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"Exploring the U.S. Africa Command and a New Strategic Relationship with Africa"

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A Statement by

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Introduction

Senators Feingold and Sununu, I am grateful to you both for the opportunity to address the important and timely subject of AFRICOM and the United States' emerging strategic relationship with Africa. I wish also to thank you for your leadership on these and other Africa policy matters.

CSIS has taken a strong interest in AFRICOM over the past year, and had the good fortune to discuss AFRICOM's rationale and implementation plans with General Craddock in late 2006, as he was heading to Stuttgart to assume his duties as Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces Europe and Supreme Commander of NATO. In May of this year, CSIS also hosted General "Kip" Ward, EUCOM's Deputy Commander in Chief and the current nominee to be the first Commander in Chief of AFRICOM.

Since the Command was first announced by President Bush on February 6, 2007, the absence of an empowered senior AFRICOM leader has been a serious constraint and accounts in part for the often ineffective communication of AFRICOM's mandate and vision. Once General Ward is in place, his leadership will be an invaluable asset in moving AFRICOM forward.

Achieving a successful launch of AFRICOM will not be easy or simple, and will take a determined, sustained effort over several years. Skeptics here in the United States, and in Africa and elsewhere abroad, will continue to raise tough issues that will have to be answered more effectively than has been the case up to now.

Most significant will be overcoming the widespread fear that AFRICOM signals the militarization of U.S. engagement in Africa, at the expense of developmental and diplomatic interests.

Achieving balance and legitimacy requires improved *strategic communications* by AFRICOM: high-level reaffirmation, backed by action, that AFRICOM is pursuing a genuinely balanced civil-military approach that is answerable to civilian U.S. policy oversight, that is responsive to African perceptions of which security threats matter most, and that cements support within Africa from a range of stable, well-governed states and their citizenry. At the end of the day, the test of AFRICOM's sustainability will be whether it establishes durable and mutually advantageous partnerships with African interests, both governmental and non-governmental. Today it is not clear whether that condition will be met.

Success also requires a detailed action plan that spells out in concrete terms what the value-added will be from creating a unified Africa command. Today, it is not clear whether the creation of this new entity will result in significant gains over existing U.S. security programs in Africa.

Success, both at home and in Africa, also reaches beyond AFRICOM's vision, structure and leadership. No less important, it requires getting serious about strengthening chronically weak U.S. civilian agencies, most importantly the State Department's Africa Bureau, USAID's Africa Bureau, and U.S. missions in Africa.

AFRICOM aspires to be a new type of interagency command, which presumes a robust and functioning interagency process. For that to happen, however, requires a systematic effort to reverse the decline of the U.S. civilian agencies responsible for policies and programs in Africa: to make them better led, better staffed and resourced, and more coherently organized. For a very long time, the administration and Congress have been complacent, as U.S. Africa policy capacities have been steadily hollowed out.

So long as the State Department and other civilian agencies are exceptionally weak, an emerging AFRICOM will inevitably be seen as domineering. AFRICOM should not be blamed for this phenomenon, and its progress should not be held back on account of weak civilian agencies. Rather, simultaneous action is needed on two fronts: to correct structural weaknesses in our civilian agencies, at the same time that priority is given to strengthening AFRICOM's strategic outreach and action plan.

I will concentrate my remarks on three key issues: what is stake for the United States in the creation of AFRICOM; the difficulties in selling AFRICOM internally within the U.S. government and within Africa; and practical suggestions on the way forward from here.

1. AFRICOM is a potentially valuable instrument for advancing U.S. *global* interests.

In the last decade, and especially in recent years, U.S. national interests in Africa have risen significantly.

For a long time, we have recognized the importance to U.S. values and norms of responding to Africa's humanitarian needs and assisting in ending Africa's chronic conflicts and overcoming poverty. We have recognized how vital it is to support the continent's transition to multiparty democracies, greater respect for human liberties, improved management of national economies, stronger curbs on corruption, and greater integration of Africa into global markets.

