

U.S. Army Africa: A Team Like No Other

By MG William B. Garrett III



Rick Scavetta, U.S. Army Africa

When a U.S. Air Force C-17 landed at Kigali International Airport, Rwanda, in early January to airlift vital equipment to peacekeepers in Sudan, it marked a change in U.S. policy toward assisting in the Darfur peacekeeping mission. It also marked a change for the U.S. Army in Africa. Just a few weeks before, in early December 2008, Southern European Task Force (SETAF) began its transformation to become U.S. Army Africa, the Army component to U.S. Africa Command.

MSG George Duenas observes as SSG Chad Sloan explains infantry skills to a soldier from the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF). The two U.S. Army Africa NCOs spent a month mentoring RDF troops under a joint British-American program held at Gabiro, Rwanda.

CPT Charlie Jones, a U.S. Army Africa logistician, explains to a group of Ugandan soldiers how U.S. soldiers load equipment on aircraft. Jones' mentoring mission is indicative of U.S. Army Africa efforts—small teams of U.S. soldiers using unique skill sets and experience to mentor African militaries.



U.S. Army Africa

CPT Charlie Jones and SSG Brian Ruse, two U.S. Army Africa soldiers, were on the tarmac that day, assisting Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) soldiers with uploading the U.S. cargo plane. The team was sent to mentor RDF logisticians on how U.S. soldiers load aircraft and support logistical missions; they were at the right place at the right time. In early January, then-President George W. Bush authorized the airlift mission. On January 14, U.S. cargo planes landed at Kigali, where the RDF soldiers loaded their equipment using lessons learned from their U.S. Army Africa mentors. In turn, the partnership effort offered immediate support to multinational peacekeepers serving in Sudan's war-torn region.

This type of engagement is indicative of U.S. Army Africa's new role. Small groups of soldiers with unique skill sets partner with African militaries to share knowledge and information, allowing Africans to choose which ideas apply to their situations and empowering them to resolve problems their own way.

U.S. Army Africa spent the first weeks of 2009 gearing up for missions in Africa during Lion Focus, a two-week exercise conducted concurrently with a mission readiness exercise at the Joint Warfighting Center in Suffolk, Va., that prepared troops heading to Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa. The goal was to improve the way our headquarters staff plans and conducts operations, with an Africa fo-

cus. It also gave U.S. Army Africa staff its first look at the road ahead, a major change from past operations. Based in Vicenza, Italy, SETAF supported NATO missions for more than 50 years, focusing primarily in Europe. Five times within the last 15 years, however, SETAF deployed assets to Africa in support of crisis-response operations.

U.S. Army Africa's new mission is twofold: conducting sustained security engagements with African land forces to promote security, stability and peace; and providing a contingency headquarters in support of crisis response. U.S. Army Africa staff have tackled their new mission, planning and participating in ongoing U.S. Africa Command missions and taking on new initiatives.

In February, a U.S. Army Africa officer went under way with the USS *Nashville* as part of the U.S. Navy's Africa Partnership Station, a training, goodwill and outreach mission to the five West African nations of Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon.

In March, CSM Earl Rice and SSG Christopher Upp represented U.S. Army Africa during a visit to South Africa's special forces (SASF), a mission conducted jointly with the U.S. Army Ranger Training Brigade. SASF leaders had previously attended a U.S. Army Ranger School graduation, and after seeing how Ranger professionalism is combined with technical and tactical proficiency, they invited the U.S. soldiers to South Africa to discuss the development of a course for junior leaders.

While plans are to have SASF troops interact with U.S. Army Africa noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and U.S. Army Rangers to build South African military capacity, it was U.S. soldiers who had a taste of hardcore SASF training. A few weeks after the initial visit, three Army NCOs underwent a grueling three-week survival course in the South African bush, learning valuable lessons on adapting to the environment, maintaining endurance and overcom-

MG William B. Garrett III is the commanding general of U.S. Army Africa and U.S. Army Southern European Task Force. He is also the senior commander for all U.S. Army forces in Italy. Previous assignments include tours of duty with the 6th Infantry Division, 10th Mountain Division, 25th Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, U.S. Special Operations Command, the Army Staff and the Joint Staff.

ing nearly insurmountable challenges—a “tool kit” they carried back to their units.

Later in March, a U.S. Army Africa team headed to Gaborone, Botswana, to share their logistics knowledge with a group of officers from the Botswana Defence Force. Once again, a small team that included a senior NCO and a warrant officer was effective, offering Army ideas on movement control while opening a two-way dialogue on the challenges of carrying out operations in Africa. Building rapport with soldiers in partner nations is an added benefit from such engagements, which can lead to future opportunities to share information on critical Army skills with soldiers in Botswana and elsewhere.

