

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 26-04-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) September 2009 - April 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE AFRICOM and Africa's Future Youth Bulge				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) Maj Nyree D. Rinkevich				5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
				5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A	
				11. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A					
14. ABSTRACT The world is fast approaching an era where "youth bulges" will occur in developing countries. According to the United Nations, the population of the world will exceed 9 billion by 2050. "Africa's share of the world population will rise to more than 18 percent by 2050". The continent has the fastest-growing and most youthful population in the world. Over 20 percent of Africa's population is between the ages of 15 to 24 with over 40 percent of Africa's population is under 15 years of age. Populations where youth are the majority population tend to experience strains on resources, conflict increasing the instability of the region, and can cause a security threat for the remaining world. This prominent youth population will cause areas of Africa to be a security threat not only to the continent of Africa, but also to the US. The youth bulge will affect top strategic interests for AFRICOM. Africans and the international community need to be aware of the potential impacts a youthful population can have on countries.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Marine Corps University / Command and Staff College
a. REPORT Unclass	b. ABSTRACT Unclass	c. THIS PAGE Unclass			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
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2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

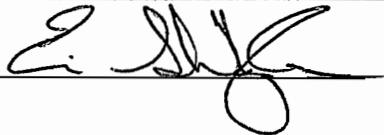
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AFRICOM AND AFRICA'S FUTURE YOUTH BULGE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Date: 26 APRIL 2010

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Date: 26 APRIL 2010

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Executive Summary

Title: AFRICOM and Africa's Future Youth Bulge

Author: Major Nyree D. Rinkevich, United States Air Force

Thesis: This rapid growth of youth in Africa is going to be a concern for the United States and its security and will have an impact on how AFRICOM continues to develop its strategy.

Discussion: The world is fast approaching an era where "youth bulges" will occur in developing countries. According to the United Nations, the population of the world will exceed 9 billion by 2050. "Africa's share of the world population will rise to more than 18 percent by 2050". The continent has the fastest-growing and most youthful population in the world. Over 20 percent of Africa's population is between the ages of 15 to 24 with over 40 percent of Africa's population is under 15 years of age. Populations where youth are the majority population tend to experience strains on resources, conflict increasing the instability of the region, and can cause a security threat for the remaining world. This prominent youth population will cause areas of Africa to be a security threat not only to the continent of Africa, but also to the US. The youth bulge will affect top strategic interests for AFRICOM. Africans and the international community need to be aware of the potential impacts a youthful population can have on countries.

AFRICOM stands by its charter to be a security cooperation command and not a warfighting command. In December 2009, President Barack Obama made it clear he is committed to AFRICOM. He stresses the focus will be on the threat Africa poses when it comes to extremist group safe havens and keeping the stability in the oil producing regions due to the dependency America has on this resource. President Obama believes that Africa is a "central battlefield in America's campaign against Islamist extremist groups and is shown in his stepping up military operations to root out these extremists in Somalia and Mali." In an effort to make Africa more stable, it is imperative for AFRICOM to focus on developing the young, but also to continue focusing on the armed conflict plaguing the region and calling the young for participation. "Political conflict and instability in parts of Africa have caused human suffering on a massive scale and undermined economic, social, and political development."

Conclusion: Currently, the US has AFRICOM to address issues that present themselves on this continent. AFRICOM needs to focus on many of the potential issues that could arise from this youth bulge by working with the international community and other US government agencies to build the desired partnerships to create and maintain security and stability on the continent.

Preface

I would like to thank Dr. Eric Shibuya for helping me to find a topic and keeping me on track throughout this process. He generously gave his time and expertise to better my work and I thank you for your patience support. My knowledge of this important and complicated region has been greatly expanded.

Introduction

On October 8, 2008, the Department of Defense (DoD) established the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) “to enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.”¹ The continent of Africa is significant to the United States and its security in many aspects. Oil continues to be a growing concern for the US. President Bush, in his 2006 State of the Union address emphasized the need to look to Africa when “replacing more than 75 percent of our oil imports from the Middle East by 2025, making our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past.”² Other countries, such as China and India are showing an interest in the oil on the continent and the US needs to ensure a continued presence to secure this resource availability. Africa has a direct impact on the US in the ongoing “global war on terror and the potential of the poorly governed spaces of the continents to provide facilitating environments, recruits, and eventual targets for Islamist terrorists.”³

In response to these and other concerns, AFRICOM was created consolidate the US efforts to assist African nations. One factor that will have an impact on US security interests and will require actions from AFRICOM is the rapid growth of the youth population over the next half century in Africa. This rapid growth of youth in Africa is going to be a concern for the United States and its security and will have an impact on how AFRICOM continues to develop its strategy.

History

Africa has a history that has been plagued with conquest after conquest by rising powers culminating in the European domination reaching into the 19th century. The rulers came to power by controlling the natural resources found on the continent and engaging in trade of those

resources. When nationalism began to take shape, the European powers granted their territories independence, but the countries in Africa found themselves still influenced by the international community concerning the Cold War and desired aid to establish the stability on the continent. The instability that ensued on the continent resulted in coups giving in to “single-party” style governments.⁴ In addition, civil wars, disease, and famine continued to disrupt developments in these countries.

