

Expeditionary Strike Group and the Gulf of Guinea

CSC 2005

Subject Area Strategic Issues

### **Executive Summary**

**Title:** *Expeditionary Strike Group and the Gulf of Guinea*

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**Thesis:** The Global War on Terror effort in Africa has focused mainly on the northeast in the Horn of Africa, but increased attention should be given to West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. The region has many characteristics that make it an appealing venue to terrorist organizations, but it also has emerging strategic value to the U.S., as it will be a major producer of oil in the near future. For these reasons, the U.S. will increase its presence in the Gulf of Guinea, and the most suitable and likely force to operate there is the Expeditionary Strike Group.

**Discussion:** There are numerous ongoing issues in the Gulf of Guinea that are important to the economic and security interests of the U.S. It is anticipated that 25 percent of the oil supplied to the U.S. in 2015 will come from the Gulf of Guinea. U.S. oil companies are currently spending billions of dollars on oil infrastructure in the region. However, widespread poverty, ethnic strife and systemic government corruption have destabilized the region and subsequently pose a threat to its oil industry. These threats have historically materialized in the form of infrastructure destruction, piracy or kidnapping, but there is increasing concern that regional conditions, coupled with the lucrative targets presented by American financed oil facilities, will draw terrorists into the region.

**Conclusion:** The conflicts in the Gulf of Guinea are important to U.S. interests and values. These conflicts are numerous and complex and require external attention to resolve, as they are beyond the power of their government leaders to resolve. As such, persistent U.S. military presence in the region could have a stabilizing effect. The ESG's mobility and full spectrum operational capabilities in the littorals make it the most suitable and likely force to conduct operations in the region.

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# ***Table of Contents***

|                                         | <i>Page</i> |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
| Disclaimer.....                         | i           |
| Executive Summary.....                  | ii          |
| Table of Contents.....                  | iii         |
| List of Illustrations.....              | iv          |
| List of Tables.....                     | v           |
| Introduction.....                       | 1           |
| Gulf of Guinea Geography.....           | 2           |
| Regional History.....                   | 4           |
| Political Background.....               | 8           |
| Importance of Gulf of Guinea Oil.....   | 9           |
| Oilfield Security.....                  | 13          |
| Government Greed.....                   | 14          |
| Poverty.....                            | 16          |
| Sabotage and Piracy.....                | 19          |
| Concerns Over Terrorism.....            | 20          |
| The ESG.....                            | 23          |
| Maritime Security Operations.....       | 26          |
| Military Operations Other than War..... | 30          |
| Strike.....                             | 32          |
| Conclusion.....                         | 33          |
| Bibliography.....                       | 35          |

## ***Illustrations***

|                                             | <i>Page</i> |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Figure 1. Map of West Africa                | 2           |
| Figure 2. 1892 Map of West African Colonies | 6           |

## ***Tables***

|                                    | <i>Page</i> |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Figure 1. Economic Data            | 17          |
| Figure 2. ESG Mission Capabilities | 25          |

## **Expeditionary Strike Group and the Gulf of Guinea**

Africa is the world's most war-plagued continent. Armed conflict, often sparked by small rebel groups capable of destabilizing weak governments, undermines much of what United States policy aims to achieve in Africa, including promoting economic development, combating infectious diseases, and conserving natural resources. Security is an essential foundation for Africa's development. With the development of terrorist sanctuaries in Africa, we have an increasing stake in the continent's peace and stability.<sup>1</sup>

Congressman Ed Royce  
Africa Subcommittee Chairman

The U.S. is at a crossroads in its policy towards Africa. It has long been recognized that the continent is war-torn and ravaged by disease, famine, illiteracy, war, and bad government, and that many African states are lawless terrorist breeding grounds. It is also recognized that Africa is abundantly rich in natural resources and could make a significant contribution to the world economy, and to its own well-being. Until recently these issues have been viewed within their respective lanes, with limited consideration for their effect on one another, but the Global War On Terrorism (GWOT) has drawn new focus on the region, revealing how inextricably linked these issues are to one another.

The GWOT effort in Africa has concentrated mainly on the northeast in the Horn of Africa (HOA), but increased attention and effort should be given to West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. The states along the Gulf of Guinea share many of the same problems that other states in Africa do, but although unstable, are not yet terrorist strongholds. The region also has tremendous petroleum resources, making it not only a

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Royce, statement before the Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, "Peacekeeping in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities," 8 October 2004, 1.

significant interest in the U.S. National Security Strategy but the National Energy Strategy as well. Likewise, it is an appealing venue to terrorists, and will draw them into the region. This development will force the U.S. to increase its presence in the Gulf of Guinea, and the most suitable and likely force to operate there is the Expeditionary Strike Group, with its substantial and varied capabilities that range from offensive military action to humanitarian relief. As we shall see, this proven force has great applicability to developing circumstances in the Gulf of Guinea.

### Gulf of Guinea

For the purposes of this paper the Gulf of Guinea is defined as the thirteen states along Africa's west coast, between Sierra Leone and Angola.<sup>2</sup> This also includes the tiny island states of São Tomé and Príncipe, approximately 200 miles off the coast.



CIA World Fact Book, November 2004.

<sup>2</sup> African states as of 2004.

## **Regional History**

The Gulf of Guinea states have a very old and complicated history that dates back to the earliest records of man. The region has always had an abundance of natural and human resources that influenced its governance early on, a cyclical trend that continues today.

By 500 B.C. Africans in the region were learning to smelt iron ore, a feat even the Egyptians had not accomplished by that time.<sup>3</sup> The development of iron catalyzed a series of events which ultimately led to the development of trade kingdoms and well established trade routes to the north and northeast. Africans, equipped with iron tools could better farm, craft products, dig minerals and gems, and harvest Ivory.

In the early centuries A.D., West African kingdoms, such as Ghana, were major producers of gold.<sup>4</sup> This was a tremendous attraction to the Roman Empire and the Arabs, whose monetary systems were based on gold.<sup>5</sup> The bridge between the European and Arab traders to West Africa was through the Berber traders in North Africa, where present day Morocco is located. These Berber traders could make the treacherous and demanding journey across the Sahara desert, which isolated West Africa from the northeast. This trade relationship existed for hundreds of years, and was largely responsible for the spread of Islam into the region during the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the mid-eighth century.<sup>6</sup>

In 1415 the Portuguese, in an attempt to steal this trade, established a foothold in Morocco by taking the fortress-town of Ceuta.<sup>7</sup> Although the Berbers shifted their

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<sup>3</sup> Basil Davidson, *West Africa Before the Colonial Era*, (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ancient Ghana was located in the vicinity of present day Senegal.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Crowder, *West Africa, an Introduction to its History*, (London: Longman Group, 1977), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Davidson, 26.

<sup>7</sup> J. D. Fage, *A History of Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 215.

