would over-militarize US foreign policy. To be clear, USAFRICOM currently serves as the DOD lead and offers supports to government agencies and departments responsible for implementing US foreign policy in Africa.¹

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USAFRICOM operates in a dynamic and complex environment. The 54 continental and island nations of Africa encompass nearly 12 million square miles. Africa’s population is nearly one billion, boasting over 800 ethnic groups speaking 1,000 separate languages.² Opportunities for progress in Africa abound due to rising regional institutions, expanding economies, increasing democratization, and emerging security institutions. Perhaps most importantly, Africans have a growing political appetite to confront their challenges and are increasingly providing for their own security, thus reducing their reliance on outside assistance. Nevertheless, significant security challenges persist on the African landscape: illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons and people, non-professional/irregular militaries, piracy, terrorism, extremism, ethnic strife, as well as under-governed areas all threaten African stability and security. Africans recognize the crucial link between security and development in creating the conditions that prevent conflict.

Not surprisingly, preventing conflict, promoting peace and providing stability is not something that the United States or DOD can do alone. “Security” in Africa extends beyond traditional military and defence sector terms, mandating a holistic approach that includes contributions from other security sector elements such as police forces, border patrol and customs agents, and their judicial equivalents, including



004 - Sgt. 1st Class Eddie King, a U.S. Army Africa operations NCO, works with soldiers from the Armed Forces of Liberia during range qualification as part of the U.S. State Department-led Liberia Security Sector Reform in April 2009.

Photo credit: Rick Scavetta, Writer/Editor U.S. Army Africa Public Affairs Office, Vicenza, Italy

jailers and judges. Unlike in Iraq and Afghanistan, the DOD does not have special authority to train non-military forces. The US Department of State (DOS) leads all diplomatic efforts but relies on DOD to implement defence portions of its policy, such as Foreign Military Sales and International Military Education and Training. The DOS also retains the lead for training international police forces and gendarmes for UN peacekeeping operations as part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) and through venues like the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (COESPU). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) channels US support to African states' indigenous development efforts, while the DOD helps develop the capacity of those African states' militaries. In turn, national militaries can complement USAID development efforts in areas ranging from crisis response to civil-military education.

Consequently, US military support assists African partners "by, with, and through" Ambassadors abroad and other agencies in the field, while remaining aligned with US foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, members of the military work with other nations, international organizations, and corporations whose interests in Africa are consistent with those of the US and who are engaged in both security and development issues.

USAFRICOM Mission

This synchronizing approach is reflected in the opening words of USAFRICOM's mission statement: "*in concert with other US government agencies and international partners, conducts sustained security engagement through*

military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations *as directed* to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of US foreign policy." For doctrinaires, including a "how" in a military mission statement is taboo but USAFRICOM's architects believed that partnership was such a vital part of the mission that they elevated the "how" to a position of prominence, demonstrating that it is a listening and learning organization which supports the work of others.

Two other aspects of the mission statement are worth highlighting. USAFRICOM's commitment to "sustained security engagement" is vital because security assistance programs are implemented in a predictable, rather than an episodic, fashion. The command emphasizes the importance of reliability in its partnerships with African states and their militaries to ensure lasting added value to peace and stability.

Finally, two important words, "as directed," means that USAFRICOM stands ready to conduct military operations like any other US combatant command. While widely misunderstood, the ability to respond to crisis is a critical aspect of the mission. It provides reassurance that, should conflict prevention efforts fail and the president determines that US military action is warranted, USAFRICOM retains the ability to act decisively.

US Army Africa

According to US law (Title 10, US Code), each Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) is required to have assigned service components. The service components provide administrative and logistic support to GCC headquarters. Additionally, they are tasked to prepare forces and establish reserves of manpower, equipment, and supplies for the effective prosecution of military operations in theatre.³ The service component commands assigned to USAFRICOM are: 17th Air Force (US Air Forces Africa), US Naval Forces Africa (the commander is dual-hatted as the Commander of Naval Forces Europe), Marine Forces Africa (the commander is dual-hatted as the Commander of Marine Forces Europe), Special Operations Command Africa, and Southern European Task Force (SETAF/US Army Africa).

Each of these service components conducts theatre security cooperation activities, provides support to on-going operations, and simultaneously carries out selected congressionally-mandated "Title 10" responsibilities for their service's forces in-theatre. In the case of US Army Africa, the command is tasked to perform these three functions while simultaneously deploying – *as directed* – a Combined Joint Task Force in support of a national, multinational or

international crisis response effort.

SETAF was selected as the Army Component for USAFRICOM in part because it has deployed to Africa for five major contingency operations as part of a Joint Task Force (JTF) during the past fifteen years. Each mission was a successful joint or combined operation and SETAF earned the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for its efforts.

DOD leaders have concluded that emergency deployments were not only institutionally expensive but also preventable. Five large scale deployments since 1994 to the African continent meant five interventions where US or international interests were threatened and five times that the US military exported stability to the African continent. In retrospect, if African states had the capacity to provide for their own security then the US and international community

establishing strategic relationships, and performing civil-military activities to foster conditions favourable to conflict prevention, with over 100 types of security cooperation activities to offer African partner countries every year. A few of the best examples that involve US Army Africa are described below.

Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA). With 22 participating countries, the ACOTA programme is managed and funded by DOS and implemented by DOD, and is designed to improve African partner nations' ability to respond quickly to crises by providing selected militaries with the training and equipment required to execute humanitarian or peace support operations. US Army officers and non-commissioned officers participate in ACOTA to enhance the capacities and capabilities of its African partner countries, regional institutions, and the continent's peacekeeping resources as a whole so that they can plan for, train, deploy, and sustain sufficient quantities of professionally competent soldiers to meet peacekeeping requirements with minimal non-African assistance.⁴



UGCH Jones - Capt. Charlie Jones, a U.S. Army Africa logistician, mentors Ugandan soldiers during an African Deployment Assistance Phased Team program in the fall of 2008.