Today, Africa consists of 53 countries and “population experts estimate there are approximately 3000 distinct ethnic groups in Africa.”⁵ The interior is a plateau surrounded mostly by mountains and approximately one-third of the continent is desert due to lack of water. Africa continues to be rich in natural resources such as minerals, timber, and oil, but poor infrastructure, corruption, unstable governments, and the impact of disease has hindered the ability of governments desiring to provide a secure and stable environment for the people. This continued lack of security and stability on the continent has caught the attention of the United States, as there is a concern this unrest will cause second and third-order effects on the international community.

US Security Interests in Africa

The stability and security in Africa is essential to the security of the United States. The focus to Africa shifted in May of 2001 when Vice President Richard Cheney warned

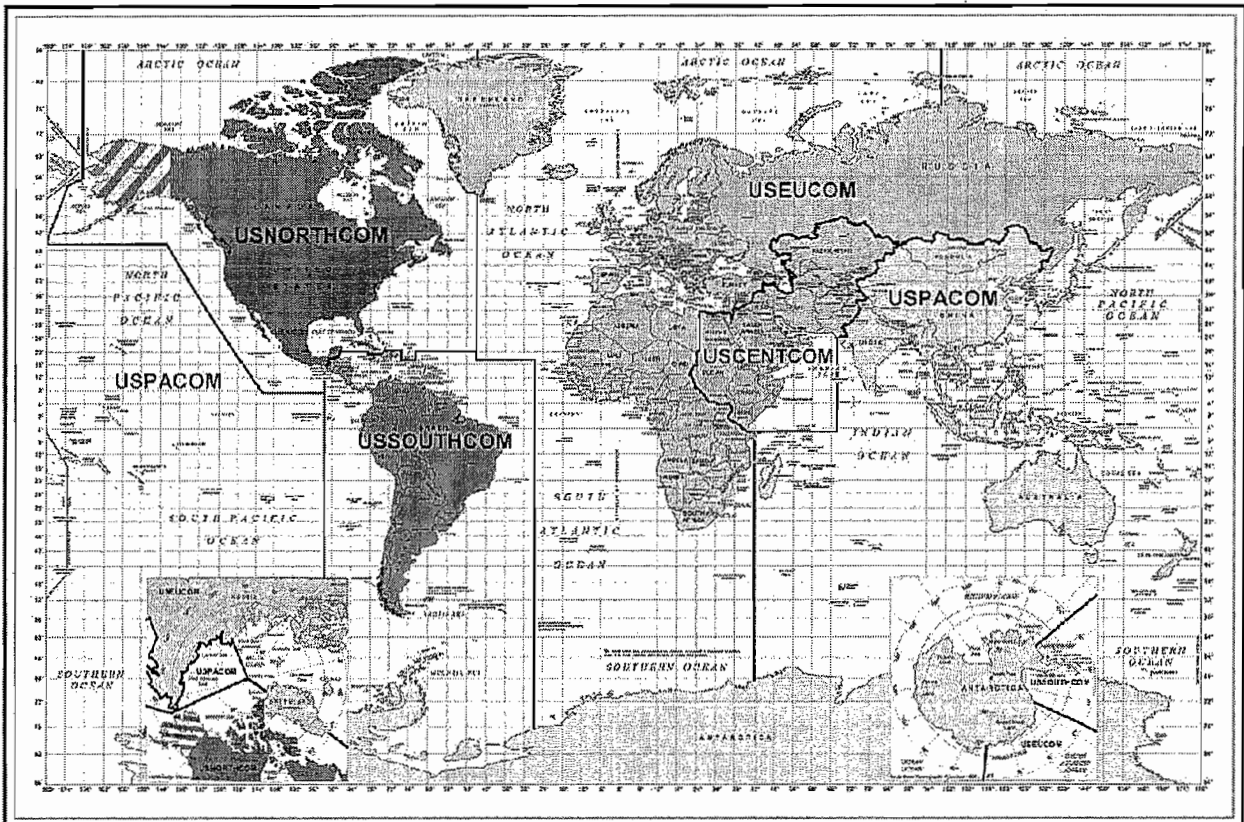
that the U.S. would grow increasingly dependent upon foreign oil in the years to come and recommended that as a matter of policy the Bush Administration work to increase production and export of oil from regions other than the Middle East, noting that Latin America and West Africa were likely to be the fastest growing sources of future U.S. oil imports. ... Three months later, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner declared that African oil "has become a national strategic interest."⁶

This change in priorities is evident in the National Security Strategy (NSS) documents. “Nigeria is Africa’s largest supplier of oil, and is the fifth largest global supplier of oil to the United States.”⁷ The instability in the Niger Delta region of Africa has caused a 25% output reduction and the “attacks on pipelines and other oil facilities” have caused oil prices throughout the world to be impacted.⁸

“The 2002 NSS states “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.”⁹ The 2006 version of the NSS stresses the need for stability in Africa and the impact on the US if the continent maintains the current path of failing states. The 2006 version recounts the “bitter” history of the continent and stresses, “the United States recognizes that our security depends upon partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile and failing states and bring ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies.”¹⁰

