

Testimony on Africa
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
1 August 2007

Thank you for this opportunity to share some of my opinions about Africa and how they might relate to the new Africa Command. As you are aware, I served as the Director of Strategy, Policy, and Assessments at the European Command and was deeply involved with US military activities in Africa. But my interest in Africa goes back to 1952 when my parents moved to the Belgian Congo when I was a year old. Learning Swahili along with English, I learned quickly to communicate with Africans—they were my friends and playmates in those early years. During the turbulent years after independence, we were forced to evacuate to Uganda, then to Kenya where we lived until 1967. I returned to Kenya after college to do three months of humanitarian work, then again to Uganda in 1979 during the last days of Idi Amin. I later flew as an F-5 instructor pilot for two years with the Kenya Air Force, and served as an Africa Desk Officer in the Pentagon in the mid-80s. Throughout my entire career, I've continued to have a deep interest in humanitarian issues in Africa, especially with orphaned and disabled children.

Until recently, I served as the CEO of Millennium Villages, an organization established to help end extreme poverty in Africa and to help developing nations achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals. During my frequent visits to Africa, I became even more convinced that the continent's security issues are linked to its significant stability challenges. Extreme poverty, the youth bulge, insufficient job opportunities, corruption, and weak governance continue to fuel feelings of hopelessness and despair. This is an environment hostile to effective security programs and it limits Africa's chances of achieving its enormous human and resource potential.

Despite significant obstacles to sustained development, natural disasters and poor leadership in some countries, we must continue to meet our near-term challenges. We should try to collaborate on and compliment activities of partners with similar objectives in Africa, particularly in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We must consult and cooperate with African and international partners to resolve the situations in Darfur, Somalia, DRC, and the Western Sahara. We must help to coordinate a plan to deal with countries like Zimbabwe, especially for the post-Mugabe period. We must determine where the actions of other external players (e.g., China, Russia, and Korea) compete or conflict with our interests and take appropriate action promptly, while placing an emphasis on how we can cooperate with external powers in Africa. We must confront terrorist threats where we find them and help African countries eliminate terrorist and criminal safe havens throughout the continent.

With this as background, let me state up front that I supported establishing a separate command to deal with Africa when I was in the military and I'm delighted to see it's becoming a reality. I believe we need one unified command to coordinate and synchronize our military activities in Africa. We will get an even greater benefit when this command is truly integrated with all the other elements of US power and diplomacy. With US interests on this continent clearly defined and a united voice in Washington to advocate for requirement and resources, I believe we'll be able to advance America's interests in Africa better and build strong partnerships with African government to eliminate poverty and accelerate Africa's integration into the global economy.

Over the years, I've learned a few lessons about dealing with Africa. It might be useful for the new Africa Command to consider these lessons as it establishes its capabilities and initiates its programs.

1. Proactive and preventative programs using all the elements of national power are significantly cheaper and more effective than reactive and corrective measures. Our experiences in countries like Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan are obvious examples. We've got the Kofi Annan Center for Peacekeeping. Maybe it's time for the United States to help Africans establish the Nelson Mandela Center for Good Governance and the Julius Nyerere Center for Political Leadership.

2. I believe we should focus on helping Africans help Africans. We must work with the African Union, the five regional economic communities, and individual countries to ensure our assistance meshes with their regional and national programs. US initiatives must have the approval and support of our African hosts if they are to work, if they are to last. Since we are the guests, we must listen to our hosts and understand their views and requirements. The United States must build relationships based on mutual trust and respect. We must form strong partnerships based on shared understanding of security requirements and a common vision for the future.

3. To the maximum extent possible, our assistance programs must be sustainable, replicable, and scaleable. "Train the trainer" programs should be a critical component of any initiative. We need to be working ourselves out of a job; there should be a "sun-down" clause in our training and assistance programs.

I believe Africa Command is off to a good start conceptually. I applaud DoD's efforts to use an interagency model—to include other US government departments' and agencies' inputs in its decision-making process. The discussion about including personnel from other agencies as permanent members of the headquarters staff is also very interesting. Our goal not only should be to put a stronger hyphen between "mil-pol" or to make it more "pol-mil." It should also be to create an organization that truly integrates the unique strengths pol, mil, econ, and development.

Security cooperation at the AU and national level is extremely important and the US military has made great strides in this area. This effort must be matched by a similar interagency commitment to enhance and resource a more robust "stability cooperation" program. Increased security depends on better governance and plans for long-term stability that foster a believable hope among Africans that tomorrow will be better. This means cleaner water, adequate food, better schools, available and affordable healthcare, improved infrastructure and communications, more employment opportunities, human rights, and total gender equality.

I believe our ultimate success will stem from our attitude and approach as we have a larger presence and footprint in Africa. AFRICOM must be perceived by Africans as being a good and respectful guest, and a valued partner. AFRICOM must be about Africans helping Africans.

In my view, AFRICOM is on track to be just that type of organization—a significant improvement over the older versions of the Unified Command Plan. Thank you.