US Africa Command: A More »Active« American Approach to Addressing African Security Challenges?

LAUREN PLOCH

Introduction

In February 2007, the Bush Administration announced its intention to create a new unified combatant command, Africa Command or AFRICOM, to promote US national security objectives in Africa and its surrounding waters. Created in part to address concerns over the administrative division of responsibility for US military efforts and engagement in Africa, AFRICOM's establishment also reflects an evolution in American perceptions of strategic interests in Africa. US military focus on the continent historically has been sporadic. The 1998 embassy bombings in East Africa are considered by many analysts to be a turning point in US strategic policy toward the region.

US security strategy toward Africa now appears to be focused on protecting trade interests, reducing armed conflict, and countering proliferation and terrorism. The lasting premise behind AFRICOM's establishment, according to its creators, is that stable and secure states are more capable of deterring terrorism, proliferation, and crime. Building partnership capacity is a key component of this approach and has been at the forefront of US military strategy in Africa in recent years. To what extent do US goals, and US proposals for security engagement, coincide with African security priorities?

African perceptions of the new command have been mixed. Some in Africa worry that the move represents a neo-colonial effort to dominate the region militarily. Many Africans view US counterterrorism efforts with skepticism, and there appears to be a widespread belief that the new command's primary goals will be to hunt terrorists and to secure US access to African oil. Some Africans also ask whether AFRICOM might be part of a new contest between the United States and China for influence on the continent. However, some African governments have reacted to AFRICOM with cautious optimism and have advised the United States to consider how AFRICOM could complement the African Union's nascent peace and

security architecture. AFRICOM's ability to address the concerns of its African partners within the context of its operations will be critical to its ability to contribute to efforts to promote peace and stability on the continent.

Background

In recent years, analysts and US policymakers have noted Africa's growing strategic importance to US interests. Among those interests are Africa's role in countering terrorism and potential threats posed by uncontrolled spaces; the growing importance of Africa's natural resources, particularly energy resources; and ongoing concern for the continent's humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, and more general challenges, such as the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS.

The US Department of Defense (DOD) organizes its command structure by dividing its activities among joint military commands based on either a geographic or a functional area of responsibility. US military focus on the continent has been divided among three commands: US European Command (EUCOM), US Central Command (CENTCOM), and US Pacific Command (PACOM).[1] The new Africa Command's area of responsibility (AOR) will include all African countries except Egypt. AFRICOM was officially launched as a sub-unified command under EUCOM on October 1, 2007, and is expected to become a standalone command by September 30, 2008. As envisioned by the Department of Defense (DOD), AFRICOM will promote US strategic objectives by working with African states and regional organizations to help strengthen regional stability and security through improved security capability and military professionalization. A key aspect of the command's mission will be its supporting role in other US government agencies' and departments' efforts on the continent. But like other combatant commands, AFRICOM will also be expected to oversee US military operations, when directed, to deter aggression and respond to crises.

The Bush Administration's motivation for the creation of AFRICOM evolved in part out of concerns about DOD's division of responsibility for

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1. EUCOM, based in Germany, has 42 African countries in its AOR; CENTCOM, based in Florida, covers eight countries in East Africa, including those that make up the Horn of Africa; and PACOM, based in Hawaii, is responsible for the islands of Comoros, Madagascar, and Mauritius.

US military engagement on the continent. Although some military officials have advocated the creation of an Africa Command for over a decade, recent crises have highlighted the challenges created by »seams« between the commands' boundaries. The Commander of EUCOM, whose current AOR includes 92 countries, testified before Congress that

»(…) the increasing strategic significance of Africa will continue to pose the greatest security stability challenge in the EUCOM AOR. The large ungoverned area in Africa, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, corruption, weak governance, and poverty that exist throughout the continent are challenges that are key factors in the security stability issues that affect every country in Africa.«[2]

His predecessor, General James Jones, pointed out in 2006 that EUCOM's staff were spending more than half their time on Africa issues, up from almost none three years prior.[3]