Mediterranean trading centers, it was from this and other small possessions of Moroccan territory that the Portuguese were able to learn more about the trans-Saharan trade routes into West Africa and the abundance of gold in the region. Soon, Portuguese sailors were exploring the African coastline to the west and south, seeking to outflank the Sahara. By 1444, they had reached a point on the coast where the desert changed to green vegetation, Cape Verde.<sup>8</sup> The Portuguese found gold and a people there they called *Guineus*, from the Moroccan Berber word for black. These people traded with the North Africans, but were independent of their control. As such, they were willing to trade with the Portuguese. This discovery stimulated increased support from private entrepreneurs, who provided financing for more aggressive exploration.

By 1471 the Portuguese explorers had found what they were looking for, an abundant source of gold, beyond the control of Islam and accessible by sea. They called the land *El Mina*, literally “The Mine”, which the Europeans later called the Gold Coast. Within a few years they were securing, by some estimates, 13,000 ounces of gold a year for Portugal.<sup>9</sup> Other European countries took an interest in West Africa as well, but their attention soon shifted to the Americas by the end of the 1400s, allowing Portugal to monopolize the region for the next century.

The Portuguese expansion in West Africa was not without difficulty, and proved to be costly in terms of treasure and manpower. Some African kingdoms produced more gold than others, and often their kings wanted products that were not readily available in Portugal, such as metalware, cloth or slaves. This required that the Portuguese import goods in order to sell them abroad. In addition, European traders were attracted

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 223

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 224

by the lucrative trade and were beginning to operate in the region with increasing frequency, encouraging the Portuguese to build forts and buy the loyalty of local leaders. The costs associated with this increased competition cut deeply into Portuguese profits and forced them to look at other, more promising local opportunities, namely agriculture and slave trade.

One of the problems with agriculture was that the plantations needed tremendous amounts of manpower, which was in short supply in Portugal. The Portuguese had already established a slave trade, but the emergence of plantations both in West Africa and in its transatlantic colonies created an even greater demand for slaves to work the mines and fields. As a result the slave trade picked up momentum. “By the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese had also shown western Europeans that the prime value of Africa for them was not as a source of gold or spices... but as a continent where slaves could be secured for the exploitation of the Americas.”<sup>10</sup>

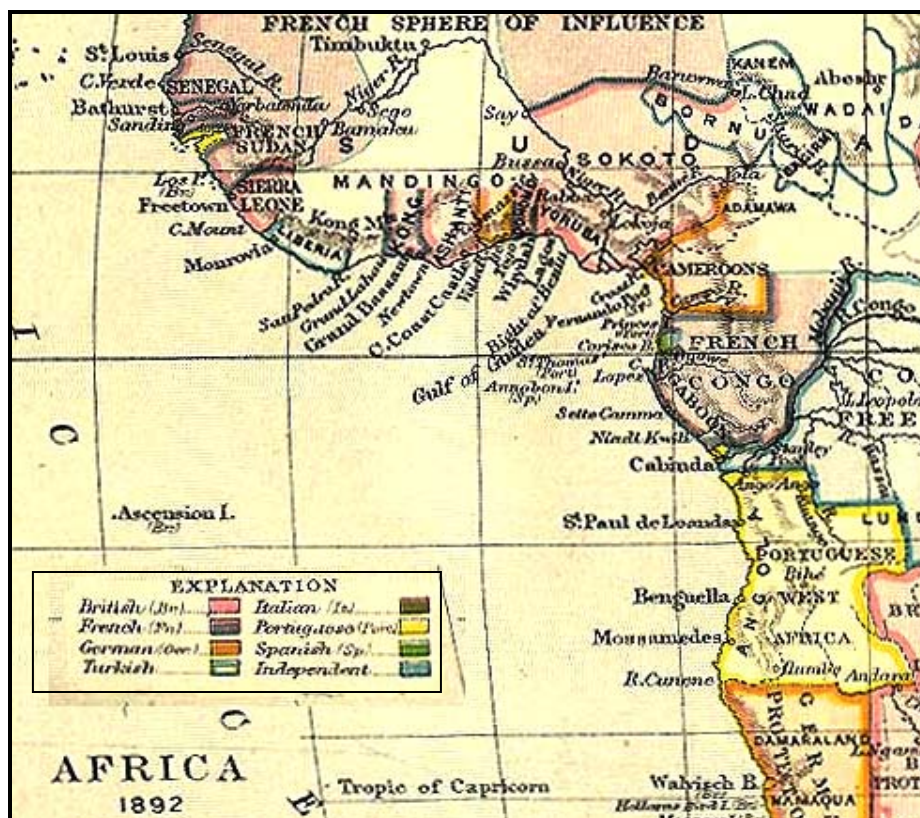
Numerous European countries competed for the slaving markets in West Africa, so much so, that the areas of present day Nigeria and Benin became known as the “Slave Coast.” The slave trade was pervasive in West Africa, and the demand for slaves was so great that it drew European traders not only to coastal West Africa, but inland as well. The practice was continued by the Europeans until it was abolished in the late nineteenth century. However, an active Muslim slave trade continued in the region into the twentieth century and remnants of it persist today.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 432. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, a series of *jihads* occurred between numerous West African Muslim tribes and kingdoms, during which, war captives were often enslaved. By some estimates, the Sokoto Caliphate of northern Nigeria had a slave population of over 2.5 million people in 1900.

By the early 1800s, a series of rivalries between European powers had spilled over into Africa and other parts of the world. There was intense competition to find new sources of raw materials to sustain commercial and industrial growth in Europe. Regions like West Africa became bartering chips, and were divided among the European powers.<sup>12</sup> What emerged in the Gulf of Guinea was an exceptionally diverse string of neighboring colonies, each with different governing systems, national languages, and ethnic and religious backgrounds. The map below illustrates the European presence in West Africa during the emergence of the colonialism. The legend is color coded to indicate how the region was partitioned.



Africa 1892, from Gardiner's Atlas of English History

<sup>12</sup> The Berlin Conference of 1885 established the framework to sort out African territorial claims among the European powers. Per the conference, once a European power had claimed a territory it was required to occupy it. These claims were supported by treaties signed by African chiefs. However, when the Europeans came to take over their territories, they were not always able to do so peacefully, because the African leaders that signed the treaties often did not know the full extent of the treaties they signed.

Relatively speaking, colonialism was short lived in the Gulf of Guinea. “The political empires that were so proudly and confidently proclaimed over Africa in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as inevitable and permanent extensions of Europe lasted hardly three generations.”<sup>13</sup> Many of the states that desired to have colonies in the region did so not only for material gain, but also to deny potential advantage to other countries. This attitude reflected the political landscape of Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.

When World War I broke out, attention and resources could not be spared to develop the colonies. After the war, the region entered an economic depression in concert with Europe and America. However, after World War II the colonial powers began investing in the region, and it experienced economic growth, mostly in the areas of mineral and agricultural exports. By the 1950s, the colonies were substantially participating in the world economy. The French West African colonies, for example, realized a tenfold increase in trade revenues between 1935 and 1953.<sup>14</sup> Nigeria had even greater growth.

