



# Executive Summary



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## AFRICOM AT 5 YEARS: THE MATURATION OF A NEW U.S. COMBATANT COMMAND

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The U.S. African Command (AFRICOM), the newest of the six Department of Defense (DoD) geographic combatant commands (CCMDs), was created in 2007 amid great controversy in both Africa and the United States over its location and mission. Over the past 5 years, AFRICOM has matured greatly, overcome much of the initial resistance from African stakeholders, and addressed most U.S. interagency concerns about the Command's size and proper role within the U.S. national security/foreign policy community. AFRICOM is a "CCMD Plus," because it also has: 1) a broader "soft power" mandate aimed at building a stable security environment; and, 2) a relatively larger contingent of personnel than other U.S. Government agencies.

Part I notes that, during the Cold War, Africa remained a low U.S. security priority despite the numerous proxy wars Washington was tacitly or directly supporting on the continent. From the 1990s up to 2007, however, there were two kinds of changes—geostrategic and operational—that explain why AFRICOM was eventually created, and another kind of change—intellectual—that shaped how it was structured. The primary geopolitical change behind AFRICOM's creation was the rise, particularly post-September 11, 2001 (9/11), of nonstate actors in Africa—terrorists and criminals—who presented asymmetric threats. A secondary geopolitical change was the continent's growing economic importance in the world, both as a source of strategic natural

resources, including oil, gas, and minerals, and increasingly, as a market.

Two important operational reasons behind AFRICOM's creation were that: 1) the U.S. Central Command and the U.S. European Command had become overstretched by the mid-2000s from fighting and supporting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and, 2) crises in Africa had revealed "seams" between the boundaries of the Commands that needed to be closed, such as in Darfur—between the Central Command's area of responsibility in Sudan—and the European Command's area of responsibility in Chad and the Central African Republic. There were also four intellectual changes in geopolitical thinking that shaped how AFRICOM was structured: 1) an increased recognition of the interdependence of security and development; 2) a new emphasis on conflict prevention and stability operations versus warfighting; 3) the emergence of the broader concept of human security and the related "responsibility to protect" (R2P); and, 4) the growing need for "new jointness" or "whole-of-government" approaches to interagency cooperation.

Part II explains how this fourth intellectual change, the growing need for a new jointness in interagency cooperation, is critical to improved integration of the U.S. national security/foreign policy community. In this section, the author advocates that Congress pass new Goldwater-Nichols-type legislation, including provisions naming a dual civilian-military Deputy Commander or

other upgraded role for the top interagency representative at all geographic CCMD; requiring assignments at other agencies for promotion into the general/field officer ranks of the U.S. military and into the Senior Executive/Senior Foreign Services for civilians; modifying civil service rules to allow employees of one agency to serve a 3-year tour at another agency with return rights to their parent agency; and outlining principles for cost-sharing between agencies to facilitate exchanges of personnel.

Part III illustrates how AFRICOM has matured greatly over the past 5 years. AFRICOM got off to a rocky beginning in 2007, when DoD, the State Department (DoS), and the White House mishandled the Command's start-up, to include proposing that its headquarters be relocated to Africa—a move thoroughly rejected by the large majority of African governments. However, AFRICOM has slowly recovered through a consistent public affairs message articulated by its top leadership, which emphasized the Command's capacity building of civilian-led African militaries. The Command now maintains generally solid working relationships with the interagency, which is defined as: U.S. Ambassadors and their country teams in Africa; agencies both at the leadership and working levels in Washington; and the interagency based at its headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. The Command also got off to a slow start in its internal planning and assessment processes and loosely prioritized tens of millions of dollars in engagement expenditures from 2007-10. However, AFRICOM is now integrating this work better with DoD Washington planning cycles and with U.S. Embassy Mission Strategic Resource Plans, including through a much improved annual planning cycle that touches senior non-DoD officials, U.S. embassies, and the interagency at multiple points.

