

African Security and the African Command

Viewpoints on the US Role in Africa

Edited by Terry F. Buss, Joseph Adjaye, Donald Goldstein
and Louis A. Picard



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Foreword

Jerry Lanier

IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT FOR MANY YEARS MOST OF THE PEOPLE WORKING IN AFRICAN affairs at the US Department of State (State) had wanted a unified military command devoted solely to Africa. The old arrangement with the African continent, split between the European Command and Central Command—and with the Pacific Command having responsibility for most of the Indian Ocean region, including the independent states that fell under State's Africa Bureau—simply did not make sense. As the Cold War receded into the past and US interests evolved, this kind of organization became even more problematic.

The trifurcated arrangement of the command system for Africa made it very difficult, if not impossible, for the US Department of Defense (Defense) and the US military to take a coherent look at the entire African continent and to plan and allocate its resources in a coordinated fashion. The initial statements about Africa Command (AFRICOM), and its apparent multidimensional mission, evoked a range of responses from mere surprise to outright alarm, both in Africa and among some observers in the United States. There were allegations of militarization of US foreign policy, neo-colonialism in Africa, and general confusion all around. These allegations were complicated by numerous early statements about the command locating itself in Africa before this was a well-considered idea and ahead of any invitation that might come from an African country or the African Union.

So, within this context of uncertainty about its mandate, confusion about its mission, and serious skepticism about its overall meaning within US foreign and security policy, AFRICOM was considered and planned by Defense, the military, State, the US Agency for International Development

(USAID), and others for several months to put together a policy paper. It was further refined in Germany at the European Command headquarters in the spring and summer 2007. By that time it had been determined that AFRICOM's initial location would be in Stuttgart, so a team was put together to follow up on the planning that had been done in Washington. The command finally received a commander in September 2007, when General William "Kip" Ward was confirmed. General Ward then had approximately one year to prepare the command to take full responsibility for all US programs in Africa—except Egypt, which remained with Central Command because of its greater connections to the Middle East. In November 2008 AFRICOM officially broke away from its subordinate position to European Command. Thus, it had been in charge of military programs in Africa only for about 14 months as of April 2010.

A number of changes have occurred. At the outset of AFRICOM in 2007–2008, the focus of discussion was more on the why of the command: Why had it been formed? What does it mean for US policy? Both were legitimate questions at that time, and there were not always clear answers. However, the questions raised since the command has been operational over the last year, particularly from African countries, have changed. They are now what questions: What can you do for us? In what way can you help us improve security on the continent? Now, the questions and concerns that African military leaders, and African civilian leaders in general, have raised have fundamentally changed from what was certainly shock and concern to interest about working together. While today perhaps not every country in Africa would be a full supporter of AFRICOM, there has been a marked change in opinion among African political and military leaders about the command, what it means, and how it can help African countries.

This change is largely the result of General Ward's personal diplomacy among civilians and military leaders as well as that of other senior leaders in the command, including the deputy to the commander, Ambassador Mary Yates, the deputy for civil-military affairs, and the deputy to the commander for military operations, Admiral Robert Molar. As a result of these efforts, things have turned around a great deal in AFRICOM. The command's actions in Africa, among other things, have confirmed assurances that the United States plans no new bases in Africa, and they have indicated a US willingness to listen to African concerns about solving their problems.

Once African leaders had actually seen and understood the security assistance programs at the core of AFRICOM, they began to realize that it was not a threat to anyone's sovereignty and the command leadership became

welcomed in most places. Second, creation of AFRICOM has simply allowed more contact and more communication with African military leaders. Regular engagement with African leaders and to a considerable extent African academics interested in security matters has created a level of comfort that did not exist before. Third, there has been at least a modicum of qualitative improvement in the nature of US military-to-military interactions with African nations resulting from the changed nature of the command. AFRICOM was designed to consciously and deliberately bring Africa-knowledgeable civilians from a variety of government agencies and elsewhere into the command. Defense deserves credit for recognizing from the beginning that it needed expertise that resided elsewhere and then recruiting it, if it was going to be effective in its programs for Africa. It is worth reiterating that State provides one of two deputies, in Ambassador Yates, the deputy for civil-military affairs.

