

## AFRICOM AND THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

By Daniel Volman\*

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On 6 February 2007, President Bush announced that the United States would create a new military command for Africa, to be known as Africa Command or Africom. Throughout the Cold War and for more than a decade afterwards, the U.S. did not have a military command for Africa; instead, U.S. military activities on the African continent were conducted by three separate military commands: the European Command, which had responsibility for most of the continent; the Central Command, which oversaw Egypt and the Horn of Africa region along with the Middle East and Central Asia; and the Pacific Command, which administered military ties with Madagascar and other islands in the Indian Ocean.

Until the creation of Africom, the administration of U.S.-African military relations was conducted through three different commands. All three were primarily concerned with other regions of the world that were of great importance to the United States on their own and had only a few middle-rank staff members dedicated to Africa. This reflected the fact that Africa was chiefly viewed as a regional theater in the global Cold War, or as an adjunct to U.S.-European relations, or—as in the immediate post-Cold War period—as a region of little concern to the United States. But when the Bush administration declared that access to Africa's oil supplies would henceforth be defined as a “strategic national interest” of the United States and proclaimed that America was engaged in a Global War on Terrorism following the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, Africa's status in U.S. national security policy and military affairs rose dramatically.<sup>1</sup>

According to Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs—the highest ranking Defense Department official with principal responsibility for Africa at the Pentagon, who has supervised U.S. military policy toward Africa for the Bush administration—Africom attained the status of a sub-unified command under the European Command on 1 October 2007, and is scheduled to be fully operational as a separate unified command no later than 1 October 2008. The process of creating the new command will be conducted by a special transition team—which will include officers from both the State Department and the Defense Department—that will carry out its work in Stuttgart, Germany, in coordination with the European Command.

## **What is Africom?**

Africom will not look like traditional unified commands. In particular, there is no intention, at least at present, to assign the new command control over large military units. This is in line with ongoing efforts to reduce the presence of large numbers of American troops overseas in order to consolidate or eliminate expensive bases and bring as many troops as possible back to the United States where they will be available for deployment anywhere in the world that Washington wants to send them. Since there is no way to anticipate where troops will be sent and the Pentagon has the ability to deploy sizable forces over long distances in a very short time, Washington plans to keep as many troops as possible in the United States and send them abroad only when it judges it necessary. This, however, was exactly the intention when the Clinton and Reagan administrations created the Central Command and based it in Tampa, Florida; and now the Central Command is running two major wars in southwest Asia from its headquarters in Qatar.

Africom will also be composed of both military and civilian personnel, including officers from the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the commander of the new command will have both a military and a civilian deputy. On 10 July 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that the President had nominated four-star General William E. “Kip” Ward to be the commander of Africom. General Ward, an African-American who was commissioned into the infantry in 1971, is currently serving as the deputy commander of the European Command. Previously he served as the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (Light Infantry) in Mogadishu, Somalia during “Operation Restore Hope” in 1992-1994, commander of the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia during “Operation Joint Forge” in 2002-2003, and chief of the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation at the American Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. The novel structure of the new command reflects the fact that Africom will be charged with overseeing both traditional military activities and programs that are funded through the State Department budget.

## **What Is Africom’s Mission?**

The Bush administration has emphasized the uniqueness of this hybrid structure as evidence that the new command has only benign purposes. In the words of Theresa Whelan, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in August 2007, while “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.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Bush administration officials insist that the purpose of Africom is misunderstood.

As Theresa Whelan put it in her congressional testimony,

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.

DoD recognizes and applauds the leadership role that individual African countries 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 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.<sup>3</sup>

On closer examination, however, the difference between Africom and other commands—and the allegedly “unfounded” nature of its implications for the militarization of the continent—are not as real or genuine as the Bush administration officials would have us believe. Of course Washington has other interests in Africa besides making it into another front in its Global War on Terrorism, maintaining and extending access to energy supplies and other strategic raw materials, and competing with China and other rising economic powers for control over the continent's resources. These include helping Africans deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other emerging diseases, strengthening and assisting peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts, and responding to humanitarian disasters. But it is simply disingenuous to suggest that accomplishing these three objectives is not the main reason that Washington is now devoting so much effort and attention to the continent.

