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AFRICA COMMAND: AN INTERAGENCY SOLUTION AND SOF'S ROLE

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of the paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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10 October 2006

ABSTRACT

The continent of Africa has been plagued for decades with problems of poverty, poor governance, genocide, and regional conflicts. In the post-9/11 world we live in, the United States can no longer afford to ignore the continent, not only because of terrorism concerns, but also because of our need for secure energy sources. With the impending announcement of a new combatant command for Africa, the U.S. Government should utilize this unique opportunity to enhance its ability to integrate all the instruments of national power at the regional level. In order to accomplish this, the structure of the new combatant command for Africa must blend civil-military leadership at all levels to create a body which can truly integrate the U.S. Government's efforts on the continent. Additionally, in analyzing the need for U.S. Military personnel to support his command's mission, the new commander should rely on special operation forces as the primary effort because of their expert capabilities, holistic approach, and pre-established command and control relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

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.

--President George W. Bush
National Security Strategy

In President Bush's National Security Strategy (NSS), he succinctly sums up the difficulties which Africa confronts and why the United States' future security and its struggle against trans-national terrorism share common ground. Although the U.S. Government understands the strategic importance of Africa in their strategy documents, many argue that the U.S. Government's actions have not lived up to their words. Instead of efforts at long term development, the administration has primarily emphasized humanitarian concerns on the continent.¹ Prior to 9/11 this may have been acceptable, but since that day and the resulting increased emphasis on not only fighting, but also preventing terrorism, the United States finds itself increasingly concerned with the state of affairs in Africa. Additionally, Africa plays an increasingly important role in the United States' need to find new sources for its insatiable appetite for natural resources.

Recently, multiple news articles describe an impending announcement of a single geographic combatant commander (GCC) for Africa.² Currently, three GCCs have responsibility for Africa: U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), and U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM). The supporters of creating a single combatant command with overall responsibility for the whole of Africa believe its visibility within the Department of Defense (DOD) will increase and thus enhance the U.S. Government's efforts at improving security conditions on the continent. But simply creating a new command will not maximize the opportunity created nor solve the problems of Africa.

Recently, many high level members of the U.S. Government have discussed the need for greater interagency integration at all levels of government to focus the nation's efforts on a given problem. The creation of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM)¹, focused solely on Africa, a region composed of numerous countries with comprehensive needs much greater than the need for purely military assistance, requires a command which does more than just de-conflict and coordinate efforts with its interagency partners. Instead, the new command needs to *integrate* the disparate agencies involved, each with their own mission and culture. Some authors have recently written concerning the topic of improving the interagency process at the theater level, recommending numerous ways to increase the synergy of the U.S. Government's efforts abroad. Although they differ on the specifics of how to improve the process, they all agree that because of globalization and the global war on terror (GWOT), the GCCs must empower the interagency process to work effectively to support their overall goals in the region.³

Therefore, the U.S. Military's establishment of USAFRICOM requires a command which integrates seamlessly with the other departments of the U.S. Government operating in the region to efficiently utilize *all* instruments of national power to support the president's NSS in Africa. Additionally, because of their unique capabilities and small footprint, the military's primary effort on the continent should maximize the use of special operations forces (SOF) to improve the internal defense and development of the African countries.

Because of recent news reports on the impending announcement of USAFRICOM, this paper assumes the president will establish the new command and does not attempt to convince the reader why there should be a single GCC for Africa. Additionally, because of

¹ Officially, neither the creation nor the naming of a new combatant command for Africa has occurred. Therefore, USAFRICOM will be used throughout this paper to identify the new command.

the limited length of this paper, specific recommendations on how to organize the GCC will not be discussed; instead previously published efforts in this arena will be referenced and suggested.

WHY AFRICA?

NATURAL RESOURCES

Although many Americans view Africa as an area of little importance in the era of globalization because of its widespread poverty and its low gross domestic product per capita, the major industrialized nations of the world increasingly view the continent as a strategically important location in the world. China, India, Europe, and the United States look towards the area as a current source and a growing future source of natural resources, especially with the recent expense of oil topping \$70 per barrel.