Part IV points out that the AFRICOM-led military operation initiated in Libya in 2011, as well as reports of expanded intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in the Sahel and Horn of Africa over the past 2 years, have given the Command more of a military operations complexion than initially anticipated. These developments have created both new controversy and support

among African and U.S. stakeholders. At the same time, the Command has up to now had considerable success in blunting criticism that it was "militarizing" U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. Factors behind this success include AFRICOM's mainly positive track record of seeking close cooperation with the interagency, including efforts by successive commanders to acknowledge in public statements the State Department's lead in foreign policy toward Africa; AFRICOM's relatively modest "development" projects focused on HIV/AIDS in the military; and its continued primary focus on sustained, long-term capacity building with African militaries. AFRICOM-sponsored development projects have at times been controversial and problematic, however, particularly those supported by its Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa. For reasons of efficacy and improved integration with U.S. Embassy strategic plans, implementation of the Command's future development projects should be guided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in coordination with U.S. Embassy country teams, with continued input from staff at AFRICOM headquarters or civil-military affairs officers in the field. Part IV also debunks three myths about AFRICOM: that it was created to "exploit" Africa's oil and gas riches; "block" China's rise in Africa; and, that France "opposes" AFRICOM.

In Part V, the author concludes by raising five issues important to AFRICOM's future: 1) allocated forces; 2) the selection of the Command's partner-nations; 3) the desirability of regional approaches in Africa; 4) the location of the Command's headquarters; and 5) the need for a strategic right-sizing of the Command. AFRICOM is slated in March 2013 to be more closely aligned with a U.S. Army brigade to carry out short-term training engagements in Africa—the first unit to be linked to a combatant command under DoD's new Regionally Aligned Brigade concept. These aligned forces will remain based in Kansas and will not be used for kinetic operations or to "militarize" U.S. foreign policy—a key point that needs further socialization with African stakeholders. Up to now, the U.S. Government has had to rely heavily on autocratic regimes in Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia to contribute

the bulk of troops to three recent African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions. Although the State Department has the lead in training African peacekeepers, AFRICOM nevertheless has come under criticism in Africa for supporting autocratic regimes, in part because it is confused as the face of such training. To avoid this problem altogether, the U.S. Government should give clear priority to emerging democracies when selecting which countries' militaries receive U.S.-funded peacekeeping training and equipment. AFRICOM can continue to build good will with African interlocutors by increasing its focus on regional approaches, including helping the AU and its Regional Economic Communities to establish standby brigades as part of the AU African Peace and Security Architecture. Regarding AFRICOM's future, the author recommends that: 1) DoD keep AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, for now for operational efficiency, but consider shifting the Command back to the United States in the future, after U.S.-Africa and intra-African air links improve further; and, 2) AFRICOM undertake, at a time of severe budget constraints and a real risk for the United States of "strategic insolvency," a top-down right-sizing exercise, including carefully examining its investments in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets.

This report also includes four background addenda that introduce the three major terrorism groupings in Africa that were the factors behind AFRICOM's creation; describe several of AFRICOM's security cooperation programs; present AFRICOM's Mission Statement and Commander's Intent relevant to defeating transnational threats in Africa; and provide examples of continued African opposition to AFRICOM in the print media.

## ENDNOTES

1. AFRICOM was launched with initial operating capability as a sub-unified command under the U.S. European Command on October 1, 2007, and reached full operating capability as a stand-alone unified command on October 1, 2008. AFRICOM's Army, Air Force, and Special Operations components were not designated as fully operational until October 1, 2009. See "Fact Sheet: United States Africa Command," Washington, DC: US AFRICOM

Public Affairs Office, May 24, 2012, available from [www.africom.mil/NEWSROOM/Article/6107/fact-sheet-united-states-africa-command](http://www.africom.mil/NEWSROOM/Article/6107/fact-sheet-united-states-africa-command).

2. The "Plus" in "CCMD Plus" has been used previously in academic literature and the popular press to describe AFRICOM, but is not a term in military doctrine. We use it here to capture the notion that AFRICOM has special characteristics that distinguish it from other combatant commands.

3. Some observers assert that the U.S. Government's interagency should not be seen as a single universe but instead as three separate interagencies composed of the intelligence, political-military, and law enforcement communities. Since one of the central themes of this Paper is how to promote unity of effort in the interagency, we work from the assumption of one single interagency. See Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, "Transforming Joint Interagency Coordination: The Missing Link Between National Strategy and Operational Success," *Case Studies in National Security Transformation*, Washington, DC: Center for Technology and National Security Policy, p. 6. For another academic journal article on interagency integration, see also Christopher Lamb and Edward Marks, "Chief of Mission Authority as a Model for National Security Integration," *Strategic Perspectives 2*, Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, December 2010.

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