Indeed, General Ward, his military deputy Vice Admiral Robert Moeller, and the other professional military offices who will actually run Africom have made it clear in their public statements that they are under no illusion about the purpose of Africom or about its primary missions. Thus, General Ward cited America's growing dependence on African oil as a priority issue for Africom when he appeared before the House Armed Services Committee on 13 March 2008 and went on to proclaim that combating terrorism would be “Africom's number one theater-wide goal.”<sup>4</sup> He barely mentioned development, humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, or conflict resolution. And in a presentation by Vice Admiral Moeller at an Africom conference held at Fort McNair on 18 February 2008, he declared that protecting “the free flow of natural resources from Africa to the global market” was one of Africom's “guiding principles” and specifically cited “oil disruption,” “terrorism,” and the “growing influence” of China as major “challenges” to U.S. interests in Africa.<sup>5</sup>

And of course Washington would prefer that selected friendly regimes take the lead in meeting these objects, so that the United States can avoid direct military involvement in Africa, particularly at a time when the U.S. military is so deeply committed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and preparing for possible attacks on Iran. The hope that the Pentagon can build up African surrogates who can act on behalf of the United States is precisely why Washington is providing so much security assistance to these regimes and why it would like to provide even more in the future. Indeed, this is actually one of the main reasons that Africom is being created at this time.

### **Why is Africom Being Created Now?**

So why is Africom being created and why now? First, the Bush administration would like to significantly expand its security assistance programs for regimes that are willing to act as surrogates, for friendly regimes—particularly in countries with abundant oil and natural gas supplies—and for efforts to increase its options for more direct military involvement in the future; but it has had some difficulty getting the U.S. Congress and the Pentagon to provide the required funding or to devoting the necessary attention and energy to accomplish these tasks. Using a number of new security assistance channels—which are described in detail below—the Bush administration has increased the value of U.S. arms deliveries and military training programs for Africa from about \$100 million in 2001 to approximately \$600-800 million in 2008. But the administration wants Africom to spend far more money on security assistance in the coming years—as well as on U.S. military exercises in Africa; the operations of the Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa—including continuing attacks on Somalia—conducted from the U.S. base in Djibouti and base improvements at the U.S. base in Djibouti and at local military facilities elsewhere on the continent; expanded naval operations, particularly off the Gulf of Guinea; and setting up the new Africom headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany (including the creation of a Joint Intelligence Operations Center, a Theater Special Operations Command for Africa, and regional Africom offices in five African countries).

The creation of Africom will allow the White House to go to the U.S. Congress and argue that the establishment of Africom demonstrates the importance of Africa for U.S. national security and the administration's commitment to give the continent the attention that it deserves. If Africa is so important and if the administration's actions show that it really wants to do all sorts of good things for Africa, it hopes that the next president will be in a much stronger position to make a convincing case that the legislature must appropriate substantially greater amounts of money to fund the new command's operations. And within the Pentagon, the establishment of Africom as a unified command under the authority of a high-ranking officer with direct access to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff will put the new command in a much stronger position to compete with other command for resources, manpower, and influence over policymaking.

Secondly, key members of the Bush administration, a small, but growing and increasingly vocal group of legislators, and influential think tanks have become more and more alarmed by the growing efforts of China to expand its access to energy supplies and

other resources from Africa and to enhance its political and economic influence throughout the continent. These “alarmists” point to the considerable resources that China is devoting to the achievement of these goals and to the engagement of Chinese officials at the highest level—including President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, both of who have made tours of the continent and have hosted high-level meetings in Beijing with African heads of state—as evidence of a “grand strategy” on the part of China that jeopardizes U.S. national security interests and that is aimed, ultimately, at usurping the West’s position on the continent. The creation of Africom, therefore, should be seen as one element of a broad effort to develop a “grand strategy” on the part of the United States that will counter, and eventually defeat, China’s efforts. It should also be understood as a measure that is intended to demonstrate to Beijing that Washington will match China’s actions, thus serving as a warning to the Chinese leadership that they should restrain themselves or face possible consequences to their relationship with America as well as to their interests in Africa.

### **What Will Africom Do?**

So, what will Africom actually do when it becomes fully operational? Basically, it will take over the implementation of a host of military, security cooperation, and security assistance programs, which are funded through either the State Department or the Defense Department.