Countries rich in oil reserves include Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Namibia. The largest current exporters of oil to the United States from the continent include the West African countries of Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea.⁴ Multi-national oil exploration companies have spent \$50 billion in recent years exploring, drilling, and pumping oil from this region of Africa and they expect to spend an additional \$30 billion in the coming five years. This significant investment should result in an increase of the percent of oil which Africa produces for the world market from its current 15 percent to an estimated 20 percent by 2010.⁵ If estimates hold, in a decade, the United States will import as much oil from Africa as it does from the Middle East, nearly 25 percent of its requirements.⁶ Additionally, shorter lines of communication for oil extracted from the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa than from the Middle East require less

effort to ensure the safe transport of this vital natural resource. In East Africa, especially Sudan, China has increased its efforts at shoring up its long term access to oil. But China's thirst for oil does not only involve East African countries, it also has invested money into countries in the Gulf of Guinea, such as Nigeria, to secure additional sources of oil for its continuing rapid growth.⁷

Although oil is currently the largest export, Africa is also rich in natural gas, timber, diamonds, copper and other natural resources which the world economy requires to maintain its continued growth. Once again, the largest players involved in the extraction of these natural resources from the continent include the world's largest economies: Europe, the United States, India, and China.⁸

In order to continue to attract foreign investment and maintain the flow of oil, the internal stability and institutions within the countries must support a framework which provides stability, and thus safety, for multi-national corporation's long term investments to extract natural resources from the region. If internal struggles, regional conflicts, or government collapses occur, the predictions of a significant increase of exports will not materialize. Therefore, the U.S. Government's policy in Africa must balance its growing energy needs with its continued attempts to promote democratic governance, internal stability, and economic growth in order to ensure the long term energy security of the United States.

TERRORISM

Although acts of terrorism committed on the continent over the last 15 years linked to Muslim terrorists have seen a marked increase, not since 9/11 has the United States attention been focused squarely on the rise of militant Islam in the region. After the U.S. Embassy

bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the United States increased its cooperation on counterterrorism with Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, and even Sudan, but these efforts were limited in nature.⁹

Shortly after 9/11 and the subsequent routing of al-Qaeda from Afghanistan, many experts predicted that terrorists would attempt to set up operations in the Horn of Africa, whose countries include Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. These experts predicted a migration because the Horn of Africa is associated with weak or failing states, poverty and corruption; an environment where a terrorist organization may seek to establish itself. To counter this, the United States and its coalition partners established the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in early 2002 based in Djibouti. This effort continues today and involves nearly 1,600 military members with a mission to “deter, preempt, and disable terrorist threats emanating principally from Somalia, Kenya, and Yemen.”¹⁰ The command does this primarily through humanitarian efforts by building schools and digging wells, strengthening governmental institutions, and conducting training with security and military forces in the region. In a recent interview, General Abizaid, commander, USCENTCOM, stated that he sees the work done by CJTF-HOA as a “blueprint” for future efforts. “This investment [CJTF-HOA] is one of the best our country has ever made. Ultimately, globalization either works or it doesn’t work. If you want to make it work, you’ve got to engage in the places where it’s most difficult and this is precisely one of those places.”¹¹

On the continent of Africa, the Muslim population accounts for roughly 40 percent of the total population. In Nigeria, Muslims account for nearly one-half of the population of 133 million people.¹² As the United States and its allies fight a global insurgency led by al-

Qaeda which calls for re-establishment of the historic caliphate to include large portions of northern Africa, the United States has initiated numerous programs to limit the spread of terrorists and their impact on this region of the world. But in their article titled “The Terrorist Threat in Africa,” Mr. Lyman, a former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria and South Africa, and Mr. Morrison, a former Department of State policy planner for Africa, argue that although the United States has made a significant effort in East Africa, its efforts on the rest of the continent have been lacking and do not utilize a coherent approach which address the underlying reasons for a growing Muslim extremism or general criminal lawlessness.¹³

Not only are the conditions in Africa rife for terrorist safe-havens, but estimates say 25 percent of the foreign terrorists the United States faces in Iraq come from African countries.¹⁴ After these terrorists learn their trade in Iraq, some of them eventually return to their native African countries to continue their fight in the global jihad as explained by General Jones, commander, USEUCOM, in a pentagon news conference. “We already have evidence of fighters going from Africa, spending some time in Iraq and Afghanistan, and then migrating back to Africa.”¹⁵ Therefore, although Iraq and Afghanistan currently comprise the central focus of the GWOT and the terrorists involved in the fight there have gained significant amounts of operational experience, eventually they will return to their home countries and spread the reach of al-Qaeda’s global jihad.

As late as 1995, a U.S. report published by the Office of International Security Affairs, stated “America’s security interests in Africa are very limited. . . . Ultimately we see very little traditional strategic interests in Africa.”¹⁶ Since the events of 9/11, the United States can no longer afford to consider Africa an area of “limited traditional strategic interest”, it must confront the problems Africa faces in order to prevent future humanitarian

crises, ensure the continued smooth flow of oil and other natural resources from the continent, and contain and prevent the spread of terrorist networks on the continent.

