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Militarization of U.S. Africa Policy 2000 to 2005

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"This isn't target practice! This is about killing people!"

-- U.S. military trainer in Niger, quoted in
"America's African Rifles," Atlantic Monthly, April 2005

Introduction: Guns, Oil and Terror

In the wake of September 11th, and in keeping with its interest in securing access to oil and other key natural resources, the Bush administration has been rapidly expanding U.S. military involvement in Africa.

While most recent increases in U.S. arms sales, aid, and military training in Africa have been justified as part of what the administration refers to as the "Global War on Terrorism" (GWOT), oil has been a major factor in the administration's strategic calculations from the outset. In his first few months in office, President Bush's first Secretary of State, Colin Powell, stressed the need to improve relations with oil producing nations like Nigeria and Angola. Similarly, the report of Vice-President Cheney's Energy Task Force stressed the importance of gaining and maintaining access to African oil resources, which U.S. intelligence assessments expect to increase to as much as 25% of U.S. oil imports by the year 2020 (see Salih Booker and Ann-Louise Cogan, "Africa Policy Outlook 2004," at www.africaaction.org/resources/outlook/2004policyoutlook.php).

A look at last year's Congressional Budget Justification for FY05 Foreign Operations (State Department, Feb. 2004) underscores the strong pull of oil interests in Bush administration decision making. The entry on Equatorial Guinea notes that "Over the course of the past five years, U.S. companies have invested approximately \$5 billion" in the country's oil sector. The entry for Sao Tome and Principe is more forward-looking, noting

that “In the coming decade, U.S. companies are expected to participate in the development of petroleum resources in Sao Tome’s territorial waters.” Nigeria is cited for its “large oil and gas reserves,” while the entry on Angola stresses the need to “help ensure U.S. private-sector oil access to a source of seven percent of U.S. petroleum imports, a figure likely to rise in the coming years.”

Beyond oil, U.S. military officials have cited “a growing terrorist threat” in northern and sub-Saharan Africa to justify a program of stepped up military engagement in the region. General James Jones, head of the U.S. European command, has suggested the need to create a “family of bases” across Africa that would range from forward operating locations that would include an airfield and facilities to house 3,000 to 5,000 U.S. military personnel to “bare-bones” bases that U.S. Special Forces or Marines could “land at and build up as the mission required.” (See Eric Schmitt, “Threats and Response; Expanding U.S. Presence: Pentagon Seeks New Access Pacts for African Bases,” New York Times, July 5, 2003). These new facilities would not be considered “formal” bases like the growing U.S. base in the Horn of Africa in Djibouti, which has a regular deployment of 1,800 to 2,000 troops stationed there. While new basing arrangements are being worked out, a major increase in U.S. military exercises and training missions throughout Africa will be used to sustain a regular U.S. presence.

Military Aid, Training, and Sales on the Rise

While the millions of dollars being spent on U.S. military aid and sales to Africa pale in comparison to the billions being expended in the Middle East and South Asia, all of the major U.S. bilateral aid and sales programs have increased sharply in recent years. Funding to sub-Saharan Africa under the largest U.S. military aid program, Foreign Military Financing, doubled from \$12 million in fiscal year 2000 to a proposed \$24 million in the FY 2006 budget proposal, and the number of recipient nations has grown from one to nine. The Pentagon’s International Military Education and Training (IMET) program has increased by 35% from 2000 to the 2006 proposal, from \$8.1 million to \$11 million, and from 36 participating nations to 47. Foreign Military Sales, the largest U.S. arms transfer program, more than quadrupled from fiscal year 2000 to fiscal year 2003 (the most recent year for which full statistics are available), from \$9.8 million to \$40.3 million. And Commercial Sales (CS) of arms licensed by the State Department grew from .9 million to \$3.8 million over the 2000 to 2003 period. For additional details, see Tables I through IV, below.

These bilateral programs are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of overall U.S. military aid commitments going forward. The U.S. European Command has requested \$125 million over five years for the Pan-Sahel Initiative, for training and exercises with Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and other nations in the region. U.S. engagement under the program has gone far beyond traditional training to include involvement in combat operations. Craig S. Smith of the New York Times (“U.S. Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists,” May 11, 2004) offers the following description of the role of U.S. forces in a 2004 operation against the Salafist terrorist organization and its leader, Ammari Saifi:

“The United States European Command sent a Navy P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft to sweep the area, relaying Mr. Saifi’s position to forces in the region. Mali chased him out of the country to Niger, which in turn pushed him into Chad, where, with United States Special Forces support of an airlift of fuel and other supplies, 43 of his men were killed or captured.”

Other major U.S. military commitments include a proposed \$100 million program for military and anti-terrorist training in East Africa, and a \$200 million pledge to train and restructure Liberia’s military forces. The first \$35 million of this amount has been committed to a training program run by Dyncorps, a private military company with a mixed record in operations in the Balkans, Colombia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In addition to programs targeted to specific countries or regions, the ACOTA program (African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance) has received \$38 million in funding over the past three years, with the stated goal of training “select African militaries to respond effectively to peace support and humanitarian crises on their continent.” Participants in the program have included Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Senegal, and Botswana. ACOTA is the successor program to ACRI, the African Crisis Response Initiative.

