

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

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**Introduction**

Africa has long been seen as a problem to be solved – a continent of failed states, faltering economies, regional conflicts, and corrupt leadership. This image is far cry from the Africa of today. This is a year in which we celebrate the half century of the historic independence of Ghana, and where the economic growth rate of the continent has averaged five percent for the past three years. In November 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was democratically elected to replace Charles Taylor, who is now at the Hague to stand trial for the brutality he unleashed in the region in the early 1990's. She is the second elected black woman head of state in the world.

The credit for this progress goes to the African people. With the support of international partners, Africans are slowly but surely instituting democracy and good governance across the continent, enabling more and more people to build their lives and pursue their livelihoods in a context of security and freedom, choice and opportunity.

Challenges do remain. Poverty, disease, and conflict persist. Corruption flourishes where the rule of law is weak. Gaps in infrastructure, technology and legal protections discourage local and foreign investment. We in the United States are in a position to help African nations develop the capacity to address these challenges.

The United States spends approximately \$9 billion dollars a year in Africa, funding programs in support of a wide range of areas. The U.S. is helping to train health care professionals and provide desperately needed hospital equipment, train teachers and provide educational materials, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS through various awareness programs, train prosecutors in support of the legal reforms and the promotion of independent judiciaries, train police forces consistent with important human rights norms, and to train customs and border control officers to increase capacities to thwart illicit trafficking of weapons, narcotics, and even children across national borders.

We are looking for ways to increase capital and trade flows, the means by which mutual prosperity is built. The African Growth and Opportunity Act, for example, grants African economies preferential access to our markets. The Millennium Challenge Account offers countries that have met standards of responsible and accountable

governance to develop and propose extensive projects that target development goals that they themselves have identified.

All of these activities are undertaken in partnership with African governments, African institutions, and African organizations.

### **Strengthening our Relationships with Africans**

Our security cooperation with Africa is one aspect of our collaboration with Africa – but it is a small part of our overall relationship.

This security assistance includes joint training exercises with African militaries throughout the continent. We provide a great deal of training to improve the level of professionalization and technical proficiency in African militaries. We do our best to convey through this training respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the proper role of a civilian controlled military in a democracy. We provide equipment – in some cases granting the funds to do so - to meet African defense and security needs. We established the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, DC to promote a continuous dialogue between African military and civilian leaders and their U.S. counterparts on important security issues. In Nairobi, we instituted the Regional Disaster Management Center of Excellence. We engage on a daily basis with African military chains of command through our embassy-based Defense Attachés and Defense Cooperation Chiefs. Every step of the way, we consult with our African partners and listen to what they have to say.

We are now taking this relationship a step further. In February 2007, the President announced his decision to create a Unified Command for Africa – U.S. Africa Command, or “AFRICOM.”

Although this structure is new, our military engagement on the African continent will remain primarily focused on building partnership capacities, conducting theater security cooperation, building important counter-terrorism skills and, as appropriate, supporting U.S. Government agencies in implementing other programs that promote regional stability. For many years our military relationships on the continent have been implemented by three separate commands: U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command and U.S. Pacific Command. While these commands executed their missions well, AFRICOM presents an opportunity to eliminate the bureaucratic divisions and operational seams created by this organizational structure. We hope that AFRICOM will allow DoD civilian and military leaders to take a more holistic and operationally efficient approach to the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead as Africa’s multilateral institutions, such as the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities, figure more prominently in African security affairs. Consolidation under one command has the potential to better support the development of these important regional mechanisms and relationships.

### **Rationale for AFRICOM’s Creation**

Stability and prosperity in Africa are important to the long-term interests of the United States. A stable, healthy, and more prosperous Africa will contribute to global security and a stronger world economy.

Many of Africa's security challenges are not limited by country boundaries but are transnational and regional in nature. African governments and institutions are using new approaches to address these challenges, and our engagement with Africa needs to reflect these African institutional innovations at the regional level.

In many ways, the creation of this command is an historic opportunity to "catch-up" to Africa's quickly evolving continental and regional security structures, and their increasing capacities to synergize African efforts in both the governmental and non-governmental spheres to address the significant security challenges on the continent. AFRICOM represents an opportunity to strengthen and expand U.S. and African relationships in such a way that our combined efforts can help generate a more indigenous and, therefore, more sustainable peace and security on the continent. AFRICOM also is a manifestation of how DoD is innovating to transform its ability, institutionally, to meet the challenges of the new global security environment.