There is also a third career senior diplomat—the director of outreach in the command, whose function is public diplomacy, what the military refers to as information or strategic communication. In addition, USAID has three senior officers in the command. There is a senior development advisor and a director of programs from USAID, who oversees programs for the whole command; these are not just USAID programs, but involve the military working with civilians in Africa, and this person has military people reporting to him. All of the civilians in the command have military people reporting to them, and they are not just there as advisors, but embedded in the chain of command. In addition, the Commerce Department provides the director of resources; the command also has senior officers from other departments, integrated throughout the staff to place their expertise in locations where they can make the greatest contribution, including the Treasury Department, Homeland Security, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, and the director of National Intelligence. Other agencies also provide temporary personnel while they determine when and how they can create permanent positions or if they want to actually participate in AFRICOM by having someone permanently stationed there. There are a number of long-term temporary people who come in for specific reasons to work on different projects. People from the State Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization, the Agriculture Department, and US Geological Survey (USGS) come in periodically to stay in touch with the command.

These members of other agencies do not implement the policies of their home agencies or departments. They do not even speak on behalf of their parent organizations. This is done within those agencies in Washington. Rather than authority, they have influence. These people provide the

command with the insights into their parent organization's activities in Africa, and their own expertise and experiences are injected into the command's processes. This enables the command to develop its programs, activities, and missions with greater sensitivity and awareness than there would be otherwise. Currently, there is one other regional combatant command that has a similar or perhaps a more advanced kind of arrangement—SOUTHCOM, the command with authority for South America.

AFRICOM does not make or direct US foreign policy on the continent. That is the responsibility of State. It in fact does not even direct Defense policy on the continent. That is done by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Pentagon. AFRICOM merely executes Defense programs, activities, exercises, and missions in accordance with Defense policy and in support of overall US government policy from State. AFRICOM officials are not policymakers; they are policy implementers.

The Department of State's then-acting assistant secretary for Africa, Phil Carter, enumerated four US policy objectives in Africa for the twenty-first century. The first was providing security assistance programs critical to securing a peaceful African continent. According to the State Department, the US government will work with its African partners to build security capacity at three levels: at the level of the African Union, at the subregional level, and at the level of individual states.

Second, US government policy is to promote democratic systems and practices. The US government is engaged in supporting the rise of freedom and democracy on the continent. It's not enough to just end wars, but the United States also aims to move beyond post-conflict and into democracy consolidation. Third, the goal is to pursue and promote sustainable and broad-based market-led economic growth. Finally, the goal is to promote health and social development.

While these might not be the totality of the objectives of the US government in Africa, these are four critical and fairly broad areas. Objective number one is where the command would be most involved in supporting US policy: providing security assistance programs. The operative word is "support" because, while the command has a great deal of experience in security assistance, it does not decide which countries receive security assistance. That, again, is a responsibility of State. Moreover, the command does not decide what security assistance programs are needed within a country that seeks security assistance. That is the responsibility of the US ambassador and the country team working with the host government. Every program the command executes in any country on the continent is fully vetted through the US embassy in that country and designed to support the ambassador's priorities.

So, even in its area of greatest expertise—security assistance—AFRICOM does not have the final authority. In other areas such as democracy, economic growth, or development, the command seeks to be supportive, if requested by the ambassador and the host government. But AFRICOM has neither the expertise, the desire, or most important the authority to work in those areas. Consequently, AFRICOM has defined its role in specific military terms. According to the command's mission statement, "In concert with other U.S. Government agencies and international partners . . . AFRICOM . . . conducts sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and more secure African policy, African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy." To reiterate, AFRICOM is not a policymaker but is a policy implementer. The command's primary focus is on security.

In this regard, AFRICOM is very conscious of the needs of both state security and human security in African countries. State security already exists, to some degree, in most areas of Africa, but even if the states are secure, we know that many of the people residing in them are not secure. AFRICOM officials work with host governments to improve the security of the people, where possible and appropriate, and to assist in creating a measure of security where it is absent. African militaries themselves are in some cases a problem for human security and have been some of the worst abusers of human rights, guilty of both the sins of omission and commission. AFRICOM's view is that if security can be established or improved, then good governance, economic development, and responsive public institutions can have a better chance of thriving.