AFRICOM

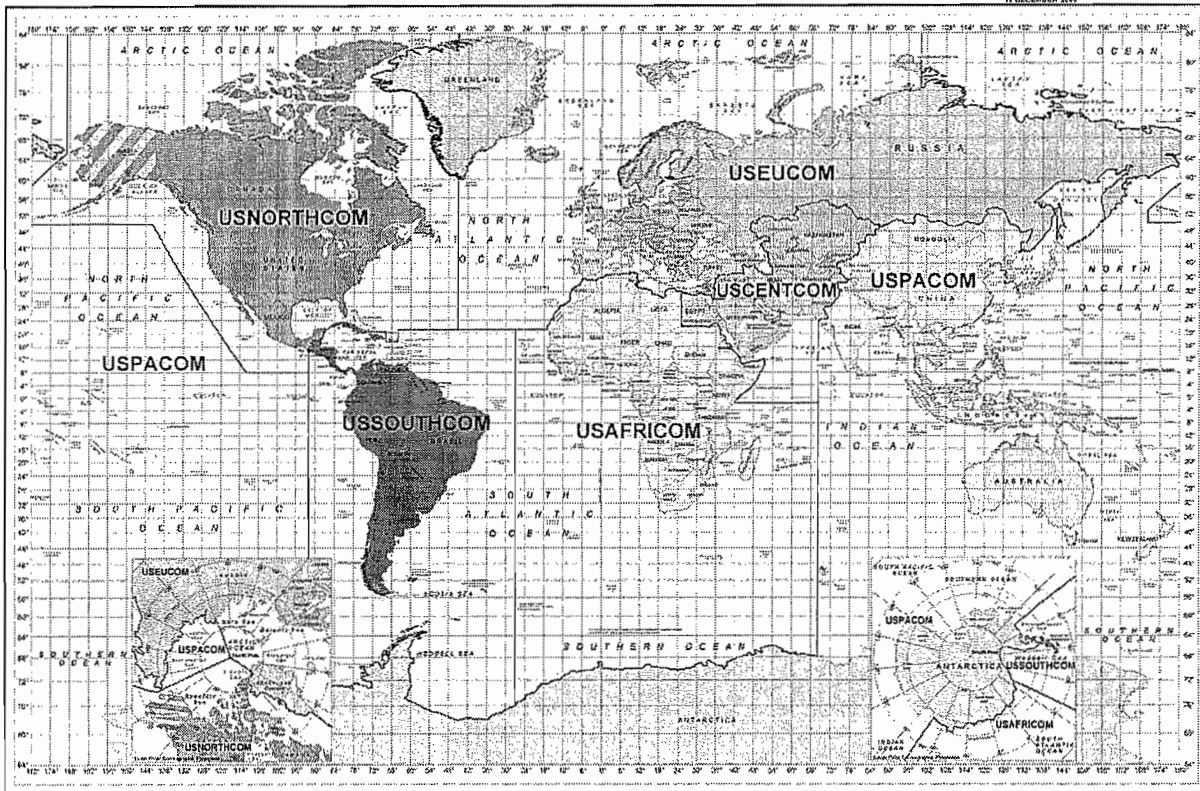
Prior to 2007, two combatant commands were responsible for Africa but other demands were taking priority over the growing concerns on the continent of Africa (see map below).



SERIES 1107
 EDITION 5-NHMA
 PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
 1:135,000,000
 THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
 OFFICE OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20315-5000
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http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2002/04/020417-D-6570-003.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2002/04/mil-020417-dod02.htm&usq=nHBaMIOVe7Hds-cgpuYb2Qsln4c=&h=782&w=1060&sz=300&hl=en&start=7&um=1&itbs=1&tbnid=RV9tEvI3Yla5LM:&tbnh=111&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dunified%2Bcommand%2Bplan%2Bmaps%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D1I7TSHB_en%26tbs%3Disch:1 (accessed April 17, 2010)

In an effort to centralize the focus, DoD created AFRICOM (see map below).

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State of Alaska assigned to USNORTHCOM's
Area of Responsibility. Japan assigned to
USCENTCOM's Area of Responsibility.

1:60,000,000

The USA needs permission but
doesn't ask for it. It's a mistake
to think that the USA is a
member of the UN. It's not.

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Source: US Department of Defense, Unified Command Plan,
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The mission statement of AFRICOM is, "Africa Command, in concert with other U.S.

Government agencies and international partners, conducts sustained security engagement

through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military

operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S.

foreign policy."¹¹ Security cooperation rather than warfighting has been the main effort since the

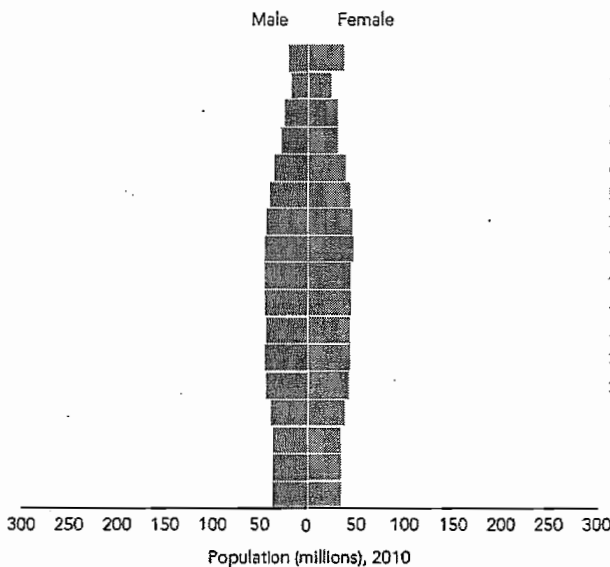
beginning of AFRICOM. This makes AFRICOM different than any other combatant command.