Transparency and accountability are major missing components with respect to current U.S. military operations in Africa. There is no single source that summarizes U.S. exercises or Pentagon-run training missions like the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET program) in any detail. To cite just one example, the U.S. military is intent on planning 30 military exercises with the South African military in 2005, including training on “operating the C-130 Hercules transport aircraft, military police and Special Forces skills, and peacekeeping operations.” (“Pentagon Wants Increased Cooperation with SA,” Southscan (London), February 25, 2005).

The Bottom Line: Peacekeeping or Warmaking?

Increased U.S. military operations in Africa pose a crucial dilemma. While most programs are justified in terms of anti-terror or peacekeeping missions, some of the same skills and equipment supplied for these purposes can also be applied to internal repression or conflicts with neighboring countries. There are also political and moral issues tied to the increasing the role of the U.S. military to the point where it may become the main “face” of American involvement in Africa. Arms supplied to Nigeria, for example, may be applied to regional peacekeeping, but they could also be used in support of efforts (some directly supported by Western oil companies), to suppress dissent in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Similarly, in the late 1990s, U.S. training for Rwandan armed forces in the late 1990s for one purpose – to stabilize and professionalize the country’s armed forces in the wake of the genocide there – was put to use in Rwanda’s intervention in Zaire, which led to the demise of the Mobutu regime and set the stage for a multi-year civil war there (in which Rwandan forces were also directly involved).

With periodic calls for U.S. intervention to stop mass murder from Rwanda in the 1990s, to Liberia in recent years, to the Sudan currently, the issue of what role the U.S. military should play in Africa going forward needs to be subject to serious debate. Does the existing mix of military sales, training, joint exercises, and the search for informal basing arrangements better position the United States to play a leadership role in fostering effective peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and stability operations on the continent? Or is it strengthening African military forces at the expense of civil society, to the detriment of democracy and accountability? The answers to these questions may be complex, but there is no way to answer them without greater transparency and greater public discussion about U.S. military programs and goals in Africa.

See Tables I through IV, starting on the next page.

NOTE: For more information on the impact of U.S. military aid and sales in Africa and beyond, see Frida Berrigan and William D. Hartung, “U.S. Weapons at War,” World Policy Institute, forthcoming, late March/early April 2005.

Table I
Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Africa

FISCAL YEAR	NUMBER OF NATIONS RECEIVING FMF	DOLLAR AMOUNT (in millions)
2000	1 nation	\$12
2001	Multiple nations	\$18*
2002	7 nations	\$15
2003	8 nations	\$18.5
2004	9 nations	\$21
2005	10 nations	26.2
2006 (proposed)	9 nations	\$24
TOTALS	800% increase 2000-2006	\$134.7 million 100% increase 2000-2006

Foreign Military Financing (FMF) refers to congressionally appropriated grants given to foreign governments to finance the purchase of American-made weapons, services and training.

Sources: FY 2006 International Affairs (Function 150) Budget Request, released by the Bureau of Resource Management, February 7, 2005; also consulted International Affairs Budget Requests for Fiscal Years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

TABLE II
International Military Education and Training (IMET) to Africa

FISCAL YEAR	NUMBER OF NATIONS RECEIVING IMET	DOLLAR AMOUNT (in millions)
2000	36 nations	\$8.1
2001	43 nations	\$9.2
2002	35 nations	\$10.3
2003	45 nations	\$11.1
2004	44 nations	\$11.1
2005	43 nations	\$10.8
2006 (proposed)	47 nations	\$11
TOTALS	26% increase 2000-2006	\$71.6 35% increase 2000-2006

International Military Education and Training (IMET) grants are given to foreign governments to pay for professional education in military management and technical training on US weapons systems. Over 2,000 courses are offered, including some on human rights and civil-military relations.

* The Africa Regional Fund distributed the \$18 million to multiple countries. According to researcher Lora Lumpe, writing in a May 2002 special report for Foreign Policy in Focus, *U.S. Foreign Military Training: Global Reach, Global Power, and Oversight Issues*, this funding underwrote training and military equipment to the regional military forces of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), a group of 15 West African states, and to militaries in other African countries “committed to providing peacekeeping troops.”

Sources: See Table I.

Table III
Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Agreements to Africa

FISCAL YEAR	FMS DOLLAR AMOUNT (in millions)
2000	\$9.8
2001	17.9
2002	20.8
2003	40.3
TOTAL	\$88.8
	311% increase 2000-2003

Foreign Military Sales (FMS) are government-to-government agreements negotiated by the Pentagon and the purchasing country. 2003 is the last year for which full FMS data is available.

Sources: "Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts," as of September 30, 2003, published by the Deputy for Operations and Administration, Defense Security Cooperation Administration.

Table IV
Commercial Sales (CS) Agreements to Africa

FISCAL YEAR	CS DOLLAR AMOUNT (in millions)
2000	0.9
2001	2.2
2002	0.8
2003	3.8
TOTAL	\$7.7
	322% increase 2000-2003

Commercial Sales (CS) are agreements negotiated between the manufacturing company and the purchasing country and then licensed by the State Department. 2003 is the last year for which full CS data is available.

Sources: See Table III.