Though money was spent to develop the regional economy, little was spent on social development. In a 1953 school attendance survey, only three percent of the Nigerian population attended school. Ghana had the highest attendance figures of ten percent during the same survey.<sup>15</sup> The lack of attention paid to advancing the general population, in the midst of economic growth, lead to considerable political and social strain in the colonies and resulted in local hostility and claims for independence. By 1960, only three

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<sup>13</sup> Fage, 460.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 424.

states in the Gulf of Guinea remained under colonial rule. The Portuguese colonies of Angola, Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe received their independence in 1975.<sup>16</sup>

### **Political Background**

The withdrawal of the colonial powers and transition to independence went smoothly at first, but the surge of optimism soon faded. The colonial system did not effectively prepare the states for independence. Some of the major problems facing the new governments were widespread illiteracy, uneven social and economic development, and competition to seize power and profit by local tribal leaders.

The 1960s has been called the “decade of coups” in Africa. This is certainly true for West Africa. By 1970, seven Gulf of Guinea states had experienced coups.<sup>17</sup> Benin, the former colony of Dahomey, earlier known as the “Slave Coast,” for example, had six coups, five constitutions, and twelve heads of state in its first ten years of independence.<sup>18</sup> In most cases, the fledgling governments simply could not meet the expectations of the people and plunder their governments too, and were not strong enough internally to take-on challengers. As a result, the leaders that emerged in many of these states applied a heavy hand to stay in power. States such as Congo Brazzaville and Angola employed Marxism; Benin was a Marxist dictatorship; Guinea was under a dictatorship; Nigeria, which had a civil war until 1970, was governed under martial law. Even in some of the states that claimed to be democracies, the term was little more than veneer, covering totalitarian regimes. In Equatorial Guinea, the first democratically elected president, Francisco Mascias, and his regime was so oppressive that one-third of the country was

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 464.

<sup>17</sup> Figures were calculated from the U.S. State Department information.

<sup>18</sup> John Reader, *A Biography of the Continent Africa*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 667.

exiled or killed during his tenure.<sup>19</sup> His successor, President Teodoro Obiang, still in power today, declared himself “president for life” after a successful coup in 1979.

Nonetheless, Equatorial Guinea is recognized as a democracy.

The disturbing sine wave of violence and instability that was established in the region in the 1960s continues in present day. Angola recently signed a cease-fire in 2002, after a 27 year civil war. Ivory Coast, once a model of stability in the region, along with Liberia and Sierra Leone, are all currently under cease-fire agreements and have all recently required the intervention of UN peacekeeping forces.

There is some hope for the region. Recent discovery of vast off-shore oil reserves in the Gulf of Guinea offers opportunity for its leaders to improve social conditions. However, history suggests that these newest sources of oil will not bring prosperity to the masses. States, such as Angola and Nigeria, have been considerable producers of oil since the late 1960s, yet their populations live in abject poverty. Their leaders, on the other hand, have become exceptionally wealthy. Angola’s president, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, for example, is considered to be one of the richest men in the world, and has been accused of siphoning, by some estimates, over 1 billion dollars a year from his country’s oil revenue. This severe negligence is commonplace among leaders in the region and sets the tone for the present political setting.

### **The Importance of Gulf of Guinea Oil**

Oil is the lifeblood of every developed nation’s economy. “America faces a major energy supply crisis over the next two decades,” Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham told a National Energy Summit on March 19, 2001. “The failure to meet this challenge

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. State Department, Bureau of African Affairs, “Republic of Equatorial Guinea,” January 2005, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7221.htm>> (18 April 2005).

will threaten our nation's economic prosperity, compromise our national security, and literally alter the way we lead our lives."<sup>20</sup> Currently oil supplies more than 40 percent of our total energy demands and more than 99 percent of the fuel we use in our automobiles.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. consumes over 25 percent of the oil produced worldwide. The estimates contained in the U.S. National Energy Policy show that U.S. oil consumption will increase by over 33 percent in the next 20 years, and natural gas consumption will increase by more than 50 percent.<sup>22</sup> Other countries' requirements will increase as well. Estimates from the Energy Information Administration project that China's oil requirement will almost double by 2025, making them second only to the U.S. in oil consumption.

The U.S. economy is tied to crude oil prices. One only has to read the business section of the newspaper to appreciate the correlation between oil prices and other sectors of business. The International Monetary Fund conducted a study in December 2000 in which it looked at the effects of a hypothetical increase in oil price by five dollars per barrel, sustained over five years. The report assessed that, in such a scenario, the U.S. gross domestic product would decrease by an average of .3 percent a year while inflation would increase by an average of .4 percent a year.<sup>23</sup>

This is a mild scenario. The oil embargo of the 1970s, in which the U.S. experienced double digit inflation is another example of how the economy is closely

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<sup>20</sup> Spencer Abraham, remarks to U.S. Chamber of Commerce at the National Energy Summit, 19 March 2001, <<http://www.energy.gov>> (1 May 2005).

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, "Oil," <[http://www.energy.gov/engine/content.do?BT\\_CODE=OIL](http://www.energy.gov/engine/content.do?BT_CODE=OIL)> (16 January 05).

<sup>22</sup> Nation Energy Policy Development Group, *Reliable, Affordable, and Environmentally Sound Energy for America's Future* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2001), 10.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Mussa, "The impact of Oil Prices on the Global Economy," Prepared by International Monetary Fund Research Department, 8 December 2000, <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/oil/2000/#foot1>> (10 March 2005).

linked to oil prices. As such, the U.S. relies on access to diverse, dependable and affordable supplies of oil to decrease the volatility of its oil market. As observed in this regard, “Concentration of world oil production in any one region of the world is a potential contributor to market instability, benefiting neither oil producers nor consumers.”<sup>24</sup>

To offset its dependence on Middle-Eastern oil, for instance, the U.S. has increasingly looked to other oil-producing states around the world. The Gulf of Guinea and West Africa offers great potential for such an alternative source. Currently the region provides about 13-14 percent of the oil consumed in the U.S.<sup>25</sup> However, recent discovery of deep water oil fields there have lead energy experts to predict that 25 percent of the oil consumed in the U.S. will come from the region by 2015.<sup>26</sup> That figure exceeds the amount that the U.S. currently receives annually from Saudi Arabia.

This is not to say that there is more oil in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea than Saudi Arabia, or that the region will necessarily replace Saudi Arabia in significance as an oil producer. Known West African oil reserves are only a fraction of Saudi Arabian ones, but it offers the U.S. an alternative source that is nearer to home. This is especially important considering the political volatility and security situation in the Middle East. In addition, the nations along the Gulf of Guinea are non-OPEC states except for Nigeria, which helps to offset OPEC cartel pricing and supply power, another benefit to the U.S.

Presently, six states along the Gulf of Guinea are producing significant amounts of oil. These are Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad.

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<sup>24</sup> National Energy Policy Development Group, 132.