Throughout the year, U.S. Army soldiers serving under Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa have partnered with several African militaries. Soldiers from the 218th Field Artillery Regiment based at Fort Still, Okla., recently wrapped up a 15-month tour conducting military-to-military mentorship programs in Uganda, Ethiopia and other East African countries. Soldiers also lent their military expertise to several missions under the U.S. State Department’s Africa contingency operations training and assistance program.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Kenyan military officers visited the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. Senior NCOs from Kenya visited U.S. Army NCO training at Fort Benning, Ga., and toured the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas.

In April, U.S. Army Africa staff attended the Land Forces Symposium in Nairobi, Kenya. During discussions with senior African military leaders, the primary topic was not simply how the U.S. Army can help now, but rather a dialogue on achieving long-term goals through planning and partnership.

Our bottom line is that U.S. Army Africa efforts must support the policies and plans established by the U.S. embassy in each nation, many of which have U.S. Army officers serving as defense attachés. There are no plans for a large U.S. Army footprint in Africa; the deployment of a battalion or a brigade would happen only in the case of a crisis. Instead, the command deploys small teams of mentors. These teams work traditional “train-the-trainer” missions, building the capacity of partner nations’ instructors and enabling them to turn around and teach their own people.

A great example of this took place recently in Rwanda. Two senior U.S. Army Africa NCOs joined a British-led mentorship mission held in Gabiro. The task was the classic infantry “four stack” for clearing buildings. One afternoon, Rwanda Defence Force instructors gathered in the shade of a tree, taking in each step. Then they walked

through the tactic. By the next morning, the RDF instructors were teaching their own troops.

As we move forward, mentorship is also happening at senior levels. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, four U.S. Army lieutenant colonels are at the core of teaching and leadership within the Ethiopian army war college. African officers and NCOs also attend stateside U.S. Army schools, such as the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

Success in Africa can only be achieved through partnership with other services within the U.S. military, other governmental agencies and civilian organizations. With no assigned forces, U.S. Army Africa relies on support from commands within the active component, the National Guard and the Army Reserve. In some cases, citizen-soldiers have unique skills and niche capabilities that active component soldiers do not.

This spring, LTG Clyde A. Vaughn, then-director of the



Pvt. Umaru Konneh shows a typhoid-tainted blood sample to SSG Mike Tatu. SSG Tatu, a medic from 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, Fort Still, Okla., was among several NCOs supporting Liberia Security Sector Reform, a U.S. State Department-led mentorship program designed to build Liberia’s military capacity.

Rick Scavetta, U.S. Army Africa

MSG Duenas mentors a group of Rwanda Defence Force soldiers during a recent joint British-American program in Gabiro, Rwanda.



Rick Scavetta, U.S. Army Africa



Rick Scavetta, U.S. Army Africa

SFC Eddie King, U.S. Army Africa, checks a Liberian soldier's target at Edward Binyah Kesselly Military Barracks, a base outside Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. King is one of several U.S. Army NCOs to take part in the Liberia Security Sector Reform program.

York with South Africa, North Carolina with Botswana, Utah with Morocco, Vermont with Senegal, Wyoming with Tunisia and North Dakota with Ghana. Often, U.S. National Guard units fulfill similar roles to the militaries of partner countries in Africa, training to both deploy in support of national missions and respond to local emergencies.

In October, U.S. Army Africa will lead an exercise in Uganda based on a disaster scenario that warrants immediate crisis response. It will validate what we've learned, test our abilities to operate safely and successfully on the continent, and mark places for improvement. Most of all, it will bring

Army National Guard, and LTG Jack C. Stultz Jr., chief of the U.S. Army Reserve and commanding general of the U.S. Army Reserve Command, met with key U.S. Army Africa leaders to discuss how citizen-soldiers' important capabilities—from those of civil affairs personnel and engineers to medics and military police—can be put to good use in Africa.

U.S. Army Africa also uses established efforts, such as the National Guard's state partnership program (SPP), to further U.S. Army interaction with African nations. For more than 15 years, U.S. soldiers have worked with foreign militaries during SPP events. In all, there are seven state partnerships with African nations: California with Nigeria, New

together U.S. soldiers with African troops from five partner nations, an interoperability challenge that will allow U.S. Army Africa to deepen our understanding of their abilities and map future mentoring missions to build African military capacity.

U.S. Army Africa is America's premier Army team, dedicated to achieving positive change in Africa. Our missions in Africa will continue to be both complex and novel as situations change. The rewards will be high, as we have a chance to forestall crises rather than merely respond. Together, we will make a positive difference—for our nation and for the people of Africa. ★