### **Bilateral and Multilateral Joint Training Programs and Military Exercises**

The United States provides military training to African military personnel through a wide variety of training and education programs. In addition, it conducts military exercises in Africa jointly with African troops and also with the troops of its European allies to provide training to others and also to train its own forces for possible deployment to Africa in the future. These include the following:

#### **Flintlock 2005 and 2007**

These are Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercises conducted by units of the U.S. Army Special Forces and the U.S. Army Rangers, along with contingents from other units, to provide training experience both for American troops and for the troops of African countries (small numbers of European troops are also involved in these exercises). Flintlock 2005 was held in June 2005, when more than one thousand U.S. personnel were sent to North and West Africa for counter-terrorism exercises in Algeria, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad that involved more than three thousand local service members. In April 2007, U.S. Army Special Forces went to Niger for the first part of Flintlock 2007 and in late August 2007, some 350 American troops arrived in Mali for three weeks of Flintlock 2007 exercises with forces from Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

### **Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP)**

Both Flintlock exercises were conducted as part of Operation Enduring Freedom—Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) which now links the United States with eight African countries: Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. In 2004, the TSCTP was created to replace the Pan-Sahel Counter-Terrorism Initiative, which was initiated in 2002. The TSCTP also involves smaller, regular training exercises conducted by U.S. Army Special Forces throughout the region. Although changing budgetary methodology makes it difficult to be certain, it appears that the TSCTP received some \$31 million in FY 2006, nearly \$82 million in FY 2007, and \$10 million in FY 2008.

### **East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI)**

The East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative is a training program similar to the TSCTP. Established in 2003 as a multi-year program with \$100 million in funding, the EACTI has provided training to Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

### **Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program (ACOTA)**

This program, which began operating in 2002, replaces the African Crisis Response Initiative launched in 1997 by the Clinton administration. In 2004, it became part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative. ACOTA is officially designed to provide training to African military forces to improve their ability to conduct peacekeeping operations, even if they take place in hostile environments. But since the training includes both defensive and offensive military operations, it also enhances the ability of participating forces to engage in police operations against unarmed civilians, counter-insurgency operations, and even conventional military operations against the military forces of other countries.

By FY 2007, nineteen African countries were participating in the ACOTA program (Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia). In 2004, ACOTA became a part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) and the Bush Administration's FY 2008 budget includes a request for a little more than \$40 million for ACOTA activities. The GPOI itself, a multilateral, five-year program that aims to train 75,000 troops—mostly from African countries—by 2010, will receive more than \$92 million under the president's FY 2008 budget, which also provides \$5 million to reorganize the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, \$16 million to reorganize the Liberian military, and \$41 million to help integrate the Sudan People's Liberation Army into the national army as part of the peace process for southern Sudan.

### **International Military Education and Training Program (IMET)**

The IMET program brings African military officers to military academies and other military educational institutions in the United States for professional training. Nearly all African countries participate in the program—including Libya for the first time in FY 2008—and in FY 2006 (the last year for which country figures are available—it trained 14,731 students from the African continent (excluding Egypt) at a cost of \$14.7 million.

### **U.S. Private Military Contractors in Africa**

In FY 2003, the State Department awarded five-year contracts worth \$500,000 each to DynCorp and to Pacific Architects and Engineers to train and equip the new Liberian armed forces, to train and equip the Southern Sudanese military as part of the implementation of the peace agreement for Southern Sudan, and to train and equip African troops from all over the continent as part of the GPOI and ACOTA programs. In February 2008, the State Department announced that it would be awarding more than \$1 billion worth of contracts in Africa for the next five-year period (2009-2013) to as many as four private military contractors.<sup>6</sup>

### **Foreign Military Sales Program (FMS)**

This program sells U.S. military equipment to African countries; such sales are conducted by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency of the Defense Department. The U.S. government provides loans to finance the purchase of virtually all of this equipment through the Foreign Military Financing Program (FMF), but repayment of these loans by African governments is almost always waived, so that they amount to free grants. In FY 2006, sub-Saharan African countries received a total of nearly \$14 million in FMF funding, and the Maghrebi countries of Morocco and Tunisia received almost another \$21 million; for FY 2007, the Bush administration requested nearly \$15 million for sub-Saharan Africa and \$21 million for the Morocco and Tunisia; and for FY 2008, the administration requested nearly \$8 million for sub-Saharan Africa and nearly \$6 million for the Maghreb.