Rather than an initial focus on warfighting and the protection of US and allied interests, AFRICOM, from its inception, uses a “whole of government” approach and a focus on stability and security. The October 2, 2009 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report lays out the top strategic interests for AFRICOM. These include the African oil and global trade, armed conflicts, violent extremism, and disease. One aspect of the future that will require AFRICOM to engage the “whole of government” approach is the impact of the youth bulge occurring in Africa.

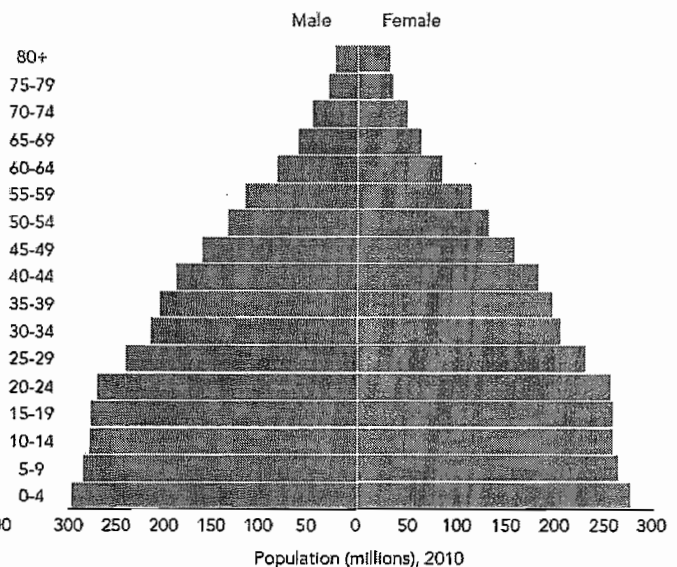
Youth Population Projections and Impacts

The world is fast approaching an era where “youth bulges” will occur in developing countries. According to the United Nations, the population of the world will exceed 9 billion by 2050. Numerous studies show that, overall the population of the world is aging among more developed countries with developing countries maintaining the world’s younger population (See graph below).

More Developed Countries Have Fewer Young People



Less Developed Countries Have More Young People

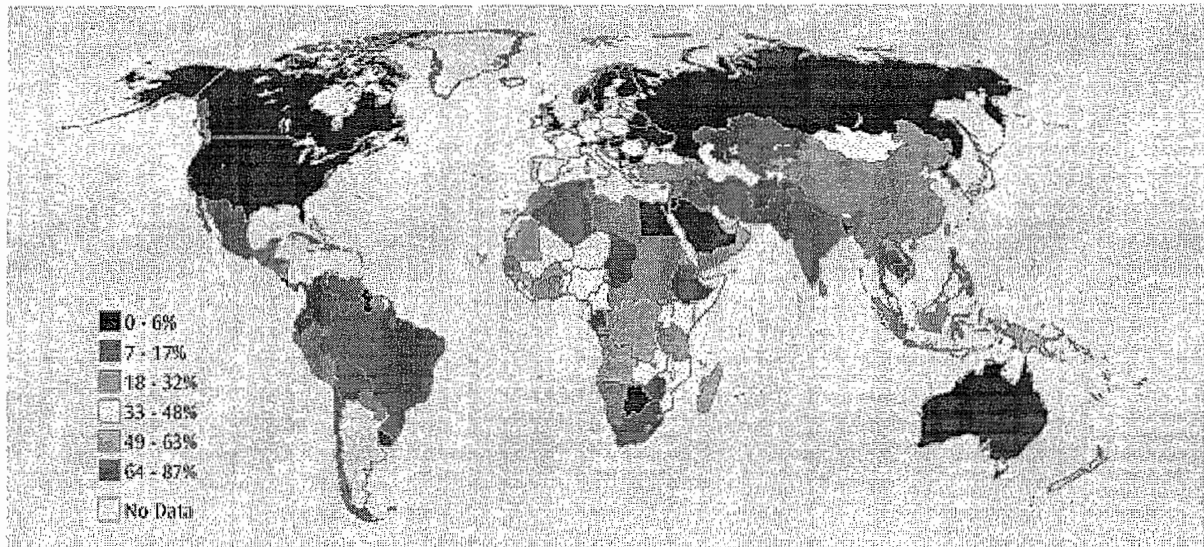


Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision* (2009).

