

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 24, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, Northwest
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper:

We are concerned by reports that the Department of Defense is significantly reducing our military presence in Africa. First, the National Defense Strategy recognizes the growing importance of great power competition. Both China and Russia are increasing their presence throughout Africa. US presence is vital to countering those efforts. Terrorist activity in this region is rapidly increasing, and it is part of the President's National Security Strategy to continue working with our partners in Africa to defeat terrorist organizations to protect the homeland.

The Trump administration has been clear-eyed about China and Russia's destabilizing and dangerous global activities, including in Africa. The full force of the U.S. government must address their efforts to undermine democratic values and free market economies. At the same time, the counterterrorism mission is vital to building partner capacity.

Success in degrading terrorist safe havens in the Middle East has sent terrorist elements fleeing to other parts of the world. Ten thousand ISIS and al Qaida jihadists are estimated to be active across Africa. Extreme poverty, weak governance and vast ungoverned spaces make West Africa, and particularly the Sahel, fertile ground for terrorist recruitment and violence.

The increase in terrorist attacks in West Africa is staggering, with extremist-related violence having doubled every year since 2015. In the last three years, the number of terrorism related casualties has also increased fivefold. Partner militaries are underfunded and ill-equipped to respond to this drastic increase in violence. That is why our limited, yet focused presence across Africa, is so important. U.S. forces train and advise partner nations and support improved intelligence collection, building their capacity to ultimately defend their own countries. They also play a critical role in supporting the political, economic and development efforts of the Department of State and USAID, and implementing the recently enacted Global Fragility Act.

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While we agree there is a need to regularly review our force posture overseas to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, we strongly urge that any overall drawdown plans at Africa Command maintain robust support for our counterterrorism and host nation capacity building. Finally, relationships built through these efforts will also facilitate U.S. government efforts to push back on Russian and Chinese influence in Africa. Proactive investments and productive security partnerships now will prevent future costly engagements and a further deterioration of the security environment.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



JAMES B. RISCH
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

CC: General Townsend