US Security Interests in Africa

The establishment of AFRICOM reflects an evolution in national security policymakers' perceptions of Africa. Africa was not included in the US military command structure until 1952, when several North African countries were added to the »responsibilities« of EUCOM because of their historic relationship with Europe. The rest of the continent remained outside the »responsibility« of any command until 1960, when Cold War concerns over Soviet influence in newly independent African countries led DOD to include Sub-Saharan Africa in the Atlantic Command, leaving North Africa in EUCOM. Responsibility for US military engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa was transferred in 1962 to the now defunct Strike Command, which was also responsible for operations in the Middle East and South Asia. In 1971, responsibility for engagement in Africa was dissolved, leaving Sub-Saharan Africa out of the combatant command structure until 1983. Under the Reagan Administration, US military involvement in Africa was largely dominated by Cold War priorities, and the Administration's »containment« policy led DOD to divide responsibility for African operations into its current configuration among three geographic commands.

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2. Testimony of General Bantz Craddock before the Senate Armed Services Committee, September 19, 2006.
3. Mills, Greg: »World's Biggest Military Comes to Town,« in *Business Day* (February 9, 2007).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, many US policymakers considered the US military's role on the continent to be minimal. US military involvement in Africa in the early 1990s was dominated by the deployment of US forces to Somalia. In 1995, DOD outlined its view of Africa in its US Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, asserting that »ultimately we see very little traditional strategic interest in Africa.«[4] Political and humanitarian interests guided US engagement. In 1998, following terrorist attacks on two US embassies in East Africa, the United States conducted a retaliatory attack against a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan that was at the time believed to be linked to Al Qaeda. The embassy bombings, and the retaliatory strike against Sudan, are considered by many analysts to be a turning point in US strategic policy toward the region.

In 2002, the Bush Administration outlined a more focused strategic approach toward Africa in its National Security Strategy: »In Africa, promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war, and desperate poverty. This threatens both a core value of the United States – preserving human dignity – and our strategic priority – combating global terror.« To address these challenges, the document asserted that US security strategy must focus on building indigenous security and intelligence capabilities through bilateral engagement and »coalitions of the willing.«[5] The Administration's 2006 National Security Strategy identified Africa as »a high priority of this Administration,« declaring that »our security depends upon partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile and failing states and bring ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies.«[6] US military planners and their civilian counterparts, who historically had not regularly identified issues on the African continent as strategic priorities for the US military, now engage in a wide array of activities aimed at protecting trade interests, reducing armed conflict, and countering proliferation and terrorism.

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4. The report did, however, note significant US political and humanitarian interests. DOD Office of International Security Affairs: »United States Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa« (August 1995).

5. The White House: »The National Security Strategy of the United States« (September 2002).

6. The White House: »The National Security Strategy of the United States« (March 2006).

Global Trade and Maritime Security

The potential benefit from improved commerce between Africa and the United States is a key component of US Africa policy.[7] Natural resources, particularly energy resources, dominate the products the United States imports from Africa, which now supplies the United States with roughly the same amount of crude oil as the Middle East.[8] In 2006, President Bush announced his intention to replace more than 75 percent of US oil imports from the Middle East by 2025.[9] Nigeria has been Africa's largest producer of oil, and is the fifth largest global supplier of oil to the United States. But instability in the country's Niger Delta region has reduced output periodically by as much as 25 percent. World oil prices have been affected by Nigerian political developments and by periodic attacks on pipelines and other oil facilities in the Delta. In addition to supporting development programs to that region, the United States has provided security assistance funding to help Nigeria strengthen security in the Delta's waterways.

Africa's coastlines have been highly susceptible to illegal fishing, illegal trafficking, and piracy in recent years. Nigeria's waters have recently been named the most dangerous in the world in terms of pirate attacks.[10] The inability of African governments to adequately police the region's waters has allowed criminal elements to smuggle people, drugs, and weapons and to dump hazardous waste, and has exposed maritime commerce and offshore oil production facilities to the threat of piracy and sabotage. In 2005, the Bush Administration introduced its first National Strategy for Maritime Security, identifying the freedom of the seas and the facilitation and defense of commerce as top national priorities and indicating plans to fund border and coastal security initiatives with African countries.[11]

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7. For more information, see Langton, Danielle: »U.S. Trade and Investment Relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa: The African Growth and Opportunity Act and Beyond«, CRS Report RL31772 (November 13, 2006).

