



White House (Pete Souza)

President Obama shakes hands with Ghanaian parliament members after speech on U.S. policy toward and priorities in Africa

“Africa’s Future Is Up to Africans”

PUTTING THE PRESIDENT’S WORDS INTO ACTION

By WILLIAM E. WARD *and* THOMAS P. GALVIN

President Barack Obama’s address in Accra, Ghana, in July 2009, signaled a pivotal moment for U.S. policy toward and priorities in Africa. Many in the United States increasingly recognize the growing importance of Africa in global affairs. With the President’s address, U.S. leadership demonstrated this view publicly and laid out its priorities clearly and directly to an African audience.

Our national interests lie in a stable Africa, with the peoples of its continental and island nations living in relative peace, being governed relatively effectively, and enjoying relative economic and social advancement. Seeing Africa’s populations able to provide for themselves and contribute to global economic development is good for America, as is access to African resources and markets in free, fair, and competitive ways.

The most significant theme of the address was that our nation’s approach would start from the “simple premise that Africa’s future is

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up to Africans.”²¹ While this may have been implied by previous U.S. National Security Strategies since the 9/11 attacks, much of the national security language was suggestive of the United States seeking to help fix problems and correct conditions in Africa that might foster transnational threats directed at the homeland. Even though the statement had been made that “overcoming the challenges [that] Africa faces requires partnership, not paternalism,”²² African perceptions of increased U.S. attention were very different, as shown in the strategic communications shortfalls brought on by the establishment of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) in 2007.³

President Obama laid out his five priority areas where the United States can contribute to a brighter future in Africa—democracy, opportunity, health, peaceful resolution of conflict, and addressing transnational challenges⁴—and alluded to how this should be done. With respect to democracy, he stated, “America will not seek to impose any system of government on any other nation. The essential truth of democracy is that each nation determines its own destiny.”⁵ The President also noted the extent to which Africans have been dependent on international aid, saying, “The purpose of foreign assistance must be creating the conditions where it’s no longer needed.” This theme of pursuing self-reliance was resonant throughout the speech and was well received.

But how should this new policy be implemented from a U.S. national security perspective? Achievement in each of these priority areas requires long-term engagement and can be prone to occasional setbacks. While the President praised Ghana’s history of peaceful transfer of power, there have been recent extraconstitutional changes of power in Guinea and Madagascar. African opportunities for economic growth and development are being shackled by longstanding corruption that will take many years to remove. Conflict and the threat of conflict due to longstanding border disputes, unresolved ethnic tensions, large refugee populations, arms trafficking, and endemic poverty are complex and difficult problems, providing fodder for extremism. Progress against these challenges has been measurable. But to Americans concerned about threats emanating from Africa, the pace of transformational change seems unacceptably slow.

Making matters even more complex is the unfortunate fact that some within the

United States, in Africa, and around the world have come to equate USAFRICOM with the main African effort of our nation. Those who have worked with the command know that it acts in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives and that its activities only occur with the input and approval of U.S. Chiefs of Mission. But the level of resources and high visibility that come with the U.S. military contribute to a perception of the geographic combatant command, rather than the Embassy, being the “face of the franchise,” so to speak.

Operationalizing these priorities, each of which involves diplomacy and development, places a premium on all U.S. agencies

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working collaboratively among the so-called 3Ds of diplomacy, development, and defense. From a security and stability perspective, it is more than *what* we contribute to the effort: it is *how* we contribute and whether the ultimate goal is achieved—Africans determining their own future.

Five Priorities for Africa

The priorities listed in the President’s speech are straightforward and did not, in and of themselves, signal anything new. After all, the United States has been globally promoting democracy and opportunity in one form or another since the early days of the Cold War. But it was the words behind the priorities that were significant, and where the policy direction for the U.S. military comes from.