WHY AN INTERAGENCY APPROACH?

“American interests and American principles, therefore, lead in the same direction: we will work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace, and growing prosperity. Together with our European allies, we must help strengthen Africa’s fragile states, help build indigenous capability to secure porous borders, and help build up the law enforcement and intelligence infrastructure to deny havens for terrorists.”

--President George W. Bush
National Security Strategy

In the NSS, President Bush identifies the problems Africa faces and his solutions to fix them including fragile or failing states that threaten the stability needed to provide for economic growth and provide safe havens for terrorists to operate within. In fact, in a recent ranking of failed states produced by *Foreign Policy*, Sudan topped the list as the most failing state and prior to 9/11, if there had been a ranking produced, Afghanistan would have surely been near the top. What do both these countries have in common? Osama Bin Laden utilized both countries as a base of operations for his al-Qaeda terrorist network. Although a country may rank high on the list of failing states and not become a terrorist breeding ground, the fact that it resides on the list means it has the potential to be utilized by terrorists as a base of operations or recruiting grounds for future terrorists. But failed states introduce more problems than just terrorism, as Susan Rice, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, stated in a 2003 article. “Such [failed and failing] states can and often do serve as safe havens and staging grounds for terrorist organizations. Failed states create environments that spur wider regional conflicts

with significant economic and security costs to neighboring states. They pose serious challenges to U.S. interests in terms of refugee flows, trafficking in illicit goods, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, and lost trade and investment opportunities.”¹⁷ Taking a closer look at the *Foreign Policy* rankings reveals the top three, and six of the top ten states, are located on the continent of Africa. Therefore, any U.S. policy which attempts to deal with the security situation presented by Africa, must acknowledge, as the president’s NSS does, the importance of failing states and their effect not only on the relatively prosperous countries on the continent, but also their potential for future intervention by the United States either in a humanitarian role or in a security role.

Military force alone cannot win the campaign against a failed state as the current situations in Iraq and Afghanistan have proven. Therefore, the GCCs must not only look to the element of national power they primarily possess, the military, but they must understand and utilize their interagency and non-governmental organizations partners to develop solutions to attain their goals of protecting the security of the United States through the other instruments of national power: diplomatic, information, and economic. In order to win the GWOT, Dr. Kilcullen, an expert on counterinsurgency and irregular warfare, describes the need for a coherent-simultaneous strategy conducted on three lines of operation: security, diplomatic, and economic.¹⁸ “Security is *not* the foundation for economic and political progress (as some commanders and political leaders argue). Nor does security depend on political and economic progress (as others assert). Rather, all three pillars must be developed in parallel and kept in balance, while being firmly grounded in an effective information campaign.”¹⁹

When establishing a new GCC for Africa, how will it need to interact with its interagency partners to develop a strategy and monitor its implementation? The latest Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 utilizes the nine traditional principles of war and adds three additional ones, to create the twelve principles of joint operations.²⁰ One of the principles included in the twelve is unity of command. Although this term clearly resonates with its military audience, even joint doctrine realizes this will not always be possible. “During multinational operations and interagency coordination, unity of command may not be possible, but the requirement for unity of effort becomes paramount. Unity of effort – coordination through cooperation and common interests – is an essential component to unity of command.”²¹

But where does unity of effort currently get coordinated? At the national level, the National Security Council (NSC) has the responsibility to coordinate the efforts of the various government agencies. “The National Security Council is the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials . . . The Council also serves as the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies.”²² At the individual country level, the U.S. Ambassador’s country team, consisting of the senior representative of each U.S. department or agency operating in the country provides the central location for interagency coordination.²³

But no one body focused at the regional level has the authority or charter to coordinate the instruments of national power to support the president’s NSS. Joint doctrine establishes the GCC as the focal point to coordinate the military’s interagency efforts and to facilitate this coordination created Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) at each combatant command.²⁴ Some have extolled the virtues of Joint Interagency Task Forces as

the solution, but these organizations function as well as they do because of their limited scope and mission, focused at the joint task force level, not the broad range of missions required at the theater level.