<sup>25</sup> David L. Goldwyn, “The Gulf of Guinea and US Strategic Energy Policy,” testimony before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion, United States Senate, (15 July 2004), 54.

<sup>26</sup> David L. Goldwyn and Robert E. Ebel, “Crafting a U.S. Energy Policy for Africa,” in *Rising U.S. Stakes in Africa*, (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2004), 11.

Cameroon, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire produce much smaller, but still appreciable, amounts. Moreover, Liberia, Togo, Benin, São Tomé, and Príncipe promise to be producers within the next decade.<sup>27</sup>

For the moment, Nigeria and Angola are the most significant suppliers of oil in the region. Collectively, these states produce 3 million barrels of oil per day, and by 2009 will produce 6 million barrels per day.<sup>28</sup>

U.S. energy investment in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria and Angola, has been on the rise for several years. Already, billions of dollars have been spent on oil exploration and infrastructure in the Gulf of Guinea, and according to Energy Information Administration, U.S. companies' investment in Nigeria and Angola totaled \$1.8 billion in 2003, while European companies' investment totaled \$3.5 billion. Most of this investment has been devoted to the development of deep offshore oil and gas fields, and to the development of continental oil pipelines. As technology for extracting oil from these formerly difficult fields mature, investment in the region will only increase. It is anticipated that within the next decade international oil companies will invest an additional \$30 to \$40 billion in the deep water offshore fields of the region as technology becomes available and political issues are resolved.<sup>29</sup>

One of the emerging areas of great interest is the Joint Development Zone (JDZ). The JDZ is a 34,548 km<sup>2</sup> area about 100 miles off of the Nigerian coast, which contains a potentially vast and yet unknown quantity of oil.<sup>30</sup> This area has been of particular

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<sup>27</sup> John R. Brodman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of International Energy Policy, U.S. Department of Energy, testimony before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion, United States Senate, (15 July 2004), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Goldwyn, "Gulf of Guinea and Strategic Energy Policy", 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>30</sup> Nigeria-Sao Tome and Principe Joint Development Authority, "Geological Summary", <<http://www.nigeriasaotomejda.com/>> (22 January 2005).

interest to investors because of its potential and location. Because the wells are so far off shore, they are relatively secure from the sabotage and piracy that regularly occurs with the inland wells. In addition the wells provide easy access to very large oil tankers that would come from the Atlantic coast, and that could easily moor to a loading buoy rather than endure the process of entering a harbor.

Of note, the Gulf of Guinea is also a major natural gas producer, with over 9 million tons on liquefied natural gas a year, and is expected to produce more than four times that amount annually, when current development projects are completed.<sup>31</sup>

In light of both the obvious and increasing desire of the U.S. to lessen its reliance on Middle-Eastern oil and the active and increasing investment in the Gulf of Guinea oil resources, it is clear that the Gulf of Guinea is poised to be a major player in the U.S. national energy strategy. As such, instability in the region will likely trigger U.S. intervention.

### **Oilfield Security**

One of the major concerns about the oil supply in the Gulf of Guinea is its vulnerability to disruption. In recent testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion, David Goldwyn, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, illuminated this vulnerability:

We are in no position to endure a serious oil supply disruption from the Gulf of Guinea today. The global oil market is stretched to capacity... Due to OPEC policy, there is barely 600,000 to 800,000 barrels per day of excess capacity available to redress a supply disruption. Nearly all of that spare capacity is in Saudi Arabia, and it is not enough to substitute for Nigeria's exports...<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Goldwyn, "Gulf of Guinea and Strategic Energy Policy", 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 4.

The potential for disruption is significant. Although seldom reported by the international media, a range of internal problems, from government greed to sabotage, and external forces, such as piracy and terrorism, continually threaten the security of the region's oilfields.

### **Government Greed**

Despite the regions abundant oil resources, the wealth derived from there has not seen its way to the people. This situation has resulted in widespread disenchantment with and resentment towards governments and the oil industry. Equatorial Guinea, for example, now pumps more oil per person than Saudi Arabia. Its economy has grown 40 percent a year since 1996, yet its citizens are amongst the poorest in the world.<sup>33</sup> The focus on oil has disrupted the country's economic diversity and lured farmers from the fields to the refineries. In the tiny nation, nearly half of all children under five are malnourished, and the major cities lack clean water and basic sanitation. A health consultant who recently visited Equatorial Guinea for the first time since 1993 wrote with dismay in the *International Herald Tribune*: "Despite the oil boom, I was unable to see any improvements in the living standards of ordinary people."<sup>34</sup>

Equatorial Guinea's president, Obiang Nguema, seized power after overthrowing and executing his uncle in 1979. Since the discovery of oil in his country in 1995, Nguema's regime has made billions of dollars from state oil resources, and has given

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<sup>33</sup> "What Oil Can Do To Tiny States," *Economist*, 23 January 2003, <[http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=1552518](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=1552518)> (5 February 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Peter Maas, "A Touch of Crude," *Mother Jones*, January 2005, <[http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/01/12\\_400.html](http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/01/12_400.html)> (5 February 2005).

little back to the country. In fact, even the militia, purportedly organized for the good of the country is in reality, functions as Nguema's personal security force. Equatorial Guinea is considered by the U. N. to have one of the worst humanitarian rights records in the world and has subsequently been the subject of much criticism. Until recently, the country's only courtroom was a former movie theater.<sup>35</sup>

Equatorial Guinea is not an anomaly. Its neighboring populations have also failed to receive noticeable benefits from their countries' oil wealth. Few of the governments along the Gulf of Guinea are stable and most are severely corrupt. Like President Nguema, many other government leaders in the Gulf steal and mismanage billions of dollars. Meanwhile, the general populations of these nations remain amongst the poorest in the world, living in an appalling state of poverty. This mismanagement has resulted in more than just deep resentment for government, but also sustains a cycle of revenge and violence. Consequently, oil fields are often targeted by disgruntled workers and saboteurs as a tool to negotiate with companies for higher wages or simply a means to inflict pain on the companies and governments alike. A report prepared for Royal Dutch/Shell Group found that more than 1,000 deaths a year occur as a result of crime and political violence in the Niger Delta.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Vicky Ward, "Black Sheep, Big Trouble," *Vanity Fair*, January 2005, 125.

<sup>36</sup> Jim Landers, "Corruption Casts a Shadow Over Hope for West African Oil," *Dallas Morning News*, 6 October 2004.