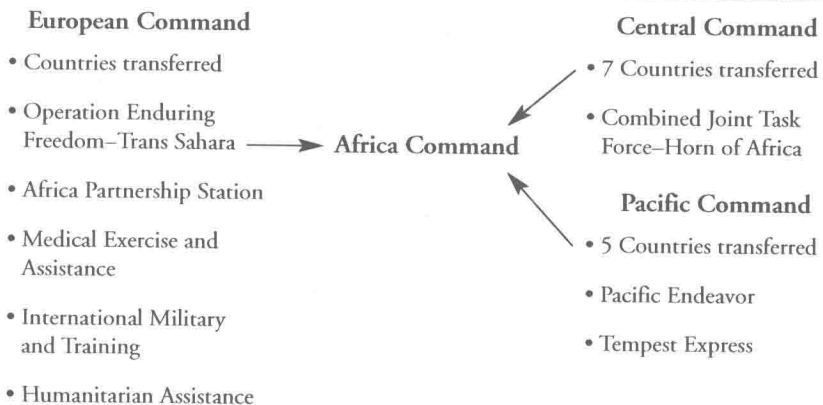
The command's core peacetime task is to provide comprehensive training to African military forces. Given that most African military forces do not face serious external threats, much of the command's effort in African countries will be built around military reform, security sector reform, professionalization of the military, and capacity-building, designed to make the recipient nation's military more responsive to its own government and to its people. Of course, this kind of training is also valuable if one has to face an external foe.

The US National Guard has partnership arrangements with seven African states, wherein National Guardsmen from the United States support some programs and some exchanges, and Africans are brought back to America to these individual states. Again, this is one of the most desired programs in AFRICOM, and in the long run it is going to be one of its most effective programs. The program gets Americans into Africa and Africans into the United States so that they can see what both countries are doing on security.

A challenge in Africa is dealing with failed or underdeveloped countries or undergoverned states. In states where the government cannot extend its reach throughout the entire nation, one can see that ungoverned areas can become safe havens for crime, including terrorism, and especially trafficking in arms, drugs, and human beings. In many cases, these are police problems and not military problems. The civilian police agencies in Africa also need to be trained and funded. There is a need to work with those countries in Africa that have police problems. AFRICOM cannot do that.

The command's primary means for supporting African militaries is US military-to-military contact within each selected African country. Security cooperation offices are attached to US embassies on the continent and are engaged full-time in this. Some of these offices are fully staffed offices of security cooperation, while others are simply defense attachés. They coordinate bilateral military activities with their host nation and are active in helping these countries improve their security capabilities. There is really no one within the command who has a better firsthand understanding of the African perspective and who can better judge the effects of programs and actions than people on the ground. That is why the command is most effective when it is field-driven by US embassies, including military attachés. Offices of security cooperation are the face of the command, and there are plans to increase their number. The United States has already added three in the first year and plans to add up to twenty-three by FY2012. These are not just defense attachés, but also provide security assistance.

Figure 1 Responsibilities Transferred to AFRICOM



In looking at specific programs, AFRICOM is still in its early days. However, perhaps the best known of these programs is the US Navy's African Partnership Station program. The program originated from a request by the nations surrounding the Gulf of Guinea, which sought US assistance to develop plans to improve their regional maritime security. The navy, working through US embassies, determines the needs of each country, and then dispatches ships to support them. This does not require a permanent base, and the ship functions as a kind of mobile university, moving from port to port, and by "university" is meant a security or defense university, to provide training and long-term collaboration between American, European, and African nations.

In addition to military-to-military training, the command has also inherited two ongoing operations, one from the European Command, the other from Central Command. Operation Enduring Freedom—Trans Sahara (OEFTS) provides military support to State's Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) by improving and building security collaboration and communication among the military of Trans Saharan nations. OEFTS strengthens counterterrorism and border security, reinforces bilateral military ties, and supports institution-building. The command, through OEFTS, provides training, equipment, assistance, and advice to these partner nations. OEFTS activities include military information-sharing, communication system operability, and joint and combined multilateral exercises. There is also a system called Flintlock that focuses on communication; it has about twenty-five African countries that will participate in that each year. Flintlock also works in building regional organizations; countering extremist ideology; building military professionalism; airlift and logistical support; and ground and aviation training and maintenance support.