So what format should a new combatant command take, with regional responsibility for Africa and a primary mission not focused on the upper end of the range of military operations, major operations or campaigns, but more focused on the lower end, crisis response and limited contingency operations? It should have a framework similar to that suggested by LTC Christopher Naler in his recently published work “Are We Ready for an Interagency Combatant Command?” He describes how the makeup of the “Interagency Combatant Command” transforms from an organization composed of only military personnel, into one which has combined civil-military leadership at all levels.²⁵ The command would have inherent to its staff the expertise to utilize all instruments of national power more effectively and efficiently, so vital because of the limited resources available.

The new command goes well beyond the current GCC structure and truly integrates the military’s interagency partners within the structure of the leadership and decision making process at the GCC; therefore, providing the link between the National Security Strategy and the country team. Although a radical departure from the current GCC roles and responsibilities, as President Bush said in his 2002 National Security Strategy and re-iterated in his 2006 National Security Strategy, “The major institutions of American national security were designed in a different era to meet different challenges. They must be reformed.”²⁶ The U.S. Government should utilize this rare opportunity to transform the regional level of the interagency process, especially for an area where the need for an efficient and effective interagency approach is so vital to mission success.

WHY SOF?

After the establishment of a GCC responsible for Africa, one of the initial responsibilities of the command will involve the conduct of mission analysis to determine what their mission involves and how best to accomplish it. As discussed previously, the command will need to work with its interagency partners to support the goals laid out in the president's NSS. While deciding how to organize the new command, it will simultaneously face the decision of how best to utilize the U.S. Military to accomplish its assigned mission.

The new commander will need to create a strategy to best utilize the limited forces available to it because of the ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan where over 160,000 U.S. forces are continuously deployed. The president consistently re-iterates that the country's primary goal is to defeat terrorism and that Iraq and Afghanistan are the central efforts in the GWOT. General Jones, commander, USEUCOM, understands this, "It is clear that the primary fronts in the war on terror are currently in Afghanistan and Iraq."²⁷ Therefore, the new command's efforts will, in the near term, require the judicious use of military forces.

In the northern portion of Africa, the United States has initiated its latest efforts on the continent, the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which follows the Pan Sahel Initiative initiated shortly after 9/11.²⁸ USEUCOM, currently with responsibility for most of Africa except for the Horn of Africa, Egypt, and the island nations off the east coast, leads the latest military efforts on the continent called Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS). The program involves, "a regional and preventive approach to combat terrorism and enhance partner nation border security and response in Trans Sahara Africa."²⁹

The countries included in TSCTI include Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, and Tunisia. Many of these countries exist on the fault line between Muslim and Christian parts of Africa and therefore have an increased emphasis placed on them because of the GWOT. The June 2005 Operation FLINTLOCK kicked off OEF-TS and involved about 1,000 U.S. SOF members training over 3,000 African military members in border security operations over a two week period.³⁰ This operation displays the ability of SOF to accomplish the combatant commander's objectives with a small footprint and a short timeline.

The goals of OEF-TS fall squarely within DOD's definition of foreign internal defense (FID) which JP 1-02 defines as, "Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency."³¹ JP 3-07.1, joint doctrine for FID, emphasizes the critical role of civil-military operations and psychological operations in successful FID operations.³² Additionally, to conduct FID effectively, the military must work with its interagency partners to successfully strengthen the target country as part of the wider U.S. Government efforts at internal defense and development (IDAD).³³

U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), responsible for the training, equipping, and deploying of SOF, has unique forces able to conduct operations globally. USSOCOM's 2006 posture statement states, "It is Special Operation's unique, but less visible, ability to establish the conditions to counter and defeat terrorism through Unconventional Warfare, Psychological Operations, Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, and Civil Affairs that will become increasingly vital to our long-term

success in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).”³⁴ Additionally, in 2003 USSOCOM gained responsibility as the DOD’s lead for planning and synchronizing the GWOT.

Generally older and more culturally aware than their conventional counterparts, SOF operators allow the combatant commander to utilize a small number of forces to create a large impact.³⁵ Because the primary effort in the GWOT does not include Africa, OEF-TS’s success resides in its ability to act as a force multiplier for the host nation’s institutions ability to improve the stability and development within their countries. Although this appears to hinder the ability of the United States to successfully support our allies, often times, a limited approach has more success than a full-scale involvement. For example, our successful 12 year effort in quelling El Salvador’s insurgency involved a maximum of 55 personnel at any one time.³⁶

The previous commander of Special Operations Command Europe, General Csrnko said in an interview with *Special Operations Technology*, “Our SOF core competencies of unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense are well-suited for building partnership capabilities . . .”³⁷ He went on to say, “We must always consider what the adversary is doing and saying in the region and counter it with the most effective tool we have—in many cases, this is CA and PSYOP.”³⁸ SOF includes the forces required to complete the mission: Special Forces, Navy SEALs, Civil Affairs (CA), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Information Operations (IO), Intelligence, and the Foreign Military Training Unit (FMTU).³⁹ Additionally, when the GCC chooses to utilize SOF, all the various units have habitual relationships and deploy under the command and control of the Theater Special Operations Commander, thereby greatly simplifying the employment of these forces across the range of military operations.