## **Poverty**

The level of poverty in the Gulf of Guinea is difficult to comprehend, and is a destabilizing force in the region. As Mao Tse-tung observed, “People who live at subsistence level want first things to be put first... Those who have known only poverty have begun to wonder why they should continue to wait passively for improvements.”<sup>37</sup>

According to data collected by World Bank, 23 of the world’s 25 poorest countries, in terms of income per capita, are in Africa.<sup>38</sup> Seven of those countries are along the Gulf of Guinea, of which Sierra Leone and Liberia are among the 4 poorest countries in the world. In Liberia, for example, the gross national income (GNI) per capita is the equivalent of \$130 a year. The other countries in the Gulf of Guinea that did not make it into the bottom 25 poorest list fell within the 50 poorest countries in the world. The table below contains economic data for each of the countries in the region, to include purchase power parity (PPP). PPP measures how much a currency can buy in terms of an international measure, in this case dollars, since living costs differ from one country to another. Also included are figures for the US and Mexico, to provide a frame of reference.

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<sup>37</sup> Quote by Mao Tse-tung, translated by Samuel B. Griffeth, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Frederick A. Preager, Inc., New York, New York, 1961, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators Database, September 2004, <<http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/GNI.pdf>> ( 28 March 2005).

Economic Data for Select African States, 2003

|                   | <i>Gross National Product*</i> | <i>Gross National<br/>Income Per Capita*</i> | <i>Purchase Power Parity*</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Benin             | 7,554,000,000                  | 440                                          | 1,110                         |
| Cameroon          | 33,278,000,000                 | 640                                          | 1,980                         |
| Gabon             | 8,244,000,000                  | 3,580                                        | 5,700                         |
| Congo, Brazaville | 3,562,000,000                  | 640                                          | 710                           |
| Cote d'Ivoire     | 24,724,000,000                 | 660                                          | 1,390                         |
| Ghana             | 6,200,000,000                  | 320                                          | #                             |
| Sao Tome          | 53,700,000                     | 320                                          | #                             |
| Liberia           | 400,000,000                    | 130                                          | #                             |
| Nigeria           | 138,905,000,000                | 320                                          | 900                           |
| Siera Leone       | 2,965,000,000                  | 150                                          | 530                           |
| Togo              | 7,424,000,000                  | 310                                          | 1,500                         |
| Mexico            | 934,553,000,000                | 6,230                                        | 8,950                         |
| United States     | 10,871,095,000,000             | 37,610                                       | 37,500                        |

(figures provided by World Bank, September 2004)

\* US Dollars

# Data not available

The pervasive poverty in Africa is closely linked to the AIDS pandemic affecting the region. While the percentage of AIDS infected adults in the Gulf of Guinea states is not as high as some states in the continent, the figures are still startling. The numbers range from 2 percent in Benin to 8.1 percent of the population in Gabon.<sup>39</sup> This compares favorably to neighboring South Africa with an average of 28.45 percent adult infection rate between the states of Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.<sup>40</sup>

Statistics illustrate that in general, the highest prevalence of AIDS in Africa occurs in war-torn states. As a population, soldiers are the most common carriers of the disease. This is partially due to widespread exposure to blood and the practice of

<sup>39</sup> Figures were obtained from the CIA World Fact Book.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

systematic rape, but it is also due to their risk prone behavior. However, war contributes to other factors that accelerate the spread of AIDS in these regions, such as poverty. In many impoverished states, prostitution is the only means that some women have available to make money. In addition, war and poverty destroy the healthcare infrastructure, leaving no one to educate the population about the spread of the disease.

Sierra Leon provides a good example of the correlation between war and the spread of AIDS. Before civil war broke-out a decade ago, the state's HIV infection rate was estimated below one percent.<sup>41</sup> Now, its infection rate is more than seven percent.<sup>42</sup>

AIDS, poverty and violence have a negatively synergistic relationship. They each amplify one another and subsequently destabilize communities. AIDS erodes the strength of communities because it is most prevalent among young adults, leaving behind orphans and the elderly. Young adults are traditionally the core of the work force. The World Bank estimates that AIDS will reduce GDP in some African states by as much as 20 percent within the next decade.<sup>43</sup> This weakening of states, and particularly in those that are on the edge of crisis, stimulates ethnic and political unrest and violence, or even coups. It also creates a haven for militant groups, warlords and terrorists, who could, in oil rich states, take the oil industry hostage. This, in turn becomes an interest to U.S. national security.

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew Tostevin, "Ivorian War: West Africa's AIDS Nightmare," *Reuters Health*, 3 March 2003, <<http://www.reutershealth.com/en/>> (18 April 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Figures were obtained from the CIA World Fact Book.

<sup>43</sup> Mike Denning, "A Prayer for Marie: Creating an Effective African Standby Force", *Parameters*, 34, no. 4 (Winter 2004-05): 105.

## **Sabotage and Piracy**

Inflicting damage on oil facilities is not a new practice in the Gulf of Guinea. In the 1970s the Angolan government resorted to the use of thousands of Cuban military forces to guard its refineries. Fortunately for the government, virtually all of its oil wells were off-shore.

In the Niger Delta there is a significant problem with sabotage. At one point, in March and April of 2003, ethnic violence involving armed militants, interrupted up to 800,000 barrels of oil a day from the Niger Delta alone. Subsequently, the Nigerian government deployed 4,000 military personnel to help secure the region.<sup>44</sup>

Facilities are not the only targets. Often oil company workers are taken hostage as a means to extort money from oil companies. Such events are commonplace and rarely make headlines in U.S. Newspapers: March 2000 – 32 held for 5 days, June 1999 – 2 helicopter pilots held for three weeks, July 1999 – 64 held for two days, August 2001 – 99 held for five days, August 2000 – 164 held for five days, May 2003 – 300 held for 13 days. Generally, targeted workers are not killed; however, in April of 2004, seven Chevron employees were killed by gunmen during a boat attack.<sup>45</sup>

As Stephen Morrison from the Center for Strategic and International Studies has observed, “A glaring vulnerability in the Gulf of Guinea is the lack of effective

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Simons, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy, Sanctions and Commodity Policy; Economic and Business Affairs Bureau, “Role of West Africa in our Energy Security,” 15 July 2004, <<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/rm/3577.htm>> (29 January 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 2.

control over its maritime and coastal environment.”<sup>46</sup> Pirates steal, or “bunker,” between 200,000 and 300,000 barrels of oil a day in the Niger Delta, where the waters are some of the deadliest in the world.<sup>47</sup> The Niger Delta, for example, ranks third in pirate activity, behind Indonesia and the Malacca Straits, but has the highest number of murders committed during those incidents.<sup>48</sup> The piracy problem is escalating because of the lack of maritime security, creating an arms race amongst rival gangs. In addition, the scale and sophistication of the pirate attacks has increased. Recently, two Nigerian admirals were court martialed for their involvement in the theft of an oil tanker containing more than 11,000 barrels of crude oil. Ironically, the oil contained in the vessel before it was taken, was stolen from another source. The resultant investigation also revealed that at least three leading Nigerian banks, with links to banks in Switzerland, had financed the trade in bunkered oil.<sup>49</sup>

### **Concerns Over Terrorism in the Gulf of Guinea**

Since September 11, 2001, U.S. policymakers have focused most of their attention on Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Horn of Africa; however, they have failed to devote sufficient attention to the less noticeable, grass-roots terrorism threat that is spreading into West Africa. The Bush administration, in its 2002 National Security Strategy, acknowledged the link between failed states and the spread of terrorism. West Africa is filled with failed and failing states. The region belongs to what is

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<sup>46</sup> J. Stephen Morrison, testimony before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, “The Gulf of Guinea and U.S. Strategic Energy Policy,” 15 July 2004, 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>48</sup> “Piracy Report Says Nigerian Waters Most Deadly,” *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 27 July 2004, <<http://www.irinnews.org>> (7 November 2004).