The other program, Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa, is in Djibouti in eastern Africa. Its mission is to counter extremist ideology, primarily through an indirect approach: cooperative conflict prevention that builds cooperation and strengthens security in the regions through civil-military programs, including infrastructure projects and medical assistance. These are coordinated through US embassies to ensure that they support embassy objectives.

The command also provides mentors in State programs, such as support for the US government security sector reform program in Liberia. Here the command details personnel to Liberia to serve as trainers to the Liberian Armed Forces. The Liberian Army had to be re-formed and rebuilt, following its civil instability in 2003. For the command, this is a multiyear

engagement plan to support US government objectives, since this was a high priority at State for security reform in Africa.

The command also provided support on the continent to other organizations, including the United Nations. In January 2009 the command supported the UN Africa Union mission in Darfur when it provided airlift for Rwandan equipment to be shipped to Darfur. Again, this was carried out as directed by the US government in support of the United Nations. The command also has executed security assistance programs on the continent for State through foreign military sales and financing, expanded and international military education and training, and the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. The latter two are State programs executed by the military through AFRICOM. Foreign military sales or foreign military funding provides assistance for African countries to purchase nonlethal materials they need for their military.

Many short- and long-term challenges lie ahead. But, through cooperation, the US government is working to achieve—or at least has as its objective—a more stable and secure Africa. It remains too early to reach many conclusions about the command. AFRICOM, while it may have been initially the product of intelligent, if faulty, design, will ultimately be judged by its evolution. The chapters in this volume lay out the issues and prospects for the command and the debates over policy alternatives that are ongoing. The authors' views are eclectic, but combined they provide the reader with a well-rounded picture of the changing security situation in Africa.

Preface

Don Goldstein and Phil Williams

THE GENESIS OF THIS BOOK CAME FROM A CHANCE MEETING WITH MY COLLEAGUE DR. Louis A. Picard in late November 2008. At this meeting, a conversation in the hallways of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), Professor Picard mentioned that at the African Center for Strategic Studies at National Defense University, where he was on sabbatical the year before, he had worked on research on the creation of the new unified African Command and that he had researched and tried to address the ensuing debate that was going on with regard to the formation and mission of this new command. I was very interested in this subject because during my days in the US Air Force, I had worked for the Strike Command, now known as the Readiness Command, as a staff officer with the Middle East and Africa–South of the Sahara (MEAFSA) Section, and I remembered the same arguments.

After our conversation I did some quick research about the controversy over the creation and the roles and mission of the command. As the then director of the Matthew B. Ridgway Center for International Security Studies, I had been trying to reach out to other areas of international affairs besides Asia and Europe. I asked Professor Picard if he was interested in a conference on the command. Dr. Picard quickly replied, “Yes.”

Dr. Picard and I contacted Joseph Adjaye, director of African Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, and the three of us had several meetings with our staffs to set up the conference. The conference was to be a debate on Africa Security Development and the African Command. We believed that in order to present all sides we would try to bring in the best scholars and practitioners on the subject. At our meetings we decided that the conference

would include former ambassadors and State Department and government officials who served in Africa or on committees about the subject. Upon completion of the conference, we hoped to publish its proceedings. At that point we contacted Terry Buss of Carnegie Mellon University to work with us on editing these materials. The result was this book.

The conference was held March 20, 2009. More than 125 people attended, and it was a huge success. Mainly sponsored by the Matthew B. Ridgway Center for International Security Studies and the University of Pittsburgh's African Studies Program, other sponsors included Dr. Lawrence Feick, director of the Center for International Studies; Dr. John T. S. Keeler, dean of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh; Dr. Alec Stewart, dean of the University of Pittsburgh's Honors College; and Dr. George Klinzing, vice provost for research at the University of Pittsburgh. We are indebted to them for funding for this project.