### **Direct Commercial Sales Program (DCS)**

Under this program, the Office of Defense Trade Controls of the Department of State licenses the sale of police equipment (including pistols, revolvers, shotguns, rifles, and crowd control chemicals) by private U.S. companies to foreign military forces, paramilitary units, police, and other government agencies. In FY 2008, American firms are expected to deliver more than \$175 million worth of this kind of hardware to Algeria through the DCS program, along with \$2 million worth for Botswana, \$3 million worth for Kenya, \$19 million worth for Morocco, \$17 million worth for Nigeria, and \$61 million worth for South Africa. Citing the commercial nature of these sales, the State Department refuses to release any further information on these transactions to the public

on the grounds that this is “proprietary information,” i.e. this information is the private property of the companies involved.

### **African Coastal and Border Security Program (ACBS)**

This program provides specialized equipment (such as patrol vessels and vehicles, communications equipment, night vision devices, and electronic monitors and sensors) to African countries to improve their ability to patrol and defend their own coastal waters and borders from terrorist operations, smuggling, and other illicit activities. In some cases, airborne surveillance and intelligence training also may be provided. In FY 2006, the ACBS Program received nearly \$4 million in FMF funding, and Bush administration requested \$4 million in FMF funding for the program in FY 2007. No dedicated funding was requested for FY 2008, but the program may be revived in the future.

### **Excess Defense Articles Program (EDA)**

This program is designed to conduct ad hoc transfers of surplus U.S. military equipment to foreign governments. Transfers to African recipients have included the transfer of C-130 transport planes to South Africa and Botswana, trucks to Uganda, M-16 rifles to Senegal, and coastal patrol vessels to Nigeria.

### **Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program (ATA)**

The ATA program was created in 1983—under the administration of the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security—to provide training, equipment, and technology to countries all around the world to support their participation in America’s Global War on Terrorism. In FY 2006, Sub-Saharan Africa received \$9.6 million in ATA funding; for FY 2007, the administration requested \$11.8 million and for FY 2008, the request was \$11.5.

The largest ATA program in Africa is targeted at Kenya, where it helped create the Kenyan Antiterrorism Police Unit (KAPU) in 2004 to conduct anti-terrorism operations, the Joint Terrorism Task Force in 2004 to coordinate anti-terrorism activities (although the unit was disbanded by the Kenyan government in 2005, and is now training and equipping members of a multi-agency, coast guard-type unit to patrol Kenya’s coastal waters. Between 2003 and 2005 (the most recent years for which this information is available), ATA provided training both in Kenya and in the United States to 454 Kenyan police, internal security, and military officers in courses on “Preventing, Interdicting, and Investigating Acts of Terrorism,” “Crisis Response,” “Post-Blast Investigation,” “Rural Border Operation,” and “Terrorist Crime Scene Investigation.” The creation of the KAPU was financed with \$10 million in from the FY 2003 Peacekeeping Operations Appropriation for Kenya, along with \$622,000 from ATA; the ATA spent \$21 million on training for Kenya in FY 2004 \$3.5 in FY 2005, and another \$3.2 in FY 2006. The administration requested \$2.9 for FY 2007 and an additional \$5.5 in FY 2008.



The second largest ATA program in Africa at present is one used to help fund the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP). For FY 2007, the administration requested \$7.2 million in ATA funding for the TSCTP and for FY 2008 requested another \$6 million in ATA funding for FY 2008 for Africa Regional activities, most of which may be used to fund the TSCTP.

ATA programs are also being used to train and equip police, internal security, and military forces in a number of other African countries, including Tanzania (\$2.1 million in FY 2006), Mauritius (\$903,000 in FY 2006), Niger (\$905,000 in FY 2006), Chad (\$625,000 in FY 2006), Senegal (\$800,000 in FY 2006), Mali (\$564,000 in FY 2006), Liberia (\$220,000 in FY 2006), Ethiopia (\$170,000 in FY 2006). Training courses provided to these countries includes topics like “Investigation of Terrorist Organizations,” “Rural Border Operations,” “Antiterrorism Instructor Training,” “Terrorist Crime Scene Investigation,” and “Explosive Incident Countermeasures.” In Djibouti, this training helped to create the country’s National Crisis Management Unit, within the Ministry of the Interior, to respond to major national emergencies.