<sup>49</sup> “Nigerians Pay the Price for Stealing Oil Tanker,” *Times Online*, 8 January 2005 <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-1429979,00.html>> (28 April 2005).

known as the “axis of instability,” and as a consequence presents a potential need for U.S. engagement. According to *Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst*, intelligence services in the West believe that Osama Bin Laden is focusing his efforts on Nigeria and West Africa.<sup>50</sup> This is further supported by a tape, allegedly made by Bin Laden, and broadcast by Al Jazeera in February, 2003. The message on the tape suggested that Muslims should overthrow the “apostate regime” of the Nigerian president and that Nigeria should be “liberated” from U.S. “enslavement.”

Nigeria is a good example of a state that could easily fail. Nigeria is the most populated country on the entire African continent, with a population of almost 135,000,000. Since its independence in 1960, the state has maintained a delicate balance of 50 percent Muslim and 40 percent Christian population. Today, that balance is being tested as fundamental Islam is establishing a foothold in the northern part of the country, where 12 of Nigeria’s 36 states have adopted full Shari’a law.<sup>51</sup> In his recent testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Porter Goss stated, “In Nigeria, the military is struggling to contain militia groups in the oil-producing south and ethnic violence that frequently erupts throughout the country. Extremist groups are emerging from the country’s Muslim population of about 65 million.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Transnational Threats Update*, 2, no. 10 (July 2004): 2.

<sup>51</sup> Muslims in Nigeria have always abided by Shari’a, which was limited to civil and family matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. However, in January 2000 the state of Zamfara, Nigeria adopted a Shari’a penal code as well, which is referred to as “full” Sharia. Full Shari’a has jurisdiction over both civil and criminal matters. Eleven other Nigerian states have adopted full shari’a: Sokoto, Niger, Kaduna, Kano, Kebbi, Katsina, Bauchi Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, and Gombe.

<sup>52</sup> Porter J. Goss, Director of Central Intelligence Agency, testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Global Intelligence Challenges 2005: Meeting Long-Term Challenges With a Long-Term Strategy*, 16 February 2005, <[http://www.cia.gov/cia/public\\_affairs/speeches/2004/Goss\\_testimony\\_02162005.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/2004/Goss_testimony_02162005.html)> (01 April 2005).

The Shari'a movement is seeking to gain more political influence in Nigeria and is at odds not only with the Christian populations living in Shari'a states, but with Nigerian national law. Nobel Prize recipient Wole Soyinka put it clearly in an interview with *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, "There is no longer even a façade of unity...It is about the cynical manipulation by political forces made desperate by the erosion of a hegemonic power base, the loss of privilege, the resolve to end national pillaging, and the relegation of the military to political impotence."<sup>53</sup> Since the Shari'a law has been in place in several Nigerian states, there have been numerous clashes between Islamic and Christian tribes, resulting in more than 10,000 deaths between 1999 and 2003.<sup>54</sup>

In March of 2004, Chadian forces killed 42 Islamic fighters from the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), in a battle near the Niger/Niger border. The GSPC is openly allied with Al-Qaeda and typically operates to the north in Algeria. Their presence in Chad indicates that the group is attempting to expand southward. This theory is further validated by the fact that several of the fighters killed in the action were from Nigeria.

The fact that there is a significant Muslim population in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly in the northern states, is not a litmus test to validate the presence of Islamic terrorist cells in the region. It does, however, highlight the region as an area where Islamic extremists might seek to establish operations and recruit new members.

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<sup>53</sup> "Shari'a in Nigeria: the Crisis Deepens," *Janes Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 05 October 2000, <<http://www2janes.com>> (7 March 2005).

<sup>54</sup> Princeton Lyman and Stephen Morrison, "The Terrorist Threat in Africa," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 1 (2004): 79.

Islam is not a new phenomenon in the Gulf of Guinea. The faith has a long history in the region and dates back to the seventh century, when Muslim kingdoms dominated the landscape of West and North Africa. Northern Nigeria and parts of its neighboring states were home to the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest Muslim state in Africa. Consequently, the region has religious significance and is part of the Muslim world. Increased U.S. interaction in West Africa conflicts with the goals of groups, like Al Qaeda, who want to rid the Muslim world of Western influence. This, coupled with the existing sectarian tension in states like Nigeria, encourage the involvement of violent Islamic groups and polarize the population.

### **The ESG**

The Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) is an organization designed to enhance the Navy/Marine Corps ability to project power and respond to a broad spectrum of crises. ESGs are currently being tested as “proofs of concept”, so no organizational doctrine has yet been accepted for its final structure.<sup>55</sup> This paper focuses on the West Coast ESG’s capabilities.

The ESG construct is built on the existing Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), but has far greater capabilities. Aside from being able to execute the required missions of the MEU (SOC) and PHIBRON, the ESG has more assets than the ARG/MEU and a flag planning staff. The additional assets include a cruiser, destroyer, frigate, attack submarine and land-based P-3 support. These added

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<sup>55</sup> There are currently (January 2005) three ESG models being tested within the Navy/Marine Corps: Forward Deployed Naval Force (FDFN), East Coast model, and West Coast model. Both the FDFN and East Coast models are enhanced ARG/MEUs. They are augmented by cruiser/destroyer, and submarine escorts, but are not commanded by a flag officer. The West Coast ESG model is commanded by a flag officer, who embarks his own planning staff.

assets enable the ESG to provide for its own force protection in maritime regions, where naval surface and/or air threats exist.

In the past, the ARG/MEUs were vulnerable to surface and air threats, limiting them to operations only in low-threat maritime environments, when not under the protective umbrella of a carrier battle group. Not only did this inhibit where ARG/MEUs could operate, but it limited the Naval ability to distribute forces around the globe. If the MEU was required to respond to a crisis in which there was a surface threat, it needed to be accompanied by a carrier battle group. By rearranging surface and sub-surface combatants into ESGs and Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs), a byproduct of “Sea Basing”, the Navy has been able to increase the independence of its forces and almost double its presence.<sup>56</sup>

The ESG’s planning staff is another significant characteristic providing increased capabilities from the ARG/MEU. The ESG commander is either a Navy or Marine O-7 and has a small planning staff of about 30 officers and enlisted.<sup>57</sup> The flag officer and staff provide unity of command and effort. The small staff has a broad base of expertise and is able to plan multiple missions concurrently, decreasing planning saturation at the subordinate level. Also, the flag organization and the ESG’s highly capable command and control systems are designed to take-on additional forces and become a Joint Task Force.