“Africa’s share of the world population will rise to more than 18 percent by 2050”.¹² The continent has the fastest-growing and most youthful population in the world. Over 20 percent of Africa's population is between the ages of 15 to 24 with over 40 percent of Africa's population is under 15 years of age.¹³ Populations where youth are the majority population tend to experience strains on resources, conflict increasing the instability of the region, and can cause a security threat for the remaining world. This prominent youth population will cause areas of Africa to be a security threat not only to the continent of Africa, but also to the US. The youth bulge will affect top strategic interests for AFRICOM. Africans and the international community need to be aware of the potential impacts a youthful population can have on countries.¹⁴

Water

Africa is already experiencing strain on its resources from water and food demand to the need for land ripe for crops and a youthful population will add to this struggle. Even though Africa has many renewable water sources, the increasing population influences the sustainability of this resource. Africa’s climate varies across the continent with areas of “severe aridity with limited freshwater resources like the Sahara and Kalahari deserts in the northern and southern parts, to the tropical belt of mid-Africa with abundant freshwater resources.”¹⁵ Access to a safe water supply is essential to sustain life and with the increasing population, access to safe drinking water will only increase. The map below illustrates the percentage of a population that has reasonable access to safe drinking water.



Source: UNDP, "Human Development Report 2004", Tables 7, 33, www.undp.org; <http://www.theglobaleducationproject.org/earth/human-conditions.php#13> (accessed January 15, 2010)

"Reasonable access to safe drinking water is defined as the availability of at least 20 litres per person per day from an improved source within 1 kilometer of the user's dwelling."¹⁶

According to the Environment Protection Agency, "children, especially infants, drink more fluid per pound of body weight than adults."¹⁷ Very young children with partially developed immune systems are less able to fight microbes in drinking water that may induce diarrhea and vomiting, causing children to become dehydrated more quickly than adults.¹⁸

Water pollution from mining, farming, and poor sewage infrastructure is a growing problem in Africa. The waste from mines and farm pesticides, as well as humans, drain into the water resources blocking storm drains. A recent example occurred in 2009 in South Africa where deaths from a cholera epidemic infected displaced people who live near the river and use the river to cross over from Zimbabwe looking for a place to live. Due to poor sanitation, this disease found its way into the Limpopo River which is, a source of water for the two countries and flows along the border.¹⁹ According to the magazine, Science in Africa, "cholera occurs in epidemic form when there is rapid urbanization without adequate sanitation and access to clean drinking water."²⁰ With the rapid growth of the youth population, urban areas will have

difficulty preserving its water sources with displaced persons attempting to move into these areas.

Food

Water will not be the only scarce resource as the young population in Africa grows. Food security is another concern. USAID defines food security as “when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.”²¹ During the food crisis of 2006 to 2008, “staple food prices in developing countries increased by 48 percent causing an additional 100 million people to be deprived of access to adequate food.”²² Specifically in the sub-Saharan Africa region, “hunger now affects one out of every three people.”²³ This worsening of hunger conditions for those who were already food insecure impacts other requirements such the use and quality of land.

Land Degradation

With the increase in population and food insecurity, many cultures resort to inappropriate farming practices. Inappropriate farming practices include the pollution of the surrounding areas through fertilizers and pesticides and not restoring the nutrients to the farming land needed to continue crop growth. These practices “impoverish and erode the soil; reduce vegetation; over-use and improperly used agrochemicals; and impact water resource management resulting in severe land degradation.”²⁴ With the majority of populations in Africa in rural areas, land is essential for survival and development. Land degradation is a serious concern to areas of Eastern Africa. Land degradation is the most prevalent in the areas with the highest population density. “Rwanda has the highest density of population in Africa, with 340 people per km²; its population is growing at 2.1 percent per year. Burundi, with a population density of 265.8, is growing at 3.1 percent per year.”²⁵ As seen in the table below, “Burundi and Rwanda face a serious threat of

land degradation, where about 76 and 71 percent of the respective country's total area encounters very severe degradation problems.” With the increase in youth population, families need additional space to raise their children causing deforestation to continue to be a concern in Africa. “The declining rainfall in interior West African countries has in part been attributed to excessive clearing of the coastal rainforests.”²⁶

Land degradation in Eastern Africa						
Country	Total area		Severe		Very severe	
	'000 km ²	area (%)	'000 km ² *	area (%)	'000 km ² *	area (%)
Burundi	26	0	0	76	0	
Djibouti	23	0	0	0	0	
Eritrea	94	55	51.7	8	4.136	
Ethiopia	1 101	8	89.09	20	17.616	
Kenya	569	19	109.11	11	11.8921	
Rwanda	25	0	0	71	0	
Somalia	627	0	0	15	0	
Uganda	200	41	82	12	9.84	
Total	2 665		329.89		43.4841	
Total (severe + v. severe)*	373.3741	14.01				
* aggregated data						
Source: FAOSTAT 2005						

Source: FAOSTAT 2005 http://www.eoearth.org/image/Land_degradation_E_Africa.JPG (accessed February 8, 2010).