Photo credit: Rick Scavetta, Writer/Editor U.S. Army Africa Public Affairs Office, Vicenza, Italy

would not have to respond to future crises. Ideally, less intrusive activities could be undertaken earlier to prevent these crises from becoming catastrophes.

Programmes to Prevent Crisis

USAFRICOM and its components conduct several programs to prevent crisis. The strategy includes three major categories of activities: building partner security capacity,

Military-to-Military (M2M) Engagement Program. M2M includes more than 250 scheduled engagements per year and is intended to foster relationships with African partners, illustrate the US-style military under civilian control, and encourage stability and military professionalism. These events include co-hosted conferences, familiarization visits by US military travelling contact teams, and African forces observing training exercises in the United States. These M2M activities are a mainstay of USAFRICOM's security cooperation programme – US Army Africa will conduct over 150 events in 2010. M2M can also complement other bilateral or multinational programmes as demonstrated by Canada's Military Training Assistance

Program (MTAP) in North America and Africa. MTAP provides language, staff/professional development and peace support operations training to more than 1,300 students annually from 68 member states, including 16 from Africa.⁵ M2M events promote more than force interoperability – they also develop relationships among leaders.

Partnership. The State Partnership Program (SPP) is unique to American security cooperation activities. As originally conceived, the SPP connects a US state's National Guard with an African country for training and relationship

building. Though the programme started with military-to-military contacts, SPP has since expanded to include military-to-civilian (e.g. military support to civil authorities) and even civilian-to-civilian (e.g. civilian university or hospital exchanges). Current pairings are: Botswana and North Carolina, Ghana and North Dakota, Morocco and Utah, Nigeria and California, Senegal and Vermont, South Africa and New York, Tunisia and Wyoming. Partnering with

existing regional training centers is another area poised for increased cooperation. As an example, British, Canadian and US military collaboration exists at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Centre in Ghana but the multi-lateral partnerships could be formalized with the African Union and the African Standby Force Brigade of the Economic Community of West African States. Such relationships would increase the overall capacity of the brigade for use

in UN peacekeeping missions and serve as a model for the four other regional brigades. US Army Africa is currently exploring an adaptation of these two ideas by developing partner relationships among the five African Standby Force Brigades and select US Army National Guard brigades and training institutions.

Civil-Military Activities. USAFRICOM undertakes humanitarian assistance projects that support US and its host country's security and foreign policy interests, while promoting the specific operational readiness skills of the participating US forces. USAFRICOM and US Army Africa coordinate complementary military humanitarian efforts with other US government agencies. The DOS leads this initiative in concert with US Embassy personnel and USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, particularly when deployed in a JTF capacity. The bottom line is that the military will follow USAID's lead on development initiatives, whether in peacetime or in crisis. For example, US Army Africa conducts humanitarian assistance exercises such as the annual MEDFLAG exercise, designed to enhance military medical capabilities and interoperability. This year, the US Army Africa-led JTF exercise was conducted in Swaziland to enhance its disaster response capabilities.

Joint and Combined Exercises. USAFRICOM and its service components participate in several joint (multiservice) and combined (multinational) exercises with African and international partners annually. These exercises are the largest and most visible evidence of US Army engagement with African partners. Most are sponsored by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and fall into several categories: Disaster Preparedness, Crisis Response, Command and Control, Capacity Building, and Medical Training. In the past, exercises in Africa were disconnected with disparate US commands sponsoring exercises in North Africa, East

Africa and the island nations of the Indian Ocean. In the future, the CJCS exercise programme will be synchronized, geographically and functionally, by lining up ACOTA, M2M, Partnership, Civil-Military and other US security cooperation activities in Africa. *Natural Fire '10*, which will take place in Uganda, is US Army Africa's first major attempt at conducting a regionally oriented crisis response exercise with several African partners.

Conclusion

A healthy debate continues about USAFRICOM and the necessity for establishing a GCC in Africa.⁶ Developing Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force and Special Operations component commands has been less controversial. Despite recent criticism about USAFRICOM and its components, it is a unique command that breathes life into the "whole of government" approach in Africa. Not overly focused on traditional war-fighting capabilities, the mission emphasizes professionalism within African militaries so they can independently conduct peacekeeping operations; to paraphrase President Obama, "African solutions to African problems." Countries like Canada, Great Britain, and the United States can coordinate training and assistance efforts to strengthen African military capacity and capability. Helping professionalize African militaries does not always require a large force. In fact, the most effective engagement tools frequently tread lightly: skilled individuals, small advisory groups, and professional teams. Balancing a lighter touch with a robust assistance programme is the acme of skill for foreign and domestic policy makers, but capable, professional African forces will reduce the risk of conflict and the need for external security force assistance – a proposition upon which all constituencies can agree.

(Endnotes)

- 1 US Africa Command Public Affairs, "U.S. Africa Command," <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp>
- 2 USAFRICOM has 53 countries. Egypt is part of Africa but remains in the US Central Command Area of Responsibility.
- 3 US Department of Defense Directive 5100.1 (November 13, 2003), 13
- 4 U.S. Department of State, "Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance," <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rt/acota>
- 5 *Directorate Military Training Assistance Programme (DMTAP) Home Page*, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/admpol/newsite/mtap-eng.html>
- 6 Edward Marks, "Why USAFRICOM," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 52 (1st quarter 2009): 148; Mary C. Yates, "U.S. Africa Command: Value Added," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 52 (1st quarter 2009): 152