8. See Authers, John: »The Short View: African Oil,« in: *Financial Times* (April 24, 2007). Data on US crude oil imports are compiled by the Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration, and are available at http://www.eia.doe.gov.

9. The White House: »President Delivers State of the Union Address« (January 31, 2006).

10. For more information, see the International Maritime Bureau, available at http://www.icc-ccs.org/imb/.

11. The White House: »The National Strategy for Maritime Security« (September 20, 2005).

US naval operations in African waters have increased in recent years, as have efforts to increase the capability of African navies to enforce maritime law. In fall 2007, US Naval Forces Europe launched the African Partnership Station (APS). Under this new initiative, a navy ship was deployed to the Gulf of Guinea for seven months to serve as a sea base of operations and a »floating schoolhouse« from which to provide assistance and training to the Gulf nations. Training focused on maritime domain awareness and law enforcement, port facilities management and security, seamanship/navigation, search and rescue, leadership, logistics, civil engineering, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response. Several European partners and US government agencies, including the Coast Guard and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), partnered with the Navy to use the Station for their own training and development activities. In the waters off the coast of East Africa, the US Navy partners with coalition partners in Coalition Task Force 150 (CTF-150), which conducts maritime security operations to protect shipping routes in the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Coalition and US naval forces have had numerous engagements with pirates in these waters.

Armed Conflicts

Conflict and instability in parts of Africa have undermined economic, social, and political development across the continent. Instability in Africa has demanded substantial humanitarian and defense resources from the international community, and the United States and other donor countries have acknowledged the potential cost-effectiveness of enhancing the capabilities of African forces to participate in peace operations. One of the most significant efforts to support and upgrade African peacekeeping capabilities is the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program (ACOTA), a State Department-led effort that has provided training to over 60.000 African peacekeepers with US military assistance since 2002.

Terrorism

Current US security policy is driven in large part by counterterrorism efforts, which the Bush Administration has identified as a top national security priority.[12] Terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998; on targets in Mombasa, Kenya in 2002; and most recently in Algeria, Mauritania, and Morocco, have highlighted the threat of terrorism in the region. US officials have emphasized the need to work with African governments to counteract the threat. Of primary concern to policymakers is the possible challenge posed by »ungoverned spaces.«[13] The Administration has linked these areas indirectly to terrorist threats, asserting:

»Regional conflicts can arise from a wide variety of causes, including poor governance, external aggression, competing claims, internal revolt, tribal rivalries, and ethnic or religious hatreds. If left unaddressed, however, these different causes lead to the same ends: failed states, humanitarian disasters, and ungoverned areas that can become safe havens for terrorists.«[14]

In 2002, the Department of State launched a program to increase the border security and counterterrorism capacities of four West African nations bordering the vast Sahara desert. In 2005, the Bush Administration announced a »follow-on« interagency program known as the Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership, or TSCTP. The Partnership is »aimed at defeating terrorist organizations by strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security forces, promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and reinforcing bilateral military ties with the United States.«[15]

TSCTP has a significant US military component, Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara (OEF-TS). Under the auspices of OEF-TS, for

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12. The White House: »The National Security Strategy of the United States« (September 2002).
13. Piombo, Jessica: »Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview,« in: *Strategic Insights,* Vol. VI, Issue 1 (January 2007). Piombo defines ungoverned spaces as »physical or non-physical area(s) where there is an absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control.«
14. The White House: »The National Security Strategy of the United States« (September 2002).
15. US State Department: »Africa Overview,« Country Reports on Terrorism (April 30, 2007).

which AFRICOM will take responsibility this fall, US forces work with their African counterparts from nine West and North African countries to improve intelligence, command and control, logistics, and border control, and to carry out joint operations against terrorist groups. These military efforts are designed to support complementary development activities led by the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). To counter the recruitment efforts of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), for example, USAID supports job creation initiatives for disadvantaged youth. Young people are a key demographic in Africa, where high unemployment rates and scarce education opportunities compound the challenges posed by a growing »youth bulge.« Such programs are coordinated with the efforts of US military personnel working in the region. Increasing emphasis has been placed on Information Operations (IO), which use information to improve the security environment and counter extremist ideology through military teams deployed to US embassies. Some observers question whether activities such as these should be a part of DOD's mandate.