Democracy. The President made clear that democracy was “more than just holding elections. It’s also about what happens between elections.”⁶ He described the importance of good governance, implemented through stable and effective institutions such as “strong parliaments, honest police forces, independent judges, an independent press, a vibrant private sector, [and] a civil society.”⁷ While some African nations have these, others are hampered by corruption driven by money and ethnicity, or by an inability or unwillingness to extend governance outside the capital and major economic centers of activity.

The impacts on African militaries are staggering. Lacking the means and institutions to provide for effective and ready forces, several nations have difficulties providing

basic equipment to their soldiers or even paying them. As a result, good order and discipline suffer. Furthermore, the influence of corruption erodes the professional sense of ethics that is well understood and taken for granted among developed nations.

Opportunity. Although this priority mostly concerns economic development, there are two areas with clear security implications: infrastructure and protection of vital resources.

Views from space of Africa at night clearly depict the current inadequate state of infrastructure development across the continent. Most of the development is concentrated on the coasts, while vast interior spaces lack

adequate roads, railroads, airports, power, or communications. Insufficient access to food or reliable water sources is a stressor on the people, stunting economic growth and sowing the seeds of conflict. Meanwhile, the continent is being robbed blind of its abundant natural resources. Illegal fishing is an excellent example, with nearly \$1 billion in lost revenues and food supply in sub-Saharan Africa in 2009.⁸

Public Health. Unquestionably, this is a concern for Americans, as Africa is home to several dangerous pandemic diseases. HIV/AIDS garners much attention, but malaria and tuberculosis are also major concerns. A lesser known factor is the impact of disease on the readiness of the security sector. United Nations (UN) Resolution 1308 was declared because of the impacts of HIV on UN peacekeeping missions. Meanwhile, poorly manned and equipped public health facilities leave both civilian and military populations vulnerable to illness.

Prevention of Conflict. President Obama stated, “For far too many Africans, conflict is a part of life. . . . There are wars over land and wars over resources. And it is still far too easy for those without conscience to manipulate whole communities into fighting among faiths and tribes.”⁹

While many of Africa’s bloody civil wars are over, not all of them have been resolved to the point of assuring no return to hostilities. Meanwhile, several known major hotspots remain. Somalia is foremost in many people’s minds because of piracy in the Gulf of Aden

and east Indian Ocean, while the Transitional Federal Government is fighting Islamic extremist groups. The Lord's Resistance Army continues its horrendous assault against the peoples among five central and eastern African nations of the Great Lakes region. Southern Sudan may pursue a referendum to secede from Sudan, which could be very contentious, while insurgent activity continues to affect the Darfur region. Tensions in the Niger Delta remain high, as does north-south friction across several nations in the Sahel.

Imposing peace from the outside through military force or coercion is not a

many neighboring nations in Africa have long histories of conflict. Building trust among them involves developing capabilities to share information and intelligence and operate under common sight pictures.

What Africans Are Telling Us

The good news is that these priorities were consistent with the expressed desires of many African political and military leaders with whom we have engaged since our 2007 inception. They told us they also desire African solutions to African problems, especially in providing for their own security and

oppressors. They want effective and honorable armed forces that are sufficiently trained, equipped, and sustained to contribute to stability and that are free from corruption and indiscipline.

2. We are all striving for an Africa that bolsters and promotes legitimate and professional security institutions. Africans want their militaries to generally conform in roles and purposes to other militaries around the world. They want an end to irregular militias or forces loyal to the executive at the expense of the population. They want civil authority over the armed forces, under capable institutions that ensure the training, equipping, and sustaining of the units and the readiness and well-being of the servicemembers and their families.

3. We are all striving for an Africa that has the will and means to dissuade, deter,

the borderless nature of terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, and the spread of extremist ideologies must be met by solutions based on regional cooperation—a conundrum given that many neighboring nations have long histories of conflict

and defeat transnational threats. The African countries uniformly express a strong desire to have the capacity to deal with their own security issues, including greater abilities in peacekeeping and exporting security across the continent. This is true at the national level and theater-wide.