A special thanks to Beverly Brizzi and Toby Taylor of the Ridgway Center staff and Macrina Chelagat Lelei of the African Studies Program, who were responsible for the logistics of the conference; to Professor Terry Buss, who helped edit, write, and organize the text of the book; and to my good friend and colleague Professor Phil Williams, now director of the Ridgway Center, who upon my retirement saw this project through to completion. Our thanks as well to several members of the African Center for Strategic Studies of the National Defense University for their interest and participation in the conference and the preparation of several of the papers.

This book is far from the final word, and as one reads it, one can see the various controversies about the command, its structure, and its mission. One might even wonder whether the command should have been created in the first place; however, this book is a start, and it is hoped that from it will come future studies. There is an old saying that good work calls not for judgment but for reflection, and if this work, as we organized it, raises more questions than it provides answers, then we feel that it has succeeded.

—*Donald M. Goldstein*

Professor Emeritus
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Former director of the
Matthew B. Ridgway Center
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—*Dr. Phil Williams*

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Center for International Studies
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Introduction

An Overview of the Debates

Louis A. Picard and Terry F. Buss

THE NEW AFRICA COMMAND IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE A UNIFIED FOCUS FOR US SECURITY concerns and defense activities in Africa and to enhance the interagency nature of security cooperation on the continent by emphasizing diplomatic and development efforts to foster human security (the so-called three Ds of development, diplomacy, and defense). The command is also intended to increase the security of African countries. Conceptually, this arrangement should be mutually beneficial to the US and African countries.

For this initiative to be effective, however, it requires better understanding and strong partnership. In spite of a number of efforts to explain this initiative, a number of concerns and misconceptions persist among African military and civilian leaders, and there has been strong opposition to AFRICOM on the continent. These range from realistic security concerns to broad theories about international collusion against Africa, including a mistrust of US intentions and sometimes erroneous characterizations.

African resistance to the formation of AFRICOM should be seen within the context of the priorities of the Obama administration as it came into power in January 2009. This book is intended to complement other ongoing public debates and policy-building efforts by providing detailed insights from military, socioeconomic, government, civil society, and regional/subregional perspectives.

The chapters in this book provide the reader with an opportunity to examine the debates about African security in the twenty-first century. Although it is early in the life of AFRICOM, the contributors below take on the important issues that US policymakers and their African counterparts must face as the command matures.

Feleke, Picard, and Buss in Chapter 1 look first at the legacy of European colonialism and the Cold War that provides the context for security concerns and challenges in contemporary Africa. Next, the chapter reviews UN peacekeeping efforts that provide much of what passes for security in Africa, and examines the African state, regional organizations, and pan-African initiatives that constitute African responses to their own security issues. After examining the role of the United States in these affairs, the chapter presents an overview of the new AFRICOM and its prospects for promoting security on the continent.

Lawrence Korb, in Chapter 2, provides a background to AFRICOM in a discussion of the merger of diplomacy, development, and defense (the three Ds) in US policy, asking whether the balance among them is appropriate to address security in Africa. After arguing that the three Ds are out of balance, he offers a prescription for how the federal budget might be reconfigured to bring these policies into balance. A rebalancing of the three Ds would, of course, have major implications for how AFRICOM goes about accomplishing its mission.

Part 2 of this book offers an overview of the debates about the African Command in three chapters expressing different perspectives. J. Peter Pham, in Chapter 3, suggests several reasons that AFRICOM's establishment makes strategic sense for the United States at this historical moment and that explicitly articulating a realist policy based on these considerations, rather than avoiding the discussion altogether, is the most likely path for achieving understanding of—if not necessarily always buy-in to—American political and security objectives in Africa, the ends of which are often complementary to the goals that Africans have set. America's interests in Africa include preventing the continent's poorly governed spaces from being exploited by terrorists, protecting access to hydrocarbons and other strategic resources that Africa has in abundance, promoting the integration of African nations into the global economy, and empowering Africans to cope with humanitarian and other security and stability challenges. The notion that a unified combatant command could further these interests is itself predicated upon certain assumptions about the framework examined in detail. Finally, the chapter concludes with a sketch of an American grand strategy in Africa.

Joseph Adjaye, in Chapter 4, looks at AFRICOM in the context of what he argues are commonly held African views on African security and the United States. He argues that the United States and other powers have always put their own interests above those of Africans. The United States is likely more interested in oil and counterterrorism than in African issues.