On the other side of the continent, an effort initially designed to counter terrorism in the region has grown into something broader in scope. In 2002, CENTCOM developed the Combined Joint Task Force: Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) to focus on counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn region and to provide a forward presence there.[16] CJTF-HOA personnel provide training to the region's security forces on counter-terrorism, collect intelligence, serve as advisors to peace operations, and conduct activities to maintain critical maritime access to Red Sea routes. CJTF-HOA has supported humanitarian missions, including the airlift of humanitarian assistance supplies to Ethiopia and Northern Kenya.[17] CJTF-HOA also conducts civilian-military (»civ-mil«) operations throughout East Africa as part of an effort to »win hearts and minds« and enhance the long-

16. CJTF-HOA covers the land and airspace in Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Yemen, as well as the coastal waters of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean.

17. AFRICOM Commander General William Ward, in his confirmation hearing, testified that »the U.S. military is not an instrument of first resort in providing humanitarian assistance but supports civilian relief agencies (…). The U.S. military may be involved when it provides a unique service, when the civilian response is overwhelmed and civilian authorities request assistance. The USAID Office of Disaster Assistance validates all such requests for U.S. military assistance. Our role in this context will not change.«

term stability of the region. These civ-mil operations include digging wells and building and repairing schools, hospitals, and roads, and have been part of a broader CENTCOM mission to »counter the re-emergence of transnational terrorism.« Some within the development community ask whether some of these activities might be more appropriately co-ordinated by a civilian agency or non-governmental organization than by the US military.

An Evolving American Approach to Security: »Active Security«

The US foreign policy community has produced numerous studies in re-cent years that suggest that establishing and maintaining stability and security requires an array of US government agencies to work together, not only with each other, but with their foreign counterparts, in what some have referred to as a »whole-of-government« approach. Building partnership capacity is a key component of this approach, and has been at the forefront of US security strategy in regions such as Africa and Latin America in recent years. The US military contribution to this effort would fall generally into three strategic categories: civilian control and defense reform, military professionalization, and capacity building. At present, American military experts believe that no African nation poses a direct threat to the United States or is expected to; consequently, an Africa Command would focus less on preparing US forces for major combat in the region, and is expected to concentrate much of its energies and resources on training and assistance to local militaries so that they can better ensure stability and security on the continent.

The mission of AFRICOM might be most closely compared to that of US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), whose mandate, as defined by DOD, is to ensure the forward defense of the United States through secu-rity cooperation, counter-narcotics operations, humanitarian assistance, and monitoring and support for human rights initiatives in the region. Like SOUTHCOM, AFRICOM is expected to supervise an array of operations that relate to US strategic interests but are not combat-related, unlike EU-COM, CENTCOM, and PACOM, which have traditionally been more focused on preparing for potential warfighting operations. With AFRICOM's cre-ation, we see what appears to be an evolution in DOD strategy. One DOD official suggested that the US government could consider the command

a success »if it keeps American troops out of Africa for the next 50 years.«[18]

DOD, identifying instability in foreign countries as a threat to US interests, issued a directive in 2005 defining stability operations as a »core US military mission« with priority comparable to combat operations.[19] Although US armed forces have traditionally focused on »fighting and winning wars,« defense strategy is now incorporating a greater emphasis on »soft power,« aiming to head off potential conflicts by engaging earlier, through an »Active Security« approach of sustained theater security cooperation.[20] It is important to note, though, that the DOD directive identifies the military's role in stability operations as a supporting one and suggests that many of these tasks »are best performed by indigenous, foreign, or US civilian professionals. Nonetheless, US military forces shall be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when civilians cannot do so.«

While many at the State Department and USAID welcome the ability of DOD to leverage resources and to organize complex operations, there is also concern that the military may overestimate its capabilities as well as its diplomatic role in Africa, or pursue activities that are not a core part of its mandate. Some argue that the highly unequal allocation of resources between the Departments of Defense, State, and USAID hinders their ability to act as »equal partners« and could lead to the militarization of development and diplomacy.[21]

18. Comments by Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Ryan Henry at a meeting of USAID's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA) on May 23, 2007.