Lowering dependence on external assistance is contingent on the demonstrated ability to properly and proportionately employ security capabilities when and where needed. This is true at the national, regional, and theater levels, such that nations facing these threats can turn to neighbors, the Regional Economic Communities, or the African Union (AU) for support when needed.

African countries have been increasingly demonstrating the political will to overcome these challenges and take ownership of their security domain. For example, several nations banded together to dismantle significant elements of the Lord's Resistance Army. The partnership developing among the Gulf of Guinea nations to improve maritime security is another. The AU and its five Regional



U.S. Marine Corps (Nicole Teet)

Marine teaches Ghanaian soldier to use compass during military-to-military familiarization event

recipe for success; in fact, many of the embattled nations would resist. Life under colonialism is still well remembered and leaves a bitter aftertaste. Instead, keeping the hotspots cool is better left to the Africans, although they need assistance in the form of training and equipping their military peacekeeping units, as well as planning and sustaining operations.

Addressing Transnational Challenges.

Similarly, challenges such as terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, illegal migrations, and the spread of extremist ideologies must be addressed in order to prevent the onset of new tensions or exacerbation of existing ones. The borderless nature of these challenges must be met by solutions based on regional cooperation, which is itself a conundrum given that

stability in ways that serve to prevent future conflicts and promote the full resolution of existing ones. They recognized the post-independence legacy of some African militaries that served as protectors of the regime first or that have succumbed to corruptive influences, and instead want their armed forces to be seen as protectors of the people and legitimate representatives of the best values of their nations. As they provided us their views and perspectives, four common themes emerged, consolidated below as a shared security vision for Africa.

1. We are all striving for an Africa whose military elements perform professionally and with integrity. Africans want their militaries to serve as protectors of the people, not

Economic Communities are growing and maturing rapidly and are pursuing the formation of an African Standby Force of five brigades to respond in times of crisis.

4. We are all striving for an Africa whose militaries and governments increasingly support international peace efforts. Africans prefer to resolve conflicts and sustain peace in partnerships with fellow Africans, with or supported by the international community. Over time, they believe they can address underlying conditions that cause conflict. They also know that supporting peace efforts on other continents is good for Africa and for the world.

Stability: The Overarching Need

Turning this vision into a reality requires stability in the short term that can be self-sustaining for the long haul. Nations must be generally free from the threat of violence such that economic development can continue, as seen with the continent's overall 2008 growth of 6 percent and 2009 growth of 1.75 percent, despite significant impacts from the global downturn.¹⁰ The private sector needs encouragement to invest in African infrastructure, which can only happen if tensions can remain calm.

Stability is not a static condition; it will come about only through measurable progress

in the development of African security capacity across the spectrum: military, police forces, border security, customs, and the institutions that recruit, train, equip, sustain, and support them. It also comes about through the changes in attitudes and perceptions toward security forces among the people, through building trust and demonstrating capability, consistency, and proportionality when dealing with a threat.

Stability must come together at multiple levels—nationally, regionally, and across the whole continent, its island nations, and surrounding waters. As national governments build trust with their own people, nations must band together to confront common threats, lest the enemies of peace exploit the seams. Meanwhile, the AU is a young but growing organization that is increasingly playing a stronger political role on the continent, especially involving itself in the adjudication of crises. A strong AU keeps an African face on solutions in situations that are beyond the nations' abilities to address. The development of the AU African Standby Force (ASF) is an important step toward self-sustaining stability, as it provides a rapid reaction force for the continent, although this is a long-term endeavor to develop full capability. The Regional Economic Communities, which

will each contribute a brigade to the ASF, are themselves in different stages of development and representation of their constituencies.

This form of stability fosters an environment that encourages Africans to deter the enemies of peace, safeguard innocent civilians from violence and theft, cause violent extremist ideologies to be repudiated, and build mutual trust and respect between defense establishments and the people they are defending. Such an environment would facilitate the achievement of their security vision.