Although USSOCOM has the majority of the required capabilities available to it, by no means does this mean they are self sufficient and not in need of additional support to complete the mission for USAFRICOM. SOF does not possess, or may, but in limited amounts, certain capabilities vital to the successful mission of preventing terrorism and encouraging economic growth on the continent. For example, the effort to train the navies of Africa to secure the vital sea lines of communication for the safe transport of oil and other natural resources from the Gulf of Guinea require the involvement of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard. Although USSOCOM has Special Boat Units which possess the capability to train the Nigerians to patrol the Niger River delta, the U.S. Navy not only has this capability with its newly formed River Squadrons, but it also has the ability to train the Nigerian Navy to secure the seas beyond their littoral waters with its surface fleet. An additional example, SOF does not possess the manpower necessary to conduct large scale humanitarian efforts; therefore, not only will the requirement exist for the continued involvement of its interagency partners and non-governmental organizations, but also the requirement exists for the involvement of conventional U.S. Military ground forces to support large-scale relief efforts.

Therefore, the new GCC for Africa must understand that although SOF should be the “main effort”, they cannot be the only force the commander utilizes to support his efforts because similar to the rest of the U.S. Military, SOF is stretched thin. Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council On Foreign Relations states, “No question Iraq and Afghanistan have been sucking in special forces [SOF] from all over the world, including those needed elsewhere.”⁴⁰ Although the deployments of SOF to USCENTCOM remain large, a dedicated force which USSOCOM can provide to the FID effort includes their newly established Foreign Military Training Units. These units fall under the newest component of

USSOCOM, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command.⁴¹ Eventually the command will consist of 24 teams with 11 members each able to deploy independently, “creating professional advisor teams to develop foreign militaries utilizing a holistic, long-term approach. . . . Thus, instead of directly going after these terrorist elements, FMTU seeks to utilize the ‘indirect approach’ of building others’ capabilities”⁴² In fact, three of the first four formed and certified FMTUs are currently deployed to North Africa conducting FID training.⁴³

The newly formed FMTUs, combined with the ability to surge additional SOF personnel such as in Operation FLINTLOCK, provides USAFRICOM with the nucleus to form his engagement strategy around. Although a rather small force to affect such a large region, because of their unique abilities, the small number of SOF personnel will have a much larger impact than expected. As General Brown, commander USSOCOM says “Our new paradigm must be to apply the right force, at the right place, at the right time, against the adversary.”⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

The United States can no longer afford to ignore the difficulties Africa faces on a daily basis to feed its people, maintain stability, and provide for economic growth. Since the early 1990’s until today, Muslim extremism has continued to rise on the continent and Africa has provided a base of operations for terrorist attacks against the United States. The U.S. Government must confront the difficult issues it faces in Africa directly and with renewed vigor. The efforts of the military alone conducting counterterrorist operations and training

will not prevent the continued spread of terrorist ideologies. Only through the full efforts of all departments of the government can the United States begin to solve the myriad of problems Africa faces: abject poverty, dictators, internal and external conflicts, and limited economic growth.

When creating the new combatant command for Africa, the DOD and its interagency partners should develop an organization which can translate the national policy into a coherent policy which the individual country teams at each U.S. Embassy in the region can then utilize to create their own strategies. Only through a truly integrated effort will the disparate U.S. Government agencies involved in Africa effectively engage non-governmental organizations, individual nations and regional entities in a harmonious effort.

In order to effectively utilize the limited resources available for USAFRICOM to accomplish its mission and in light of the desire to maintain a limited footprint on the continent, the commander should utilize SOF as the main effort. USSOCOM has at its disposable many of the key forces vital to a successful campaign who have prior experience working together and who have an established command and control structure to operate in challenging and austere environments. Although SOF is not a panacea for all problems USAFRICOM will face, it does provide the largest “bang for the buck” while the majority of deployed U.S. forces conduct counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Modifying General Brown’s statement to highlight the approach the USAFRICOM commander should take, the paradigm must be to apply SOF (the right force), in Africa (the right place), now (at the right time), against the problems of Africa (adversary).

NOTES

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the selected bibliography)

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