ATA utilizes training facilities at three International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) centers, one located in Botswana. In 2003, students from Botswana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania attended a course on “Terrorist Investigations” at the Botswana ILEA center. In 2004, students from Djibouti, Malawi, Uganda, and Zambia took the same course there. In 2005, students from Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania attended a course on “Combating Domestic and Transnational Terrorism at the Botswana ILEA center and students from Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zambia took a course on the “Police Executive Role in Combating Terrorism.”

### **Section 1206, 1207, and 902 Programs**

These programs are funded through the Defense Department budget and are named for provisions approved by Congress in the FY 2006 and FY 2007 National Defense Authorization Acts. The Section 1206 program—known as the Global Equip and Train program—was initiated in FY 2007 and permits the Pentagon—on its own initiative and with little congressional oversight—to provide training and equipment to foreign military, police, and other security forces to “combat terrorism and enhance stability.” The program received \$200 million in FY 2007 and has been authorized to spend \$300 million in FY 2008 for programs in fourteen countries, including Algeria, Chad, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sao Tome and Principe. In addition to paying for the cost of sending private military contractors to recipient countries to provide training, the fund is also being used to supply radar systems, surveillance equipment and sensors, GPS navigation devices, radios and other communications systems, computers, small boats, trucks, and trailers.

The Section 1207 program—known as the Security and Stabilization Assistance program—was also started in FY 2007. It allows the Defense Department to transfer equipment, training, and other assistance to the State Department to enhance its operations. The program received \$100 million in FY 2007 and has been authorized to spend another

\$100 million in FY 2008. It has been used in Somalia and in Trans-Saharan Africa. The Section 902 program—known as the Combatant Commanders’ Initiative Fund—was created by Congress in FY 2008. It can be used by the commanders of Africom and other combatant commands to fund their own relief and reconstruction projects, rather than relying on the State Department or the Agency for International Development to undertake these efforts. The program received \$25 million in FY 2008.

The Bush administration’s FY 2009 budget request calls for total funding for these programs to be increased to \$800 million: \$500 for the Equip and Train program, \$200 million for the Security and Stabilization Assistance program, and \$100 million for the Combatant Commanders’ Initiative Fund. Of this, an estimated \$300-\$400 million will go to provide training and equipment to military, paramilitary, and police forces in Africa.

### **Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA)**

In October 2002, the U.S. Central Command played the leading role in the creation of this joint task force that was designed to conduct naval and aerial patrols in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the eastern Indian Ocean as part of the effort to detect and counter the activities of terrorist groups in the region. Based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, long the site of a major French military base, the CJTF-HOA is made up of approximate 1,400 U.S. military personnel—primarily sailors, Marines, and Special Forces troops—that works with a multi-national naval force composed of American naval vessels along with ships from the navies of France, Italy, and Germany, and other NATO allies.

The CJTF-HOA provided intelligence to Ethiopia in support of its invasion of Somalia in January 2007 and used military facilities in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya to launch air raids and missile strikes in January and June of 2007 and May of 2008 against alleged al-Qaeda members involved in the Council of Islamic Courts in Somalia. The command authority for CJTF-HOA, currently under the U.S. Central Command, will be transferred to Africom by 2008. Under the initial five-year agreement with Djibouti, the CJTF-HOA base occupied less than a hundred acres, but under a new five-year agreement signed in 2007, the base has expanded to some five hundred acres.

In addition, the CJTF-HOA has established three permanent contingency operating locations that have been used to mount attacks on Somalia, one at the Kenyan naval base at Manda Bay and two others at Hurso and Bilate in Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup> A U.S. Navy Special Warfare Task Unit is currently based at Manda Bay, where it is providing training in anti-terrorism operations and coastal patrol missions.<sup>8</sup>

### **Joint Task Force Aztec Silence (JTFAS)**

In December 2003, the U.S. European Command created this joint task force under the commander of the U.S. Sixth Fleet (Europe) to carry out counter-terrorism operations in North and West Africa and to coordinate U.S. operations with those of countries in those regions. Specifically, JTFAS was charged with conducting surveillance operations using

the assets of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and to share information, along with intelligence collected by U.S. intelligence agencies, with local military forces. The primary assets employed in this effort are a squadron of U.S. Navy P-3 “Orion” based in Sigonella, Sicily. In March 2004, P-3 aircraft from this squadron and reportedly operating from the southern Algerian base at Tamanrasset were deployed to monitor and gather intelligence on the movements of Algerian Salafist guerrillas operating in Chad and to provide this intelligence to Chadian forces engaged in combat against the guerrillas.<sup>9</sup>