19. DOD defines stability operations as »military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in states and regions.« DOD, Directive 3000.05: Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations (November 28, 2005).

20. For further information on AFRICOM's »Active Security« approach, see William E. Ward and Thomas Galvin: »US Africa Command and the Principle of Active Security,« in: *Joint Forces Quarterly,* Issue 51, 4th Quarter 2008.

21. See, for example, Schirch, Lisa and Aaron Kishbaugh: »Leveraging ›3D‹ Security: From Rhetoric to Reality,« in: *Foreign Policy in Focus,* Policy Brief Vol. 11, No. 2 (November 15, 2006).

Theater Security Cooperation

The United States has trained and equipped foreign security forces through a variety of security assistance programs since the end of World War II, and, as noted above, building partnership capacity and supporting stability operations have become increasingly important components of US security strategy. According to the State Department, »failing and post-conflict states pose one of the greatest national and international security challenges of our day.«[22] The 2008 National Defense Strategy argues that »the inability of many states to police themselves effectively or to work with their neighbors to ensure regional security represents a challenge to the international system« and that »if left unchecked, such instability can spread and threaten regions of interest to the United States, our allies, and friends.« To address these challenges, the US government finances and coordinates a variety of efforts, both military and civilian, to prevent conflict or conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations in countries emerging from conflict. Security assistance initiatives, including programs to build peacekeeping capacity, counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-narcotics (CN) capabilities, border and maritime security, and military professionalization are considered to be important US government tools for ensuring or restoring stability abroad.

US security assistance to Africa, which declined at the end of the Cold War, has increased in the past decade, primarily in response to the threat of terrorism and to continuing conflict and political instability on the continent. The White House's 2006 National Security Strategy identified Africa as a »high priority« for the Administration, to be addressed by building indigenous security and intelligence capabilities through bilateral engagement and »coalitions of the willing.« The State Department has identified five countries – the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, and South Africa – as critical to stability on the continent. In its budget request for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, the Department also mentions four priorities for peace and stability in Africa: (i) ending the Darfur crisis and consolidating the peace in Southern Sudan; (ii) consolidating post-conflict democratic transitions, with a special emphasis on Liberia; (iii) preventing the spread of terrorism; and (iv) engaging Nigeria, due to its strategic importance to US energy security and regional sta-

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22. See the website of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, http://www.state.gov/s/crs/.

bility. The budget request further ranks Sudan, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola as its top African stabilization priorities.

In addition to traditional bilateral security assistance programs, the Departments of State and Defense have provided military training in Africa through several regional programs, some of them with interagency components. US forces routinely conduct a variety of bilateral and multilateral joint exercises with African militaries. US forces also conduct joint exercises as part of disaster assistance and maritime security training.

The State Department has taken the lead on two regional counter-terrorism programs, the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership and the East African Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI). Although the State Department acts as the lead agency on TSCTP, the majority of the funding is provided by DOD.[23] DOD has implemented several other regional counter-terrorism programs in Africa focused on maritime awareness and security, intelligence capability, and information sharing. Some efforts to improve information sharing networks between African countries are also intended to be used by donor and aid organizations to warn and be warned of possible crises.

Engaging African Regional Organizations

Although the United States has traditionally engaged with foreign partners primarily on a bilateral level, particularly in Africa, the US military has expressed an increasing interest in deepening its interactions with regional organizations such as the African Union. EUCOM has worked with the West African sub-regional body, ECOWAS, for several years, particularly in support of its regional peacekeeping efforts. Both EUCOM and CENTCOM have more recently increased their communications with and support for activities coordinated by the AU (these engagements are now being assumed by AFRICOM). Both ECOWAS and the AU currently host permanent US military liaisons, and AFRICOM officials have signaled their interest in posting liaisons with the other Regional Economic Communities (RECs). AFRICOM personnel have conducted training to enhance the AU's communication capabilities between AU headquarters and AU peace-

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23. In FY2007, TSCTP activities totaled USD 151.3 million; of that figure, DOD contributions included USD 113.7 million, and State contributions included USD 35.3 million.

keeping forces in the field. US officials have also committed to supporting the development of the AU's African Standby Force (ASF), a multinational peacekeeping force composed of regional brigades organized by the continent's RECs. The AU anticipates the Force being operational by 2010 with a standby capacity of 15.000 to 20.000 peacekeepers.

