



Remarks on AFRICOM

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I would like to thank you for this opportunity to discuss U. S. policy in Sub-Saharan Africa and the role of the new Africa Command, AFRICOM. I will speak for about 20 minutes, then take your questions and comments. I view this as an opportunity for discussion and dialogue.

II. THE VISION OF PARTNERSHIP

AFRICOM comes as part of a broader vision of U.S. policy. In 2001, the U.S. changed its foreign policy strategy, a move long overdue with the close of the Cold War. We decided not to rank U.S. interests according to the traditional hierarchy of regions. In that ranking, Europe was considered a vital national security interest, Asia and the Middle East important, and Latin America and Africa mainly of humanitarian interest. We no longer operate according to this hierarchy.

Since 2001, the U.S. has implemented a strategy to operate more effectively in a world where non-state actors, and illegal trans-border activity, can pose essential threats to even the most powerful of countries. This strategy has move Africa from the margins to the center of American foreign policy.

Secretary of State Rice has called this the goal of establishing "strategic partnerships". The goal is to develop a network of well-governed states capable through responsible sovereignty of protecting themselves and contributing to regional security.

Using this conceptual framework, this Administration has increased Africa's place in American foreign policy, a change of historic proportions. We are developing important new strategic relationships with key partners in the region. We consider the African Union a force for continent-wide conflict resolution and support for the rule of law. In this light, we have supported the AU and sub regional organizations like ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) as they expand their leadership roles in promoting and maintaining Africa security.

We believe this vision dovetails with Africa's own growing emphasis on the values of freedom, the rule of law, and collective security, as embedded in the African Union's New Partnership for African Development. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Peer Review mechanism reinforces African leaders' own efforts to promote democracy and good governance among their peers.

Nothing has been more important than ending conflict in Africa. We are pursuing that goal by backing African conflict mediation and strengthening Africa's capacity to carry out peace support operations and to fight terror.

To do so, we work directly with lead Africa mediators and multilaterally with the United Nations, African Union, sub-regional organizations, and directly -- bilaterally -- with governments. In other words, African leadership for African solutions to African problems.

There's plenty of evidence that this approach works. We've had success working with African partners in ending six conflicts in six countries in six years: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Congo, Burundi, and Sudan North-South conflict.

The terrible conflict in Darfur continues, but we are hopeful that plans for international peacekeeping force finally falling into place. In the case of Somalia, the African Union is responding aggressively to meet peacekeeping needs. The recent selection of a new prime minister who understands the need for a broad-based, inclusive Somali government is a positive development.

The establishment of a separate Africa Command, focused on Africa and Africans, is an important and natural part of this strategic vision.

Thus, we in the State Department, and especially in the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, are excited about AFRICOM and have strongly supported its creation. We believe AFRICOM will be an important asset in our overall African policy, and we welcome the Department of Defense's greater interest, resources, and participation in African issues.

III. THE LONG HISTORY OF U.S. MILITARY IN AFRICA

While AFRICOM is new, our military has a long history in Africa. We can all the way go back to the administration of Thomas Jefferson 200 years ago. Jefferson called on the Navy to take on the Barbary pirates of North Africa, who demanded bribes from American merchant vessels as the price for doing business in the Mediterranean. This successful campaign gave us an early model for dealing the piracy, lawlessness, and certain kind of terrorism far from home.

A lesser known campaign was a multinational patrol to suppress the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s. American naval units joined the British, French, and other navies in patrolling thousand of miles of African coast from modern Senegal down to South Africa and up the Indian Ocean to Mozambique and Tanzania. Americans served with distinction in this remarkable example of successful international military cooperation to police the seas against illegal activity (even while slavery remained legal in the U.S.).

In World War II, Africa played a leading role in American plans. The North Africa campaign -- Operation Torch -- proved to be the U.S. Army's baptism of fire in World War II. Lessons learned in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia made our military the powerful instrument that later would make campaigns in Italy and Normandy possible.