And, in a particularly ominous incident, in September 2007, an American C-130 “Hercules” cargo plane stationed in Bamako, Mali, as part of the Flintlock 2007 exercises was deployed to resupply Malian counter-insurgency units engaged in fighting with Tuareg forces and was hit by Tuareg groundfire. No U.S. personnel were injured and the plane returned safely to the capital, but the incident constitutes a major extension of the U.S. role in counter-insurgency warfare and highlights the dangers of America’s deepening involvement in the internal conflicts that persist in so many African countries.<sup>10</sup>

### **Naval Operations in the Gulf of Guinea**

Although American naval forces operating in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea and other areas along Africa’s shores are formally under the command of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, based in the Mediterranean, and other U.S. Navy commands, Africom will also help coordinate naval operations along the African coastline. As U.S. Navy Admiral Henry G. Ulrich III, the commander of U.S. Naval Forces (Europe) put it to reporters at Fort McNair in Washington, DC, in June 2007, “we hope, as they [Africom] stand up, to fold into their intentions and their planning,” and his command “will adjust, as necessary” as Africom becomes operational.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. Navy has been steadily increasing the level and pace of its operations in African waters in recent years, including the deployment of two aircraft carrier battle groups off the coast of West Africa as part of the “Summer Pulse” exercise in June 2004, when identical battle groups were sent to every ocean around the globe to demonstrate that the United States was still capable of bringing its military power to bear simultaneously in every part of the world despite its commitment to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

More recently, American naval forces led an unprecedented voyage by a NATO fleet that circumnavigated the African continent from August to September 2007. Under the command of its flagship, the guided missile cruiser U.S.S. Normandy, the ships of Standing NATO Maritime Group One—composed of warships from Denmark, Portugal, the Netherlands, Canada, Germany, and the United States—conducted what were described as “presence operations” in the Gulf of Guinea, then proceeded to South Africa, where they participated in the Amazolo exercises being held by the South African Navy, and then sailed to the waters off the coast of Somalia to conduct more “presence operations” in a region which has experienced an upsurge in piracy. Later that same month, the guided missile destroyer U.S.S. Forrest Sherman arrived off South Africa to

engage in a separate joint training exercise with the South African Navy frigate S.A.S. Amatola.

And in another significant expansion of U.S. Navy operations in Africa, the U.S.S. Fort McHenry amphibious assault ship began a six-month deployment to the Gulf of Guinea in November 2007, the first phase of the Africa Partnership Station Initiative. The U.S.S. Fort McHenry was accompanied by the High Speed Vessel HSV-2 “Swift” (the prototype for a new fast assault ship capable of operating in shallow, coastal waters) and two maritime prepositioning ships—the U.S.N.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant John P. Bobo and U.S.N.S. Lance Corporal Roy M. Wheat—from Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron 1, one of three prepositioning squadrons used to stockpile equipment at strategic locations around the world. The ships made ports of call in Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, and Angola, and trained more than 1,200 sailors and other military personnel from these countries.

During their deployment, the ships conducted three weeks of amphibious assault exercises off Monrovia, Liberia, (known as Western Africa Training Cruise 2008) in March 2008 and conducted similar exercises off of Dakar, Senegal, in April 2008 before returning to Norfolk, Virginia. Its mission was to serve as a “floating schoolhouse” to train local forces in port and oil-platform security, search-and rescue missions, and medical and humanitarian assistance. According to Admiral Ulrich, the deployment matched up perfectly with the work of the new Africa Command. “If you look at the direction that the Africa Command has been given and the purpose of standing up the Africom, you’ll see that the (Gulf of Guinea) mission is closely aligned,” he told reporters in June 2007.<sup>12</sup>

In February 2008, the U.S. 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet conducted seven days of joint maritime exercises (known as Exercise Maritime Safari 2008) at Nigeria’s Ikeja Air Force Base with the Nigerian Navy and Air Force as part of the African Partnership Station Initiative. The American forces involved included P-3 “Orion” aerial surveillance aircraft from the squadron based in Sigonella, Sicily, and elements of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet’s Maritime Patrol Operations Command Center. The highlight of the exercises was a search and rescue exercise off of Lagos.