Disease

Africa is plagued with unsanitary conditions. From the contaminated drinking water by human and animal feces to pollution from the fertilizers and pesticides, the spread of diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever are of great concern. However, diseases caused from unsanitary conditions are not the only concern. A prominent disease that is a large concern for the countries in Africa is HIV/AIDS. While the overall percentages of young people living with HIV in Africa has declined, “in 2007, youth accounted for many of the new HIV cases—45 percent of all those newly infected with HIV at ages 15 and older were between the ages of 15

and 24.”²⁷ “Sub-Saharan Africa is home to approximately ten percent of the world’s population and two-thirds of this population is infected with HIV.”²⁸ The 2009 World Population Highlights reports, “HIV spreads fastest among vulnerable populations living in poverty without access to education and health services that can mitigate transmission.”²⁹ Even with the death rates from HIV, the expected birth rates will exceed those death rates and guarantee “rapid population growth”.³⁰ The risks associated with a high HIV infection rate among a young population include impacts on business, health care, and households. In business, “employers are hard hit by a loss of workers, absenteeism, the rising costs of providing health-care benefits (including the expensive AIDS drugs), and the payment of death benefits.”³¹ With the increase in health care, health care systems begin to focus on the HIV/AIDS disease at the expense of other diseases. Other diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis increase with due to the weakened immune systems of individuals with HIV/AIDS. Households feel the impact of the disease when infected parents are unable to provide for their children in the education realm or supervision realm. With the factors of water and food scarcity and disease considered, the risk of additional diseases for the young population infected with HIV/AIDS is likely and the implications on the future of a country is impacted by the lack of stability in the medium ages.

Internal Movement and Employment

In 2001, “Sub-Saharan Africa had approximately 34 percent of the population living in urban areas, by 2020 it is predicted that nearly half (46.2%) of the population will be urban.”³² As populations grow, especially younger populations, individuals tend to migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search of more resources and new sources of labor. Unemployment becomes a concern when a country has a large youth population migrating to urban areas because there is the potential the workforce will surpass the available work. Conflict can arise from this excess

workforce because some youth facing few job prospects and little hope of future advancement may see little alternative to criminal activities or even insurgent violence. Jorge Saba Arbache of the Office of the Chief Economist, Africa Region at the World Bank says "Unemployed and underemployed [youth] are more exposed to conflicts and illegal activities—many of them fall prey to armed and rebel groups."³³ These actions not only threaten the security and stability in the direct area, "but it also risks destroying the political and social structures even of countries that are at present stable, especially with the future of the region being threatened by the growing numbers of youths who lack prospects of ever being able to work for a reasonable living."³⁴

The AFRICOM website states, "Rapid population growth, particularly a disproportionate "youth bulge"; will exceed governments' ability to provide basic goods, services, and jobs."³⁵ As those individuals who previously worked in the agriculture workforce in rural areas move to urban areas, there is less of a dependence on agriculture and more of a dependence on local food production.³⁶ "In Mozambique, for example, urban residents purchase 83 percent of their food, while rural residents purchase only 30 percent."³⁷ If a country does not plan for the growing youth population, as this growth moves to be older, it will place strains on social services and retirement systems in that economy. "This is currently felt in Western Europe and North America, where the global financial markets crisis of 2008 is reducing the value of pension investments and the population is aging."³⁸

Violent Conflict and Extremism

There are many examples throughout history that show countries with large youth populations have political crisis. Violent conflict is a reason for considerably large movements of people throughout the continent.

In eastern and central Africa substantial refugee movements from Sudan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda to countries such as Egypt, Chad, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and in West Africa, civil wars in Sierra Leone (1991-2001), Liberia (1989–1996 and 1999–2003), and Guinea (1999-2000) caused at least 1.1 million refugees and internally displaced persons to leave their homes.³⁹

“Most major revolutions—the English Revolution of the seventeenth century, the French revolution of the eighteenth century and most twentieth-century revolutions in developing countries—have occurred where exceptionally large youth bulges were present.”⁴⁰ Jack Goldstone reports, “the rapid growth of youth can undermine existing political coalitions, creating instability.”⁴¹ With the increase of youth come new ideas and challenges to the normal ways of life, i.e. religion and authority. This concern of violent extremism is valid “because most young people have fewer responsibilities for families and careers, they are relatively easily mobilized for social or political conflicts.”⁴²

Natural Resources

Throughout Africa, minerals mined range from coal and lead to gold and diamonds. Even though these mines provide a need for local labor, these minerals also attract foreign attention. Local workers seeing their national resources provide wealth for the global community and not their own country become a source of divergence and can draw the youth into criminal actions.⁴³ For example, “the Niger Delta and diamond-rich forests of the Sierra Leone/Liberia border are full of dispossessed young people, promised much by the smell and hum of global wealth creation taking place under their noses, but bereft of education or long-term job prospects, and increasingly animated by a deep sense of grievance about their predicament as social outcasts.”⁴⁴

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East are two resource-rich regions with rapid population growth rates. Both regions have experienced significant political instability and warfare, and

both are home to strategic mineral resources, particularly oil. The coastal areas of Africa present “havens for smuggling, human and drug trafficking, illegal immigration, piracy, oil bunkering, and poaching of fisheries.”⁴⁵ In the Niger Delta, theft of oil is a problem and the lack of control over shipping ports, harbors, and overall oil production is vulnerable to attacks by extremists or other armed conflict groups. Alex de Sherbinin states, “the U.S. access to strategic resources has in some cases been blocked by violent conflict partially attributable to population pressures.”⁴⁶ A young population upset about their national resources flowing out of the country and not seeming to provide any security, gains access to arms and disrupts the process flow. This is the youth way of voicing their dissatisfaction and calling attention to their troubles.⁴⁷