Remember that at the time the only viable air travel from America to Europe passed through Brazil and Africa. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt traveled to the Casablanca Conference in 1943, he overnighted in The Gambia in West Africa, a country in which I have had the good fortune of serving. On his way back, he stopped in the Republic in Liberia, another country I know well both as a student and a Foreign Service Officer. He became the first sitting American president to step foot in Africa.

Africa, in other words, proved to be the strategic underbelly of Europe. It is hard to imagine victory in Europe without the British victory at El Alamein; without the General de Gaulle's Free French Army that was assembled in Brazzaville, now the Republic of Congo; and our own Operation Torch.

Since World War II, the military has remained involved in African affairs through the European, Central and Pacific Commands, each of which has had responsibility for a portion of the continent. But Africa had to compete with Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific Basin for resources, and often lost out.

IV. AFRICA'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TODAY

AFRICOM's strategic vision, then, is rooted in the long-standing reality of the importance of Africa.

It has been historically important to the U.S. partly because of geography set next to Europe, next to the Middle East, and aside half the Atlantic Ocean. But what is happening now is that the U.S. understands that Africa is important for its own sake: as the second largest continent in area and population, as a major energy supplier to the U.S. and rest of the world, and as a growing, increasingly prosperous market coming into its own.

But, to go back to what I said earlier, Africa is ever more important because we are living in a world where non-state actors and illegal trans-border activity, can pose essential threats to even the most powerful of countries. What happens there affects all of us here. Africa became a front in the fight against terrorism nine years ago the when Al Qaeda bombed American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

When disease ravages Africans, it threatens all of us. And not least because disease knows no boundary and can travel around the world. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in southern and eastern Africa has already cut lifespans in half and is killing millions in the prime of life. Its path of destruction threatens the progress many countries have made. That instability breeds exactly the conditions that lead to disorder, despair, and terrorism. In this context, President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a \$15 billion program over five years, is at the same time a humanitarian and national security program.

The No. 1 killer in Africa is not AIDS, however. Nor is it war. It is malaria. The tragedy of malaria lies in the fact that we know how to control it. We did it a long time ago here in the U.S., but not in Africa. We have begun to right that wrong.

In 2005, President Bush announced a 1.5 billion dollar initiative to fight this disease in fifteen African countries. This includes insecticide treated bed nets, indoor spraying, and life-saving anti-malaria medications. Tackling malaria means saving lives – young lives, mostly -- reducing despair. Reduce despair and you prevent a breeding ground for violence.

V. AFRICOM AND STATE WORKING TOGETHER

AFRICOM signals U.S. recognition that Africa's strategic importance requires a single focal point within the Department of Defense, led by a four-star General. AFRICOM's establishment will grant African security challenges greater visibility within the U.S. and put Africa on equal footing with all other regions to receive American resources.

Finally, the entire continent, except Egypt, will be under a single Unified Command. And Egypt, despite its vital historical role in Middle Eastern affairs, will not be ignored, but will be considered as a country of special concern for AFRICOM.

All of Africa finally will get the full attention of one of our highest-ranking and most experienced senior military leaders, supported by a staff uniquely structured to meet the challenges of this part of the world. We in the State Department are pleased to see General William Ward as AFRICOM's first Commander. He has the background and experience to lead this initiative and we look forward to working closely with him.

A State Department career Foreign Service Officer, Ambassador Mary Yates, has taken over as Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities. We also are pleased to see Rear Admiral Robert Moeller as Deputy to the Commander for Military Operations.

From the inception of AFRICOM, the State Department has been part and parcel of the planning process. This began last fall when the Department of Defense established its AFRICOM Implementation Planning Team. Both the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs assigned senior officers to this planning team, working with Department of Defense officials full time for many weeks to address the myriad of issues that arise when this type of major inter-agency collaboration is envisioned.

