

Hearing on the Proposed Establishment of AFRICOM
Opening Statement
Senator Richard G. Lugar
August 1, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for organizing this hearing.

I want to divert from AFRICOM for a moment to commend the United Nations for acting on Darfur yesterday by authorizing 26,000 peacekeeping troops. Also yesterday, the Senate approved Resolution 276, which asks the Bush Administration to urgently request the necessary funding to cover our portion of the costs of this vital mission.

We state in the resolution that failure of the international community to take all steps necessary to generate, deploy and maintain United Nations-African Union hybrid peacekeeping forces will result in the continued loss of life and further degradation of humanitarian infrastructure in Darfur. History has shown that peacekeeping success depends on size, resources, mandate, mobility, and command structure of the force. And the mission must be accompanied by a peace-building process among the parties in the conflict. We strongly urge our government, as well as others, to act swiftly and robustly.

The creation of a new Defense Department combatant command for Africa with a State Department component is an issue that interests this Committee from a number of different perspectives.

What might be the advantages of such a new command? A new command would bring new focus and attention to a continent that has been roiled by conflict, most often by internal strife that spills over borders, creating tragic refugee flows and new conflicts in neighboring states. We would benefit as a nation if our military can develop a more sophisticated understanding of a region that is ever-changing and highly complex. A combatant command for Africa would not be distracted by problems in the Balkans or the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq or problems in other areas of the world as is the case now as three combatant commands divide parts of Africa into regionally mixed portfolios. Instead, an Africa command could focus on building regional and subregional African peacekeeping capability and strengthening the ability of partner nations to counter terrorists on their own soil.

Concerns that the region could provide havens for terrorists are justified. The bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998 demonstrated the lethal impact that even small bands of violent extremists in Africa can have when they target U.S. interests. Somalia has been a known safe haven for terrorists and a primary preparation and transit area for past terror attacks.

With the proposed creation of this new command, however, it is time to come to grips with the appropriate roles of the Department of State and the Department of Defense in deciding which countries are best prepared to receive American security assistance and how that security assistance should be used. With greater expertise created within a new regional command, the

hope is that there would be few disagreements between the two Departments on the appropriateness of security assistance to specific African nations. But, undoubtedly, some differences of opinion will occur. It is my view that it is only the Secretary of State who has the balanced overview of the full range of U.S. foreign policy interests in a country or in a region. Determinations as to which countries should receive U.S. military equipment and training and the extent and type of such training are fundamentally foreign policy decisions. Judgments on whether a potential recipient has the human rights and due process protections in place to warrant a strengthening of the security sector should be the Secretary of State's call. Likewise, whether a stronger military in one country will upset a balance in the subregion or cause neighbors to feel threatened is also a foreign policy not a military judgment and it belongs to the Secretary of State.

It is crucial that Ambassadors on the ground provide strong leadership, steady oversight, and a firm hand on the component parts of all counterterrorism activities in their countries of assignment. This includes the authority to challenge and override directives from combatant commanders or other DoD personnel to their resident or temporary staffs in the embassy.

This hearing provides an opportunity to raise a number of related issues:

- To what extent are the State Department and USAID involved in planning for the proposed new command? It is important to have the civilian agencies weigh in, especially when making the strategic decision as to whether the value of creating such a command outweighs the potentially negative impact. Robust Secretary of State involvement can minimize the dangers that critics envision: a disproportionately military emphasis in our African policy and a message that such a command presages a disposition for military intervention in Africa.
- How would the new combatant commander relate to ambassadors?
- Are more formal mechanisms needed to lay out roles and responsibilities? For example, are memoranda of understanding (MOUs) necessary?
- I understand that there is consideration being given to having a State Department official serve as one of two deputies to the command. This is a new configuration; in the past, combatant commanders have had political advisers (called polads) from the State Department. Would the new State Department Deputy have his/her own staff? Who would the Deputy report to – State or DoD? What would be the relationship of the Deputy to the Africa Bureau at the Department?
- What is the expectation on the part of DoD as to its role in Africa? Does it intend to go well beyond working to strengthen counterterrorism and peacekeeping capacity in the region? Will there be efforts to have our military also involved in humanitarian, economic development, and nation-building activities throughout the continent as it is in the Horn of Africa?

I appreciate the opportunity to explore all these issues with our witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

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