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<sup>56</sup> Sea Basing is an element of “Sea Power 21,” the Navy’s vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sea Basing is a concept where U.S. ships and forces are positioned to create a widely distributed and netted fleet. This increases the operational independence of forces and serves as the foundation for the projection of offensive and defensive operations.

<sup>57</sup> There is currently no T/O for an ESG staff so numbers could vary.

Because of its mobility, responsiveness and flexibility, the ESG would be well suited to conduct operations in the Gulf of Guinea. No other organization in the U.S. military is as equipped and capable to sustain and conduct the variety of missions as the ESG. The table below reflects many of the ESG's designed mission capabilities that would be applicable to the Gulf of Guinea:

|                                             |                                               |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Joint Task Force Capable                    | Airfield / Port Seizure                       |
| Seizure/Recovery of Offshore Facilities     | Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel   |
| Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Operations | Maritime Interdiction Operations              |
| Noncombatant Evacuation Operations          | Anti-terrorism Operations                     |
| Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief   | Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance |
| Peace Operations                            | Time Sensitive Targeting                      |
| Enhanced Urban Operations                   | TLAM and TacAir Strike                        |
| Information Operations                      | Amphibious Assault / Raid                     |
| Security Operations                         | Rapid Response Planning                       |
| Special Operations                          | Tactical Air Control                          |
| Non-lethal Weapons                          | Fire Support (NSFS, Air and ground)           |

In each case, the ESG is required to undergo a formal evaluation process, in which these and other tasks are tested. This multi-part evaluation is generally conducted in conjunction with a six month training syllabus, which all ESGs complete prior to deploying abroad.

### **Maritime Security Operations (MSO)**

Maritime security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea are not new. Since 1978, the U.S. Navy has conducted annual training with various nations that border the Gulf. This training has focused on maritime security with small boat and riverine operations.<sup>58</sup>

The coastline along the Gulf of Guinea is stretched for approximately 2000 miles and within it lie hundreds of oil platforms and surface vessels. In such an environment, providing for effective maritime security is a very difficult task. It requires manpower and assets, both of which are in short supply locally. It also requires that operating units have enough mobility and sustainment to establish a comprehensive surface picture, and the command and control necessary to coordinate action.

The ESG vision answers the mail in this case, as it is a highly capable force that can conduct Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in such an environment. For example, in July 2004 the Commander of ESG-3 assumed the duties of Commander Combined Task Force (CTF) 58. Part of CTF-58's mission statement was, "Conduct MSO in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) in order to: defend the Al Basrah and Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminals; develop actionable intelligence on international terrorist organization (ITO) locations and activities; deter, disrupt, and destroy ITOs operating within the NAG; deny ITOs the use of the maritime environment ; prevent ITO acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction;

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<sup>58</sup> "U.S. Sailors, Marines Arrive for Training Exercise in West Africa," *Navy Newstand*, 13 November, 2003, < [http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story\\_id=10544](http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=10544) > (10 March 2005).

halt maritime traffic of ITO related illicit materials; and facilitate the economic stability of Southern Iraq.”<sup>59</sup> The CTF-58 mission in the NAG was highly successful. It involved all of the ESG surface assets, along with U.S. Coast Guard and coalition assets, to include Iraqi Self Defense Force patrol craft. A similar ESG-led task force could easily conduct the same type of operations in the Gulf of Guinea.

- **Maritime Intercept Operations (MIO) and Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS)**

The ESG is exceptionally capable of conducting maritime intercept operations (MIO). The mission involves locating, tracking, identifying, querying, and if necessary, boarding surface vessels. The boarding operation is called visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS).

In March of 2004, ESG-1 boarded over 400 vessels while operating in the Northern Arabian Gulf, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The strike group that relieved them, ESG-3, conducted 1336 queries, and boarded 557 vessels during their operations in the region.<sup>60</sup>

One of the most critical requirements for conducting MIO is locating other vessels. Radars on surface vessels can only “see” so far because of the curve of the earth. The distance is generally around thirty miles, but can differ, based on how high the radar is mounted. However, an ESG has six surface vessels. Each of their radars shares information with one another to provide a common picture.

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<sup>59</sup> Commander Expeditionary Strike Group Three, Post-Deployment Brief, January 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Data obtained through correspondence with ESG-3 future operations officer.

These vessels can be dispersed, within limits of the tactical situation, to provide a greater common surface picture. In addition, ESGs employ SH-60B Light Airborne Multipurpose System (LAMPS) helicopters that have surface radars and forward looking infrared sensors, along with the ability to transmit real-time imagery to the ESG. These aircraft can operate 50-100 miles from the ESG, searching for surface vessels. Their radar systems are also tied into the strike group's common radar picture. With these resources alone, the ESG has a tremendous ability to locate and track surface contacts.

Once surface contacts are located, a query is initiated to determine the identification, origin, destination and intention of the vessel. If deemed appropriate by the ESG commander, a boarding team will be assembled to conduct a VBSS.

The ESG is capable of conducting VBSS to both compliant and non-compliant vessels, either by helicopter insertion or by using rigid hulled inflatable boats via a "bottom-up" method.

The ESG can also widen its net and conduct distributed operations. Distributed operations involve task organizing the force into separate groups. Instead of having one MIO/VBSS force, assets can be placed on other vessels to spread out and conduct simultaneous operations. These operations are not limited to MIO/VBSS.

The same capabilities that make the ESG so effective at conducting MIO also allow it to readily respond to vessels in distress. Its ships monitor maritime emergency frequencies, and its aircraft are able to detect other emergency signals

or indicators, such as flares or fire. Additionally, the ESG has organic search and rescue helicopters and rescue swimmers that can rapidly provide assistance to vessels in extremis.

- **Seizure/Recovery of Offshore Facilities (GOPLAT)**

In April 1988 during Operation Praying Mantis, Marines and SEALs captured and destroyed two oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. The platforms were being used by Iran as bases from which to conduct mining operations. At the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, SEALs were again tasked to secure oil platforms near the Al Faw Peninsula, so they would not be destroyed and create an environmental catastrophe.

Similar scenarios could develop in the Gulf of Guinea, where there are hundreds of oil platforms with very light security. The ESG is fully capable to secure oil platforms while minimizing collateral damage. The ESG also has a limited organic ability, in its Force Recon Platoon, to respond to hostage situations, but can also support SOF operations if necessary.

The oil facilities in the Gulf of Guinea represent soft and increasingly lucrative terrorist targets. Some of the largest and most expensive oil and gas facilities are being developed for use here, and these giant facilities, such as the Bonga floating, production, storage, offload system (FPSO), will store up to 2 million barrels of oil at a time. FPSOs like the Bonga also have associated berthing barges, which are floating dorms that can hold hundreds of people, and thus represent a possible

hostage situation.<sup>61</sup> Fortunately, the new oil fields, like the Joint Development Zone, are located far at sea, making the facilities operating on them more difficult to find and effectively target.