The U.S.S. Forrest Sherman and the U.S.S. Normandy, as part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet’s Southeast Africa Task Force, made the first tour by American warships of the waters off East Africa in 2007 with visit to eight countries. The Southeast Africa Task Force made its second voyage in April 2008, when the landing ship dock U.S.S. Ashland visited Madagascar, Mauritius, and Reunion.

### **Base Access Agreements for Cooperative Security Locations and Forward Operating Sites**

Over the past few years, the Bush administration has negotiated base access agreements with the governments of Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia. Under these

agreements, the United States gains access to local military bases and other facilities so that they can be used by American forces as transit bases or as forward operating bases for combat, surveillance, and other military operations. They remain the property of the host African government and are not American bases in a legal sense, so that U.S. government officials are telling the truth—at least technically—when they deny that the United States has bases in these countries.

In addition to these publicly acknowledged base access agreements, the Pentagon was granted permission to deploy P-3 “Orion” aerial surveillance aircraft at the airfield at Tamanrasset in southern Algeria under an agreement reportedly signed in during Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s visit to Washington in July 2003.<sup>13</sup> The Brown and Root-Condor, a joint venture between a subsidiary of the American company, Halliburton, and the Algerian state-owned oil company, Sonatrach, is currently under contract to enlarge the military air bases at Tamanrasset and at Bou Saada. In December 2006, Salafist forces used an improvised mine and small arms to attack a convoy of Brown and Root-Condor employees who were returning to their hotel in the Algerian town of Bouchaoui, killing an Algerian driver and wounding nine workers, including four Britons and one American.<sup>14</sup>

### **Where Will Africom’s Headquarters Be Based?**

Over the coming year, there is one major issue related to the new command that remains to be resolved: whether and where in Africa will Africom establish a regional headquarters. A series of consultations with the governments of a number of African countries—including Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Djibouti, Nigeria, and Kenya—following the announcement of Africom found that none of them were willing to commit to hosting the new command. The public response throughout Africa was so unanimously hostile to the idea of a permanent and highly visible American military presence on the continent that no African government—except that of Liberia—was willing to take the political risk of agreeing to host the new command.

This constitutes a signal victory for civil society all across the continent and an important demonstration that the dynamics of global relations and political relations within states have changed radically since the end of the Cold War. Even in Africa—once treated as a convenient arena for manipulation and intervention by both superpowers—the United States can no longer rely on compliant regimes to do its bidding and faces growing opposition from popular political organizations and civic institutions (political parties; newspapers and other independent media; churches, mosques, and other religious institutions; trade unions; community associations; human rights organizations; environmental groups; and private business interests) that are gaining more and more power to challenge U.S. policy. Privately, however, many African rulers have assured the United States that they are still eager to collaborate with the Pentagon in less visible ways, including participating in U.S. security assistance programs and agreeing to allow U.S. forces to use local military bases in times of crisis.

As a result, the Pentagon has been forced to reconsider its plans and in June 2007 Ryan Henry, the Principal Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, told reporters that the Bush administration now intended to establish what he called “a distributed command” that would be “networked” in several countries in different regions of the continent.<sup>15</sup> Under questioning before the Senate Africa Subcommittee on 1 August 2007, Deputy Assistant Secretary Whelan said that Liberia, Botswana, Senegal, and Djibouti were among the countries that had expressed support for Africom—although only Liberia has publicly expressed a willingness to play host to Africom personnel—which suggests that at least some of these countries may eventually agree to accommodate elements of Africom’s headquarters staff.<sup>16</sup>

For the time being, therefore, Africom’s headquarters will be set up in Stuttgart, Germany. In its FY 2009 budget request, the Bush administration is asking for \$398 million to create and staff the new command. This will cover the cost of creating an Africom intelligence capacity, including a Joint Intelligence Operations Center; launching a stand-alone Theater Special Operations Command for Africom; deploying support aircraft to Africa; building a limited presence on the African continent that is expected to include the establishment of two of five regional offices projected by Africom; and conducting training, exercises, and theater security cooperation activities over the coming year.