What is new in recent years is the rise of *strategic interests that are global in nature.*

These include *energy*, where we today rely on West Africa for approximately 22 percent of U.S. oil imports, and where in the near future we will cross the 25 percent mark.

They include *counter-terrorism*, concentrated but not confined to the Horn of Africa and West Africa.

And they include accelerated competition for influence with *China* and other Asian countries which have swiftly expanded their engagement in Africa.

In line with these rising interests, we have seen a steady proliferation of worthy U.S. security programs in Africa, some traditional, other non-traditional. In an organic and ad hoc fashion, the United States has created multiple partnerships with willing African counterparts that meet new, emerging needs.

The United States has invested in Africa's peacekeeping capacity building (ACOTA, the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program), in officer training (International Military Education and Training, MET, and programs at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies); and in HIV/AIDS programs (in close partnership with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR). It has concluded multiple access agreements, launched an important and promising effort to bolster maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, and introduced key counter-terrorism programs. In East Africa, most notable is the Djibouti-based Combined Joint Task Force/Horn of Africa (CFJT-HOA) and the related East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative. In West Africa is the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative.

So why the need for AFRICOM?

We have reached a tipping point. Africa matters increasingly to U.S. national interests. Security programs that require careful management have grown in number. U.S. officials responsible for these programs increasingly need to approach them as a top priority – day-in and day-out – and not a second- or third-tier concern. That requires a unity of effort that transcends the present artificial geographic "seams" that separate Africa into a U.S. EUCOM zone separate from the Horn of Africa that is the responsibility of the U.S. Central Command. (The U.S. Pacific Command is responsible for Africa's Indian Ocean island nations.) It requires stronger leadership, coherence and integration of programs, and more effective management. And it requires confidence that the resources and commitments needed over the long-term will be there, and that Congress and the American people will be supportive. These are the accumulating concerns that AFRICOM is intended to address.

No less important, AFRICOM provides the important opportunity to experiment and do things differently. It is a command that can place capacity-building in Africa at the center of its mandate, that holds the promise of creating innovative, integrated civilian-military approaches, and that can try out new structural arrangements that feature regional centers.

2. AFRICOM's launch has moved quickly, but has also generated hard lessons that now need heightened attention.

AFRICOM is less than one year in the making. President Bush made the decision to move ahead with AFRICOM only last November and officially launched the effort in early February of this year. The start-up team led by Admiral Robert Moeller moved rapidly to devise a launch plan. Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry led two U.S. delegations to Africa and Europe, in April and June, and the White House nominated General Kip Ward just this month to be AFRICOM's first Commander in Chief.

Considerable progress has been achieved, in a compressed period of time, reliant on the intense efforts of many dedicated officials such as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Theresa Whalen, a gifted expert on Africa security who has been indefatigable in developing AFRICOM.

But things have lately not gone well, in Africa and Europe, and internally within the U.S. government.

Across Africa, and in Europe as well, critics in governments and media alike have made headway in casting AFRICOM as the triumph of militarism, in which U.S. engagement in Africa will now be dominated by energy security and the Global War on Terror, along with fending off China's competition. According to this view, the shift from scattered U.S. security programs to a single U.S. command is a sharp turn to a Cold War-type competition. As in that earlier period, the United States will disregard the long-term negative consequences of its engagement in places like Somalia, Ethiopia, and West Africa, show no real interest in an integrated civilian-military approach, and make no long-term sustained commitments to build African capacities.

To counter this critique, AFRICOM's leadership needs to better address the political risks and fears felt by African leadership, and better define what the value-added will be for African partners. These issues are especially acute for the candidate countries in Africa where AFRICOM might in the future have a physical presence.