If we are to support the African pursuit of stability, we must embrace the commonalities while listening and learning about the differences. We readily agree that the scourges of violent extremism, kidnapping, piracy, narcotics, arms and human trafficking, and corruption are cancers that are holding African societies back from their fullest potential. We recognize that the perpetrators are merciless and cannot be appeased.

However, Africans see their environment differently than we do. In the recent past, terrorism was the chief U.S. concern. The current administration is equally concerned about ensuring the protection of innocent populations against genocide. Our African partners often have different priorities. We have found continuously that

Rwandan soldiers return to tents at Rwandan Military Academy, built in part with funds from Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance program

U.S. Air Force (Samuel Bendet)

listening to and learning from our partners are vital to resolving differences in perspective and in our ability to provide support to African stability until they have the means to provide it for themselves.

Pursuit of the Vision

Building partner security capacity is the primary role that USAFRICOM performs on a day-to-day basis. It is clear from the vision and stated national priorities that the traditional focus of security force assistance—the training and readiness of units—is but a very small part of the requirement. Our capabilities to build capacity must touch all domains (for example, ground, air, and maritime) and functions (for example, combat forces, logistics, intelligence, command and control, and medical). The outcomes are trained and ready forces that are capable across the spectrum of conflict, but are concentrated on those capabilities the Africans are requesting: peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, and maritime security rather than conventional warfare. And the

Our exercise series Africa Endeavor is a good example. Begun as a multinational communications interoperability exercise, the 2009 iteration hosted by Gabon involved 26 African countries, the greatest number of participants to date. Although the exercise is facilitated by USAFRICOM, it is governed by the participating nations. The Africans formed a steering committee that determines the locations of the exercise and all its planning conferences, along with the parameters and objectives. This ensures a steady progression in interoperability and cooperative spirit with which the participants are comfortable. It also avoids political challenges should the United States and any key participating nation experience differences that would lead others to question the exercise's true motivation.

Another example was Natural Fire, a combined tabletop and crisis response exercise involving 650 soldiers from five African nations plus 550 U.S. Servicemembers led by U.S. Army Africa (USARAF). The lead African nation was Uganda, which established

them through the process of formulating plans and conducting relief operations.

The following are some of the areas where we are concentrating our efforts.

Building Effective Noncommissioned Officer Corps. The noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps of the U.S. military provides critical small-unit leadership to Soldiers and units, and is the direct link to the senior leadership. Several African nations have NCO¹¹ corps that either are underdeveloped or are more vulnerable to corruptive influences. Some nations have NCOs with limited professional experience due to turmoil or transformational efforts. Our African partners, recognizing that stable NCO corps lead to more effective and sustainable units and security institutions, have turned to us for assistance.

By helping partners train and develop their NCOs, we have a greater chance of instilling the qualities that help those NCOs train and guide their own units. Such an approach is welcomed by many partners, including those with more mature NCO corps, as it requires fewer U.S. personnel than efforts to train whole units, and the results are longer lasting.

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Building Support Capabilities. Just as the U.S. military places its core competencies, such as training combat skills, first among all priorities, so do our partners. Yet as we know, our success has come from the development across our battlefield operating systems. We have won many wars through our supremacy in logistics, intelligence, fire support, command and control, and other areas. We have placed a premium on caring for our Servicemembers, providing them with top-notch medical, dental, financial, legal, religious, and family support that directly improves their readiness.

Many of our African partners have only rudimentary capabilities and must rely on outside assistance. For example, while African nations are receiving peacekeeping training



U.S. Navy (Roger S. Duncan)

Kenyan soldier distributes medication as part of multilateral exercise Natural Fire

processes must be unobtrusive to ensure that African ownership of newfound capacity is instilled from the beginning, when activities are being planned. This means that most of our activities are necessarily small in scale, yet their impact is tremendous.

the locations and parameters of the tactical portion with USARAF assistance. The other four nations—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania—faced common challenges in dealing with major regional humanitarian crises, and the exercise was tailored to help

through the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance program, American or other international partners are still relied upon to deploy to and sustain peacekeeping operations they conduct.