However, the Pentagon is already experiencing enormous difficulty assembling a staff for Africom—which was originally expected to total some 1,300 personnel—because it has so few officers with the required training and expertise. Moreover, the Pentagon has had to cut back its ambitious plan to undertake more development and relief work in Africa because of growing resistance from the State Department and the Agency for International Development, as well as increasing opposition from private U.S. aid agencies. Even Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates recently conceded, “I think in some respects we probably didn’t do as good a job as we should have when we rolled out Africom.” Gates noted that Africom was created by his predecessor, Donald H. Rumsfeld, and argued that as the United States proceeded with the creation of Africom, “I don’t think we should push African governments to a place they don’t really want to go in terms of relationships.”<sup>17</sup>

### **What Is To Be Done With Africom?**

Africom became fully operational on 1 October 2008, just a month before the election of Senator Barack Obama to succeed President Bush. Thus, it will be up to president-elect Barack Obama to decide whether or not to follow the path marked out by the Bush administration—a strategy based on a determination to depend upon the use of military force in Africa and elsewhere to satisfy America’s continuing addiction to oil—or to chart a new path based on an international and multi-lateral partnership with African nations and with other countries that have a stake in the continent (including China and India) to promote sustainable economic development, democracy, and human rights in

Africa and a new global energy order based on the use of clean, safe, and renewable resources.

The best indications that we have about what course the Obama administration will pursue on Africom come from the answers that the Senator Obama gave to the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation in response to their Presidential Town Hall Meeting Africa Questionnaire in October 2007 and in the remarks made by Whitney W. Schneidman (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Clinton administration and adviser on Africa to the Obama campaign) to the Constituency for Africa's 2008 Ronald H. Brown African Affairs Series at the National Press Club on 24 September 2008.

In his response to the Sullivan Foundation questionnaire, Senator Obama maintained that Africom "should serve to coordinate and synchronize our military activities with our other strategic objectives in Africa." But he contended "there will be situations that require the United States to work with its partners in Africa to fight terrorism with lethal force." And he went on to assert "having a unified command operating in Africa will facilitate this action."<sup>18</sup>

This statement, when considered alongside Senator Obama's campaign statements on the need to intensify U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan and on the right of the United States to make unilateral military strikes into Pakistan against alleged members of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other terrorist organizations in violation of that country's sovereignty, demonstrate that he is genuinely convinced of the necessity and legitimacy of the Global War on Terrorism and, at least implicitly, of the necessity and legitimacy of recent U.S. military attacks on Somalia. Since Vice Admiral Moeller cites the attacks on Somalia as a model for the type of activity that Africom expects to conduct all across the continent,<sup>19</sup> this suggests that the Obama administration will continue to expand the entire spectrum of U.S. military operations in Africa, including increasing U.S. military involvement in the internal affairs of African countries (including both counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations) and the direct use of U.S. combat troops to intervene in African conflicts.

Therefore, according to Whitney Schneidman, the Obama administration "will create a Shared Partnership Program to build the infrastructure to deliver effective counter-terrorism training, and to create a strong foundation for coordinated action against al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Africa and elsewhere." He explained that the proposed program "will provide assistance with information sharing, operations, border security, anti-corruption programs, technology, and the targeting of terrorist financing." In particular, Schneidman argued "in the Niger Delta, we should become more engaged not only in maritime security, but in working with the Nigerian government, the European Union, the African Union, and other stakeholders to stabilize the region."<sup>20</sup>

In addition, President Obama is certain to come under pressure from business interests and lobbyists (especially from the oil companies); certain think tanks and NGOs; officials at the State Department, the Agency for International Development, and the Pentagon; and from some African governments to pursue the plan for Africom initiated by the Bush

administration. It is likely, therefore, that the Obama administration will continue the militarization of U.S. policy toward Africa unless it comes under pressure to change direction. However, members of the U.S. Congress are now beginning to give Africom the critical scrutiny it deserves and to express serious skepticism about its mission and operations. Moreover, a number of concerned organizations and individuals in the United States and in Africa—the Resist Africom Campaign—came together in August 2006 to educate the American people about Africom and to mobilize public and congressional opposition to the creation of the new command. And the Resist Africom Campaign will continue to press the Obama administration to abandon the Bush plan for Africom and pursue a policy toward Africa based on a genuine partnership with the people of Africa, multi-lateralism, democracy, human rights, and grass-roots development.<sup>21</sup>



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