

## **AFRICOM: STATEMENT OF CONCERN**

We are a group of concerned U.S. and Africa based organizations and individuals opposed to the creation of AFRICOM. AFRICOM represents the expansion of the role of the U.S. military – potentially shifting the face of disaster response and humanitarian assistance from civilians to military personnel. Our vision is a comprehensive U.S. foreign policy grounded in true partnership with the African Union, African governments, and civil society on peace, justice, security, and development.

### **Key Facts and Concerns Regarding the Creation of a U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)**

#### **Background:**

- On February 6, 2007, the Bush Administration announced plans to establish a unified U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), stating that it “will 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.”
- Currently, US military engagement on the continent is under three separate commands – U.S. European Command (EUCOM), U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM).
- Since 2002, with the establishment of the Combined Joint Task Force: Horn of Africa, the United States military has sought unprecedented access to the continent of Africa. The Global War on Terror has changed the geopolitical landscape and has resulted in U.S. privileging of military relationships over development and diplomacy.
- The projection that Africa may supply as much as 25 percent of all US oil imports by 2015 only enhances the strategic importance of the region, particularly in light of increased competition with China.

#### **Our primary concern as organizations promoting peace, development, and justice in Africa lies in the projected structure and mandate of AFRICOM:**

- The primary concern is that U.S. – Africa policy will be driven by military engagement rather than diplomacy, development, and a genuine partnership.
- Humanitarian work previously done by State Department and USAID will now fall under DOD directive. Tasks such as drilling wells and building schools that were once done by individuals in civilian clothing will now be carried out in part by Americans in uniforms wielding guns. The resulting dual-nature of the military will not only be confusing to African civilians but blurs the roles of armed forces and civil society.
- The Bush Administration is mapping out an approach to Africa that is more focused on security and resources than the development of Africa’s economies. This could lead to further instability and insecurity throughout the continent.
- It is in the long-term strategic interest of the U.S. to amplify ‘soft power’. An alternative framework that includes development and diplomacy, rather than militarism would reduce conflict and sources of terror in the region.

#### **Concerns from the continent:**

- On September 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, Nigerian media reported that the Nigerian government began meetings with West African governments and the leadership of the African Union to oppose AFRICOM -- the Pentagon's Africa command -- from establishing itself in the Gulf of Guinea region. This follows a similar decision by the 14 Nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) which recently refused the entrance of U.S. soldiers on Southern African soil. This growing opposition to AFRICOM should be taken into serious consideration as the Bush Administration furthers its plans for military expansion on the African continent.
- To date, the only African government to come out in full public support of AFRICOM is Liberia. Others, such as South Africa and Nigeria, have expressed deep concern over the role of AFRICOM and an expanded U.S. military footprint on African soil.
- While some African officials see AFRICOM as an opportunity for development and capacity-building, others recognize the inherent risks in having a U.S. military base on their own soil. There are fears that a country hosting AFRICOM will become a terrorist target or will become militarized simply for the sake of U.S. security and resource interests.
- African leaders are also apprehensive about the extent to which AFRICOM may violate rules of sovereignty and take the place of African Union (AU) forces that are very capable of defending the continent if given adequate resources.
- Local NGOs fear that the U.S. military will take their place in the development of their own communities.
- Civil society organizations throughout the continent have begun to speak out in strong objection to the command, insisting that it will destabilize an already fragile continent.

These voices must be heard. The State Department and DOD should open a public forum between governments, civil society, and the AU to ensure that every opinion is freely expressed.

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Africa Faith and Justice Network  
African Security Research Project  
Arms and Security Initiative, New America Foundation  
Association of Concerned Africa Scholars  
Center for Democratic Empowerment, Liberia  
Foreign Policy In Focus  
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