Building Special Staff Capabilities. An important component of the U.S. military includes the functions performed by its special staffs that support the chain of command in enforcing standards and ethics. Many African partners have limited (if any) inspectors general, legal counsels, public affairs or strategic communicators, or chaplain programs.

Establishing these functions can have stabilizing effects on forces facing challenges or pressures from corruptive influences, internal ethnic divisions, or distrust from the civilian population. The USAFRICOM Office of the Inspector General develops its own capabilities that help increase transparency without sacrificing operational security and provides an additional voice for Servicemembers to address problems. The USAFRICOM Office of the Legal Counsel helps partners establish and improve their military justice systems; ensure that their activities follow the rule of law; and effectively, fairly, and judiciously prosecute crimes by military members. The USAFRICOM Office of the Chaplain helps partners bridge gaps across faith groups and promote diversity within the partners' forces.

Our special staff also promotes regional cooperation by encouraging counterparts to establish relationships with each

structure. ERC is military construction that supports overseas joint exercises through building or improving infrastructure in locations with no permanent U.S. presence. It provides great benefits for later conduct of joint and combined exercises, enhances the morale and quality of life among troops, and trains our military engineers. In fiscal year 2009, seven projects were performed at a cost of \$2.4 million, including runway construction and improvement and upgrades to training ranges.

Promoting Formal Regional Cooperation. Without question, our partners are growing more accustomed to working together at levels not seen before. Two Africa Partnership Station deployments in the Gulf of Guinea have both enhanced maritime capacity and encouraged intelligence and information-sharing among those partners at unprecedented levels. The threats of the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in the north have similarly drawn nations together in response, including states that once warred against each other.

Regional solutions is a relative term that means different things to different people. For some, the tendency is toward the Regional Economic Communities. For others, it is a simple collective of one's immediate geographic neighbors. There are other manifestations. If the response matches the challenge rather than a broader abstract ideology or vision, it will

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other, whether through conferences or direct contact. This enhances interoperability and regional cooperation among the militaries as a whole.

Building and Improving Military or Dual-use Infrastructure. Some of our African partners are saddled with old or dilapidated training facilities or bases that were sufficient for a conscription force focused on basic combat skills but are now inadequate for professional forces operating across a wider spectrum. Through programs such as Exercise-Related Construction (ERC), we leverage planned activities to improve our partners' military infra-

produce stronger and more lasting partnerships, and we should encourage them.

Promoting African-led Strategic Dialogue. Our experience is showing that the African people are growing more aware of their security challenges and feeling more empowered to address them. While not all will have the opportunity to contribute equally to the solution, the fact that the dialogue is taking place is important. We need to encourage and sustain this dialogue by expanding strategic communications opportunities and ensuring our actions and effects are consistent with what both our partner militaries and the people they serve



Nigerian soldier prepares to raise antenna during interoperability exercise Africa Endeavor 2008

are saying. This is also another way to foster regional efforts, built on shared trust, shared understanding, and shared responsibility.

Reinforce Success

Naturally, the small scale of such activities means that followup is essential to help our partners turn the short-term gains into self-sustaining capabilities. This is more than a followup for its own sake; it is about helping ensure that the short-term benefits of our activities translate into progress toward the vision. Some of our approaches include:

Leveraging the "Demonstration Effect."

Although tailoring to our partners' needs is a must, successful programs and activities can often be applied elsewhere. We have found that word spreads when things go well, which helped lead to the expansion of some of our successful programs early on.