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), is one of the largest militias in the Niger Delta region. This organization’s goals are to expose the exploitation and oppression of the people in the Niger Delta and to highlight the destruction the foreign oil companies are doing to the environment. In an interview with one of the group's leaders, who used the alias Major-General Godswill Tamuno, the BBC reported that MEND was fighting for "total control" of the Niger Delta's oil wealth, saying local people had not gained from the riches under the ground and the region's creeks and swamps.⁴⁸ In 2006, MEND claimed responsibility for the capture of four oil workers and continued attacks of sabotage, destruction of property, and kidnapping have led to the oil output for that region to decrease by one-third.⁴⁹ On January 10, 2010, Chevron, a major United States oil company, “was forced to shut down 20,000 barrels per day of crude oil production following an attack on its Makaraba-Utonana pipeline in Delta State.”⁵⁰

Potential Benefits of a Youthful Population

While a youth bulge is a security concern, it also has potential benefits because these individuals will reach working-age and bring with it “improvements in society through education, technology and increased economic output because more people are working.”⁵¹ If a country is able to keep their youth between the ages of 15-18 involved in education and employed then there will be a larger workforce available when these individuals reach 18-24. This larger and more educated workforce can provide improvements in economic stability and expand capabilities for a country. In addition, “better educated women rely less on their children to be a source of support” as the parent ages.⁵² With this decline in fertility, the developing countries of Africa have a potential opportunity with this youth population in that there will be a larger portion of working-age individuals compared to the children and elderly population. Again, with this larger working population, the increased economic benefits of a country can better support the young and elderly population. This difference provides an opportunity for more income to be available for each dependent raising the prospect of improving education across the board.

AFRICOM Response

The 2009 Africa Command Posture Statement emphasizes the command “strategy of sustained security engagement focuses our military-to-military programs on conflict and crisis prevention rather than reaction.”⁵³ This statement covers what steps AFRICOM is taking to counteract negative actions in Africa. The DoD contribution to combat the violent extremism in Africa is Operation ENDURING FREEDOM-TRANS SAHARA, part of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). This multi-faceted, multi-year U.S. Government (USG) program aims to defeat terrorist organizations by strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region’s security forces, promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and reinforcing bilateral

military ties with the United States.⁵⁴ This partnership hopes to assist the African countries with operating safe havens to improve their control over their states and prevent these safe havens from being available to extremist groups. An important note is the military train and equip component of TSCTP is primarily funded with Department of State Peacekeeping Operations funds. Another effort in combating the violent extremism is Operation OBJECTIVE VOICE. The goal of this operation is to broadcast messages with African governments across the countries to counter extremist propaganda.⁵⁵ AFRICOM sends teams out to countries to employ radio, television, newspapers, billboards, and posters to get the message across to the people. Additionally, these teams use resources already in place for these messages with the desired effect to be these message are coming from the people, not just the United States.⁵⁶ Some of the programs developed and provided to the public include “Ethnic and Religious Tolerance programs, Anti-Smuggling/Anti-Trafficking programs, and Conflict Resolution training.”⁵⁷

AFRICOM provides military mentor teams to the Department of State led Global Peace Operations Initiative to enhance the capabilities needed to conduct peace support operations. One concern AFRICOM needs to have with providing military to assist with training is the disease that dominates the young population in Africa. As mentioned earlier, HIV/AIDS is prominent in the young population. This young population is a resource for the military in peace support. To counter this threat, AFRICOM is providing funding along with the Department of State to provide prevention messages to African military members and families, emphasis to leaders on implementation of policies and supporting counseling and testing centers.⁵⁸

AFRICOM stands by its charter to be a security cooperation command and not a warfighting command. AFRICOM needs to be concerned with the activities of MEND and must be prepared

not only to protect the U.S. companies, but the African population in the region as well. MEND recently released a statement saying

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta warns all oil companies to halt operations as any operational installation attacked will be burnt to the ground. Oil companies are responsible for the safety and welfare of their workers and will bear the guilt should any harm come upon their staff in the event of an attack. By now they should know the military Joint Task Force (JTF) cannot protect their installations or staff in the event of an attack.⁵⁹

Since AFRICOM is a new combatant command, financial and manpower resources are being redirected from other requirements. With the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, resources have been worn down and readiness has been impacted. This is a cause for concern as the issues facing Africa with a rise in the youth population are in the near future. There is already concern that AFRICOM is not able to make good on the goals it is currently trying to accomplish. For example, the Associate Director of Program Development and Policy at Africa Faith & Justice Network, Beth Tuckey, reports “in northeast D.R. Congo where the Lord’s Resistance Army has displaced at least 100,000 civilians and killed over 900 as a result of a poorly planned military attack.”⁶⁰

In December 2009, President Barack Obama made it clear he is committed to AFRICOM. He stresses the focus will be on the threat Africa poses when it comes to extremist group safe havens and keeping the stability in the oil producing regions due to the dependency America has on this resource. President Obama believes that Africa is a “central battlefield in America’s campaign against Islamist extremist groups and is shown in his stepping up military operations to root out these extremists in Somalia and Mali.”⁶¹

An Islamic extremist group in Somalia calls themselves Al Shabab (The Youth) and an entire generation, those born after 1990, has never known a functional government or a society with a constitution and a rule of law. Denied an education, cut off from the outside world, overcome by a sense of injustice,

despair and anger, these redundant Muslim youth were easy prey for al Qaeda. First lured by money, then brainwashed through jihadist lectures and sermons, they were found eager to give their life the meaning it never had: the ultimate sacrifice for Islam.⁶²

AFRICOM Continued and Future Operations

Along with the programs already created, AFRICOM must recognize the youth bulge and the potential impacts on the continent and international security. There is not much AFRICOM can do about the youth bulge directly, it is coming, but leaders can put effort into the implications that arise from a youth bulge. “Two major international studies of youth, by the World Bank and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, agree on the most critical actions to be taken today to seize upon the potential of young people to improve future development prospects.”⁶³ The studies suggest actions to implement now to expand the opportunities of the young and give them the skills to be productive members of their country.