### **AFRICOM's Innovations**

AFRICOM is an innovative command in several ways. First, unlike a traditional Unified Command, it will focus on building African regional security and crisis response capacity. AFRICOM will promote greater security ties between the United States and Africa, providing new opportunities to enhance our bi-lateral military relationships, and strengthen the capacities of Africa's regional and sub-regional organizations.

Second, AFRICOM will include a significant number of representatives from other US agencies within its staff, including officers from the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). A variety of agencies have existing bilateral relationships with African governments – from collaborating to promote aviation safety to working with local NGOs to develop conflict mediation programs targeted at youth. These interagency officers will contribute their knowledge and expertise to the command so that AFRICOM will be more effective as it works to build peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, and disaster response capacity in Africa. They will also help AFRICOM identify ways that DoD can support other U.S. Government departments and agencies' initiatives in Africa.

Third, the Commander will have both a military and civilian deputy. The Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Affairs (DCMA) will be a Senior Foreign Service officer from the Department of State. This civilian deputy will be responsible for the planning and oversight of the majority of AFRICOM's security assistance work. In particular, the DCMA will work with the State Department and the African Union on developing ways in which AFRICOM can provide effective training, advisory and technical support to the development of the African Standby Force. State Department leadership at this senior

level will also enhance AFRICOM's ability to support such State Department funded endeavors as the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, a mainstay of the U.S. effort to build peace support operations capacity in Africa.

Fourth, AFRICOM will depart from the traditional J-code organization structure. Originating in the Napoleon age, this has proven to be an extremely effective method of organizing a command for war-fighting. Recognizing that AFRICOM's focus is on war-prevention rather than war-fighting, we are reorganizing the inner-workings of the command to best position it for theatre security cooperation activities and preventing problems before they become crises and preventing crises before they become catastrophes.

### **AFRICOM Myths v Reality**

There are many misconceptions about what AFRICOM will look like and what it will do. I would like to address these misperceptions and concerns here.

First, some people believe that we are establishing AFRICOM solely to fight terrorism, or to secure oil resources, or to discourage China. This is not true. Violent extremism is cause for concern, and needs to be addressed, but this is not AFRICOM's singular mission. Natural resources represent Africa's current and future wealth, but in a fair market environment, many benefit. Ironically, the U.S., China and other countries share a common interest – that of a secure environment. AFRICOM is about helping Africans build greater capacity to assure their own security.

Second, some have raised the concern that AFRICOM will take control of security issues on the continent. Our intent is quite the contrary. DoD recognizes and applauds the leadership role that individual African nations and multi-lateral African organizations are taking in the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent. For example, AFRICOM can provide effective training, advisory and technical support to the development of the African Standby Force. This is exactly the type of initiative and leadership needed to address the diverse and unpredictable global security challenges the world currently faces. The purpose of AFRICOM is to encourage and support such African leadership and initiative, not to compete with it or to discourage it. U.S. security is enhanced when African nations themselves endeavor to successfully address and resolve emergent security issues before they become so serious that they require considerable international resources and intervention to resolve.

Finally, there are fears that AFRICOM represents a militarization of U.S. foreign policy in Africa and that AFRICOM will somehow become the lead U.S. Government interlocutor with Africa. This fear is unfounded. AFRICOM will support, not shape, U.S. foreign policy on the continent. The Secretary of State will remain the chief foreign policy advisor to the President, and the Secretary of Defense will remain his chief advisor on defense and security matters. The creation of a single U.S. DoD point of contact for Africa will simply allow DoD to better coordinate its own efforts, in support of State

Department leadership, to better build security capacity in Africa. The intent is not for DoD generally, or for AFRICOM at the operational-level, to assume the lead in areas where State and/or USAID has clear lines of authority as well as the comparative advantages to lead. DoD will seek to provide support, as appropriate and as necessary, to help the broader U.S. Government national security goals and objectives succeed.

### **Standing up AFRICOM**

We are moving quickly to stand up AFRICOM through a Transition Team, which includes officers from the Department of State and USAID, that is located in Stuttgart, Germany. It is coordinating the planning for the Command, including the location of the headquarters and organizational structure, with U.S. European Command to ensure an effective transition. AFRICOM will be stood up as a sub-unified command under European Command by October 1, 2007, and is scheduled to be fully operational no later than October 1, 2008.

The establishment of AFRICOM – and the participation of State, USAID, and other U.S. agencies – demonstrates the importance the U.S. Government places on strengthening ties with Africa. With AFRICOM, the United States will be working in partnership with Africans to foster an environment of security and peace – an environment that will enable Africans themselves to further strengthen their democracies, institutionalize respect for human rights, pursue economic prosperity, and build effective regional institutions. A more stable Africa serves the goal of helping to foster a more stable global environment.