### **Military Operations Other than War**

Over the last decade the U.S. military has been employed to conduct non-combat type missions, such as humanitarian assistance or disaster relief, with increasing frequency. ESGs are already conducting these operations. As recently as January 2005, ESG-5 assisted in providing disaster relief to tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. ESGs are highly effective in this role because of their ability to transport large volumes of relief supplies and personnel from ship to shore. The ESG-5 air cargo lift capability during the tsunami relief was estimated at 69 tons per cycle, and its surface lift capability was estimated to be over 245 tons per cycle, for a combined total of 314 tons per cycle. Concurrently, the *USS Abraham Lincoln* Battle Group (CSG-9) was providing such support in the same region. In comparison to the ESG, their lift capability totaled only 37.5 tons per cycle, with 3000 pounds being the maximum lift of any individual aircraft.<sup>62</sup>

ESGs also have organic construction equipment, such as bulldozers, excavators and forklifts, along with engineers that can assist with reconstruction efforts. In addition, they have numerous trucks, trailers and other vehicles that are vital in such operations.

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<sup>61</sup> "Abbeville Delivers Modules for Shell's Bonga Project," *Rigzone*, 1 December 2004, <<http://www.rigzone.com/news/article>> (22 January 2005).

<sup>62</sup> Figures were derived from USPACOM briefing slides for Operation Unified Assistance.

Also within the ESG are medical personnel who can administer a range of treatments from vaccinations to surgery. If surgery is necessary, patients can be transported back to the ships. All total, an ESG will have close to 200 hospital beds between its different ships. This figure represents a paltry sum, if the ESG had to provide care aboard ship for a large-scale crisis. However, its medical staff is capable conducting operations ashore, and could easily augment established hospital staff in theater.

Another mission that the ESG is exceptionally well suited to conduct involves the evacuation of American citizens from unstable regions. In some states, when poverty and civil unrest reach a boiling point, it becomes unsafe for American and friendly nations' citizens living in those states. Consequently, these people are often unable to flee the country, due to airport closures or congestion, or outright hostilities. In this situation, the evacuation of those citizens by the military, is called a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO).

The Gulf of Guinea represents a region where the U.S. should be prepared to conduct NEO. The region is certainly volatile enough, and there is an established precedent from recent U.S. intervention there, that validates this requirement. In May 1997, a military coup occurred in Sierra Leone and created a dangerous situation for everyone in the state. The 22<sup>nd</sup> MEU responded and conducted a NEO, evacuating 400 American citizens and 800 third country nationals.<sup>63</sup> As late as Oct 2003, U.S. Marines from the 26<sup>th</sup> MEU were used to provide added

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<sup>63</sup> Linda D. Kozaryn, "U.S. Force Evacuates 1,200 from Sierra Leone," *American Forces Information Service*, 14 January 2003, < [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun1997/n06021997\\_9706022.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun1997/n06021997_9706022.html) > (22 January 2005).

security to the American Embassy in Liberia. Liberia is currently under a cease-fire, but could easily erupt into an environment where American citizens need to be evacuated in a NEO.

ESGs are highly capable to conduct NEOs. They have the combat force necessary to provide security at evacuation sites, and they also have the ability to conduct opposed airfield seizure, if necessary, to facilitate the throughput of heavy-lift aircraft. The ESG also has enough organic helicopter lift to transport hundreds of evacuees at a time, and fly them aboard its ships. Once the evacuees are aboard the ships they will be provided with food, shelter, medical care, and transportation to a safe port.

### **Strike**

Unlike a Carrier Strike Group, that focuses on high-intensity, deep, fixed-wing strike, an ESG provides a very broad strike capability, which is more compatible to the possible requirements in the Gulf of Guinea.

The ESG's kinetic strike capabilities range from Tomahawk missiles to troops on the ground, but the most likely requirements in the region for kinetic strike are: terrorist camps, surface vessels, and possibly, close air support. The ESG is aptly capable of supporting those requirements. However, its ability to deliver peacekeeping forces anywhere along the Gulf of Guinea, on short notice, is its greatest strength.

The capability of states in the region to organize, fund and deploy peacekeeping forces is limited at best, in spite of initiatives to formally create a collaborative regional peacekeeping force. Consequently, areas that reach a crisis

point are left to go unchecked for months before intervention forces arrive, allowing situations to catastrophically deteriorate. In addition, regional peacekeepers have historically achieved mixed results in their operations. One such example is the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Observation Group (ECOMOG). During UN missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the mostly Nigerian ECOMOG allegedly failed to maintain neutrality. Several hundred of its forces were captured by rebels on another occasion.<sup>64</sup> An ESG presence in the Gulf of Guinea would provide a valuable contribution towards training a legitimate African peacekeeping force. It would also provide a rapid reaction force, capable of responding to a regional crisis while it is still in its early stages, rather than waiting until it is fully developed.

The ESG also has a strong non-kinetic strike capability, through information operations (IO), that is highly suitable for the region. The ESG has an Information Warfare Commander and staff that directs the planning and employment of IO assets, and ensures that the ESG's IO campaign is aligned with national objectives. The ESG's IO capability enables it to influence local and regional perceptions. The IO staff is also able to tie-in to organic and theater level electronic warfare (EW) assets to conduct SIGINT, collect imagery and jam communications. These capabilities would be useful not only in deterring piracy, and tracking terrorists, but would also be helpful during non-combat missions such as disaster relief or NEO.

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<sup>64</sup> Denning, 107.

## **Conclusion**

Africa is perhaps the world's most challenging continent. Currently there are serious crises in nine of its 54 countries, and potential crises loom in the rest.<sup>65</sup> The Bush administration has acknowledged its awareness of this problem and noted that there are great disparities between the conflict, poverty and instability in Africa and core U.S. interests and values.<sup>66</sup> The conflicts on the continent are numerous and complex and require external attention to resolve, as they are beyond the power of the rulers to resolve. No single nation or organization can be a panacea to its problems; however, if resources are focused in key areas and in environments where they are most suited, positive strategic results can be achieved. ESG presence and engagement in the Gulf of Guinea presents one situation in which these conditions can be supported. The ESG is the only organization in the U.S. military capable of conducting the variety of littoral operations required in the region. It is a "highly mobile yet persistent and precise naval force that can respond across a wide spectrum of missions, from combat operations to humanitarian assistance,"<sup>67</sup>

In considering whether a U.S. military presence is warranted in the Gulf of Guinea, the U.S. should consider the high costs of non-intervention. It is not only the right thing to do morally, but it also protects our vital interests in the region.

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<sup>65</sup> Jeffery Herbst and Princeton Lyman, "Crisis Diplomacy and Peace Operations," in *Rising U.S. Stakes in Africa*, (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2004), 121.

<sup>66</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>> (19 April 2005).

<sup>67</sup> Quote from BGen Joseph V. Medina, Commander Expeditionary Strike Group Three, 10 April, 2005.

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