Africa's political leaders have up to now been willing and able to strike new partnerships with the U.S. military on security cooperation without confronting much domestic political opposition. The impending creation of a unified, conspicuous Africa Command fundamentally changes the context and invites intensified scrutiny. Controversy over the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its aftermath have fueled skepticism of U.S. security engagement in Africa and the larger concern with the Department of Defense's expanding dominance of U.S. foreign policy and expanded assistance authorities. As a consequence of these factors, many African leaders face rising pressure from within their own ranks and from skeptical media and non-governmental groups to justify security relationships with the United States.

Selling U.S. capacity-building activities in Africa is made no easier by live terrorist threats and in some cases active U.S. counter-terror operations. This problem is most pronounced in the Horn (especially Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan), North Africa, and East Africa's Swahili Coast (especially Kenya and Tanzania).

Within north African countries, where Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (formerly the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat) seeks to leverage internal radical Islamist sentiments and has had recent success in carrying out terror bombings in many major urban centers, there are obvious risks of identifying with AFRICOM.

In Horn of Africa countries, witness to the disturbing events unfolding in Somalia, the U.S. association with the Ethiopian intervention there, and the subsequent rendition of prisoners from Kenya to Ethiopia, there is an understandable wariness of the creation of a strong, unified U.S. Africa command. Countries such as Sudan and Eritrea see AFRICOM as a direct threat. Other established security partners with the United States, such as Kenya and Ethiopia, fear domestic reactions and violent targeting of a U.S. presence.

To offset apprehension and risk requires spelling out the concrete benefits that will accrue from the launch of AFRICOM, beyond existing programs. This has yet to happen. In the meantime, China has dramatically expanded its military training and provision of equipment, and tied that enlarged security relationship to a broader south-south political alliance. Normatively and operationally, China actively vies with the United States for influence and access.

Within the State Department and USAID, there is widespread apprehension that AFRICOM will overwhelm civilian-led policy leadership and the interagency process. Accordingly, commitments from the State Department and USAID to join AFRICOM ranks have been ambivalent and desultory.

3. Suggestions for a way forward.

There are a few key steps that can strengthen AFRICOM's approach and prospects for success.

First, AFRICOM's leadership and its champions in the White House and elsewhere should overtly reaffirm its core values and clarify its mandate. That should involve outlining how operationally AFRICOM's work will be answerable to civilian policymakers in Washington, how the interagency process will actually operate, how AFRICOM's transparence will be guaranteed, and how it will advance democratic governance, respect for human rights, and poverty alleviation. A special effort should be made to appoint, as the first Deputy Commander of AFRICOM responsible for civil-military activities, a known and respected senior State Department official.

Second, AFRICOM's leadership should reaffirm, doctrinally and in the development of new programs, its commitment to working with African partners to address the full spectrum of evolving security challenges in Africa: terrorist threats in North Africa, the Horn, the Swahili Coast; internal and cross-border wars; degradation of the environment; public health; weak and failed states; and crime, including grand scale oil theft schemes, piracy and plundering of fisheries.

Third, AFRICOM should spell out in detail how its creation will systematically enlarge the foundation of existing programs and increase the ability to sustain these programs into the future. It should set targets for steady incremental progress in the areas where the Department of Defense has its greatest comparative advantage: e.g. the expansion of ACOTA, IMET, military-to-military health programs, and maritime programs in the Gulf of Guinea. Where possible, it should link AFRICOM to the reconstruction of Liberia (specifically Monrovia harbor) and the work of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (e.g. renovation of Benin port).

Fourth, AFRICOM's plan of action should set targets for strengthening UN peace operations, the African Union, and Africa's regional bodies. It should set similar targets for incorporating indigenous non-governmental groups into civil-military initiatives.

Fifth, the administration should devise a multiyear plan for strengthening U.S. civilian policy and program capacities, especially at the Department of State and USAID. Its strategy should emphasize the exceptional needs in this areas, that now warrant special career incentives, new expertise in areas such as public health, and accelerated recruitment and training. A robust staff plan should be devised for the next 5-10 year period.

Thank you.