Several other State Department bureaus also had officers participating, bringing functional expertise to key portions of the planning process. This process has largely occurred in an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration, with both Departments sensitive to the requirements and concerns of the other. The result, to date, is the development of a framework that is supportive of both U.S. foreign policy interests as well our regional security objectives.

The Department of State will continue to exercise full foreign policy primacy and authority in Africa, and I am confident that no one in the Department of Defense disagrees with this. The Assistant Secretary for African Affairs will continue to be the lead policymaker in the U.S. Government on African issues, including regional security policy. Each Chief of Mission in the field in Africa will continue to act as the President's personal representative in the country to which he/she is accredited, and to exercise full authority over all the U.S. Government's peacetime activities.

State therefore will continue to provide leadership for, and exercise authority over, State's 47 embassies in the AFRICOM area of responsibility, with personnel on assignments of two or three years, whose responsibility it is to understand the host country government and people, and to both influence and implement foreign policy.

The Department of Defense will continue to support the Department of State in the pursuit of U.S. foreign policy goals, while we at the Department of State will continue to strongly support the military in its efforts to promote the security and safety of the United States and its African partners. We will work TOGETHER to promote security and stability in Africa.

VI. REACHING OUT TO THE REGION

We all know that Africa cannot fully develop economically, politically, or socially where there is violence, the threat of terrorism, or fear about the security of legitimate governments and the people they represent.

The continued violence in Eastern Congo at present offers an example of where AFRICOM could play an important role in building security, perhaps by providing training and material assistance to the legitimate military of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In a similar way, AFRICOM provides mentors and trainers to assist in the establishment of a professional, post-conflict armed forces in Liberia.

We are not at war in Africa, nor do we expect to be at war in Africa. Our Embassies and AFRICOM will work in concert to keep it that way. We expect the largely peacetime activities of AFRICOM to help State strengthen regional security policies and their implementation. AFRICOM will draw upon the leadership of our embassies in the field for most of the information it will use to guide its security cooperation programs and its overall interaction with Africa.

Throughout the process of creating AFRICOM, we have considered carefully the views and reactions of our regional friends and those from outside the region who have significant interests in Africa. A delegation of senior officials from the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development conducted two extensive trips to Africa to consult with many key African states on AFRICOM and have found a generally positive reception in sub-Saharan Africa.

We will continue to conduct consultations with African states and with allies who have strong interests in Africa in the near future. Consultations are also ongoing with various international organizations and non-governmental agencies on AFRICOM. As one would expect with a subject of this importance and scope, the reactions have been varied and diverse.

There has been much written and rumored about AFRICOM over the past several months—where it will be located, how it will be structured, the degree to which there will be State Department and interagency participation. I want to make it clear that no final decision has been made about the location of AFRICOM's Headquarters in Africa, although it is AFRICOM's plan to establish its headquarters presence on the continent by October 2008.

Until then it will be located in Stuttgart, Germany, not far from the European Command. State will also provide officers to work in AFRICOM, including as I said before, one of the two Deputy Commanders working for General Ward.

Amb. Yates, the Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities, coordinates those activities in AFRICOM with our policymakers in Washington and our embassies in Africa. The other Deputy Commander, Admiral Moeller, is in charge of the purely military operations of AFRICOM. The State Department is also providing another Senior Officer who will serve as the Political Advisor for General Ward. So we are well-represented on the AFRICOM leadership team.

State and other civilian agencies will also provide a number of other officers to work in leadership, management, and functional positions as AFRICOM staff, in addition to traditional advisors. In addition, we expect to add staff in the Bureau of African Affairs who will assist in the interface with AFRICOM and its various elements.

CONCLUSION

Let me return to the vision of a strategic partnership in Africa: A partnership of equals contributing to common objectives.

The Department of State views the creation of AFRICOM as an important tool for supporting our comprehensive Africa policy and engagement strategy. It is, in many ways the marriage of State's expertise and authorities with the military's resources and security experience, and we are excited about it.

I would be glad to take any questions that the committee might have.

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