DOD's Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) conducts a variety of academic activities for African, American, and European military and civilian officials aimed at promoting democratic values within the security sector, countering ideological support of terrorism, and fostering regional collaboration and cooperation in the African defense and security sectors. ACSS, which is based in Washington, DC and will fall under the jurisdiction of AFRICOM, opened an annex at the US embassy in Ethiopia in 2006 and is planning future annexes elsewhere on the continent.[24] DOD initiated another multi-nation forum, the Africa Clearinghouse, in 2004 under EUCOM. The Africa Clearinghouse, modeled after EUCOM Clearinghouses for Southeast Europe and the South Caucasus, provides a venue for the United States to coordinate its actions with other nations involved in security cooperation in Africa to maximize limited resources, synchronize security assistance, and avoid duplication of efforts.

Location, Location, Location

The question of AFRICOM's location has been controversial, and it has occasionally overshadowed debate on the command's proposed mission and on US military activities in Africa. EUCOM is currently the only US combatant command whose headquarters are located outside the United States. Acknowledging a lack of sustained engagement on the continent, DOD initially announced its intention to locate AFRICOM's headquarters in Africa to give its staff a better understanding of the African context and to provide closer proximity for building relationships with African security partners. Some in Africa interpreted this to mean that the United States would be establishing a military base with permanently deployed US troops on the continent. Reports of US air strikes in Somalia and US support for Ethiopia's military intervention there have added to African concerns about US intentions. DOD officials have stressed that the location

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24. US State Department: »Africa Center for Strategic Studies Opens Annex in Ethiopia« (August 1, 2006), available at http://usinfo.state.gov.

in question would be a staff headquarters rather than a troop headquarters, and that there are no plans to establish any new military bases in Africa.[25] Several factors, including negative African reaction, challenges in finding a suitable location, and a lack of consensus within the US government on the criteria for choosing a site have led AFRICOM officials to delay answering the question of the command's permanent location. The new command will operate from Stuttgart, Germany for the foreseeable future, although the possibility of moving some staff onto the continent at a later date, possibly to regional offices collocated with interested RECs, has not been ruled out.

Addressing African Concerns

AFRICOM's commander has acknowledged the need for his staff to continue their public relations campaign to allay concerns. DOD has hosted a series of conferences with representatives from African governments to solicit input on African security concerns. West African military chiefs, following a November 2007 conference in Liberia, issued a cautious response to US government plans, declaring that AFRICOM »had not been fully understood by African countries« and requesting »further sensitization by the United States authorities at the highest political level.« ECOWAS's Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security did suggest that »everybody welcomes and supports the idea, but we want that direction to come from the heads of state.«[26]

For many Africans, poverty, crime, disease, and access to clean water represent the greatest security threats, rather than threats posed by terrorists or pirates. In addressing these African concerns the US military's security cooperation programs in Africa are often most successful when they complement or support the diplomatic and assistance efforts of US civilian government agencies. DOD conducts counter-narcotics and maritime security activities with African security forces that support US State Department programs to stem the trafficking of persons, drugs, and weapons. As part of US efforts to address the AIDS epidemic, which include

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25. The United States currently maintains a semi-permanent troop presence of approximately 1,500 at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti.

26. »West African Military Heads Want to Hear More from the United States on Africa Command,« in: *Associated Press* (November 2007).

the 45 billion US-Dollar President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), DOD has established an HIV/AIDS prevention program with African armed forces. Sustained engagement by both the US military and civilian agencies in countries such as Mozambique has helped African governments improve their ability to respond to natural disasters.

AFRICOM's commander likes to stress that the command is a »listening and learning organization.« Efforts by DOD to embed in the command staff State Department and USAID personnel with experience on the continent highlights the US military's interest in gaining a better understanding of the African environment and African interests. If successful, this interagency approach may better inform AFRICOM's goal of proactive peacetime engagement. In tandem, though, US officials must continue to closely consult with African governments to ensure that AFRICOM reflects a mutual exchange of interests and is seen to foster a closer alliance rather than serving as a means whereby the United States can dictate policy to its African »partners.«