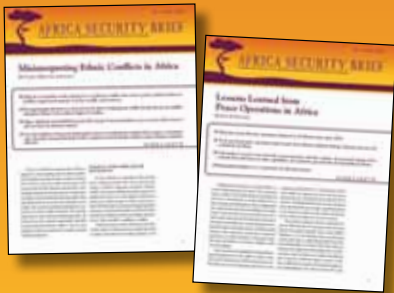
The Africa Partnership Station (APS) is an excellent example. Stemming from regional concerns about maritime security, two U.S. ships traveled up and down the Gulf of Guinea coast from late 2007 through early 2008, providing tailored training, exercises, education, and partnership opportunities based on the



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requests of participating nations. Additionally, APS brought along international staff and observers from European and African countries and nongovernmental organizations needing transportation to access populations they otherwise might not reach. This deployment was so successful that our partners wanted another one, and then another. Other nations saw the benefits and decided to participate. By the end of 2009, five APS deployments had been conducted, with one led by the Netherlands. In fiscal year 2010, we are hosting two more APS deployments, one each in east and west Africa, while the Belgian navy is also conducting APS in the Gulf of Guinea.

Demonstrating African Ownership.

Although it seems counterintuitive, touting U.S. successes can sometimes be counterproductive. While we are clearly proud of the programs and activities we are performing, the stronger messages come from the successes the Africans themselves realize. Our role is instead to enable.

A recent example is what happened during an African Maritime Law Enforcement Program (AMLEP) deployment to a West African nation. AMLEP is a cooperative effort with the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Transportation, and U.S. Coast Guard that builds partner maritime law enforcement capacity and detects and deters illicit activities within partner nation Economic Exclusion Zones. It involves institution-building, as some nations lack the necessary judicial and legal processes to determine disposition of captured sailors and ships, and processing of evidence. As it turned out, the participating Coast Guard cutter, with embarked partner nation naval and law enforcement officials, found a foreign trawler stealing fish from unpatrolled waters. The illegal vessel was seized by host nation authorities, who took possession of the trawler and its contents and prosecuted its crew. Information gathered during the AMLEP rotation subsequently helped the nation make more effective use of its limited patrolling assets.

Matching Actions with Words. There remain concerns and perceptions of the USAFRICOM role in U.S. activities on the continent being greater than that of other U.S. agencies. Rather than countering words with words, which does little to assure our partners, we act by example. Because USAFRICOM is not the lead for our nation's foreign policy, we do not act until we garner concurrence and approval from the U.S. Ambassadors and Country Teams before implementing

a program, and we reinforce this relationship when consulting with partners. They find this reassuring, as it shows them the benefits of proper civilian authority that ensures unity in pursuing national policy objectives and transparency that fosters trust. Thus, our partners have been comfortable working with us to pursue their long-term goals.

The U.S. Africa Command approach supports the defense aspects of the President's priorities by fostering the development of defense establishments—formations, facilities, and institutions—that serve its people in ways supportive of African goals. In turn, this helps grow stability that facilitates other priorities, such as opportunity and public health. Much of what we do is "under the radar," but, as the above shows, it is for a purpose. The President stated it best: "Africa's future is up to Africans." As a supporting partner in the U.S. Government effort in Africa, we ensure our actions are in keeping with that premise. By so doing, U.S. national interests are achieved in this important part of the world. **JFQ**

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NOTES

¹ Barack Obama, "A New Moment of Promise in Africa," remarks at Accra International Conference Center, Accra, Ghana, July 11, 2009; available at <www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-the-Ghanaian-Parliament/>.

² *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2006).

³ Robert T. Moeller and Mary C. Yates, "The Road to a New Unified Command," *Joint Force Quarterly* 51 (4th Quarter 2008), 67–73.

⁴ Obama. President Obama specified the first four, while alluding to the fifth.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ David Agnew et al., *The Global Extent of Illegal Fishing* (London: Marine Resources Assessment Group, 2008), 2.

⁹ Obama.

¹⁰ International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook 2009: Sustaining the Recovery* (Washington, DC: IMF Publication Services, October 2009), 89.

¹¹ Among nations following the British system, the noncommissioned officer corps also includes warrant officers.

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