The first action is to improve the quantity and quality of schooling. By improving education for the young, to include women, it has been shown fertility rates will lower evening out the population and reducing the dependency of the young in the future. “Ensuring that secondary school and university is relevant for the skills needed in the workforce” will improve contribution of the workforce and enhance productivity.⁶⁴ By easing entry into the work environment, encouraging training, and ensuring equal treatment for male and female youth, develops the skills needed to “build the human capital allowing young people to escape poverty and lead better, more fulfilling lives.”⁶⁵

Through the “expansion and bolstering of family planning programs, countries can delay births, reduce unintended pregnancies (linking HIV prevention), and improve maternal and child health.”⁶⁶ Estimates show only 30 percent of young men and 19 percent of young women in

lower developed countries have a comprehensive knowledge of HIV and how to avoid infection. Throughout the world, young people have come up with innovative campaigns to educate their peers on the transmission of HIV, how to prevent infection, and how to avoid unwanted pregnancies. In Uganda, the “Enter-Educate” weekly radio show produced by the Straight Talk Foundation by and for young people with efforts to reach out to peers across the country on sexual health.⁶⁷ Finally, “combine efforts of various government departments to enhance youth skills and opportunities such as income generating skills.”⁶⁸

In an effort to make Africa more stable, it is imperative for AFRICOM to focus on developing the young, but also to continue focusing on the armed conflict plaguing the region and calling the young for participation. “Political conflict and instability in parts of Africa have caused human suffering on a massive scale and undermined economic, social, and political development.”⁶⁹ The United Nations has been engaged in peace operations in Africa for many years. Countries, such as Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa, have consistently contributed to these peacekeeping operations, many “lacking the command and control, training, equipment, and logistics capability to effectively participate in such efforts.”⁷⁰ This instability has required extensive international aid and defense resulting in countries determining it is more cost-effective to train and assist the African militaries in getting and maintaining their security. Focusing on the continued training of the African militaries is essential to keeping the violent conflict at a minimum while addressing other aspects.

Many reports on combating terrorism have warned that terror networks are present and continue to operate in Africa providing foreign fighters in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.⁷¹ As the Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations, Vincent Kern stated, “Africa has been, is now, and will be into the foreseeable future ripe for

terrorists and acts of terrorism.”⁷² Of particular concern are the areas that do not have government and where the potential for government is uncertain. “In the National Security Strategy, the Bush Administration declares regional conflicts can arise from a wide variety of causes, including poor governance, external aggression, competing claims, internal revolt, tribal rivalries, and ethnic or religious hatreds. If left unaddressed, however, these different causes lead to the same ends: failed states, humanitarian disasters, and ungoverned areas that can become safe havens for terrorists.”⁷³ Continued work through the Department of State is vital to establish governing bodies able to maintain security and stability during times of conflict and to “root out” extremists.

Outside Organizational Assistance

AFRICOM is proud of the fact it works with the interagency and is not the warfighting combatant command like the others. With this interagency cooperation, AFRICOM can also engage other organizations with efforts to improve conditions in Africa. AFRICOM can engage the US Department of Education in their attempts to improve the schooling environment for Africans. Another option is to go to inner city schools with similar situations as the African communities and see what those districts have done to improve their attendance, atmosphere, and success of their schools and communities. As for combating HIV and other diseases, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention can assist in educating individuals in healthy living, preventing the spread of diseases, and ways to respond in case of an emergency. By engaging this organization, AFRICOM can provide additional manpower in their efforts to educate the population and improve living conditions.

Conclusion

This paper explains the current expectations of the youth population and the expected “youth bulge” on the continent of Africa. The potential impacts of this youth population range from additional pressure on the natural resources and increasing demand on food adding to the current food security issue. Additionally, impacts will be felt with increases in armed conflict and the possible increase in violent extremism due to second and third affects felt as the youth population attempts to carve their place in an environment that does not seem to be prepared for them to enter. “In Arab nations such as Lebanon (150,000 dead in the civil war between 1975 and 1990) or Algeria (200,000 dead in the Islamists' war against their own people between 1999 and 2006), the slaughter abated only when the fertility rates in these countries fell from seven children per woman to fewer than two.”⁷⁴ An impact as the population ages will be the shifting of focus on caring for the elderly community increasing costs in health care, structures, and other social services. Currently, the US has AFRICOM to address issues that present themselves on this continent. AFRICOM needs to focus on many of the potential issues that could arise from this youth bulge by working with the international community and other US government agencies to build the desired partnerships to create and maintain security and stability on the continent.

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