Sub-Saharan Africa Needs Dual-Purpose Forces

By

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hess, USA

and

Edward Henderson

[The following is a reprint of an article that originally appeared in the *Armed Forces Journal International (AFJI)*, January, 1989, pp. 76-78, and is reprinted herein with the permission of *AFJI*.]

National security and economic development remain equal but competing imperatives for much of sub-Saharan Africa. The beginning of the Reagan Administration saw a dramatic increase in the U.S. security assistance program with a corresponding increase in military assistance program funds for sub-Saharan nations. Unfortunately, this period has been followed by a decline in funding and a concurrent Congressional interest in establishing minimum program levels for selected countries. This has drastically reduced available grant military assistance for sub-Saharan Africa from a high of $148 million in Fiscal Year 1985 to roughly $25 million in FY88 and $26 million in FY89. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

FIGURE 1
Military Assistance Programs for Africa
Actual and Requested by DOD
($ in millions)

	FY 84		FY 85		FY 86		FY 87		FY 88		FY 89	
	Act	Req	Act	Req	Act	Req	Act	Req	Act	Req	Act	Req
Botswana	2.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.4	4.0	1.5	6.0	–	5.0	–	4.0
CAR	--	–	--	--	--	–	0.5	1.0	–	1.0	–	0.5
Chad	2.0	0.0	5.0	5.0	5.7	6.0	9.0	9.0	5.5	9.0	2.0	10.0
Djibouti	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	1.9	2.5	1.2	3.0	1.0	2.0	0.5	2.0
Equat. Guinea	--	–	--	--	1.0	1.0	–	1.0	–	1.0	–	–
Guinea	1.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	1.9	5.0	1.0	5.0	–	3.0	–	–
Kenya	12.0	23.0	20.0	23.0	19.1	25.0	7.5	20.0	5.0	19.0	15.0	13.0
Liberia	12.0	13.0	12.0	12.0	4.8	13.0	1.0	8.0	–	3.0	–	1.0
Madagascar	--	–	2.1	0.0	1.4	3.0	0.5	3.0	–	1.0	–	1.0
Malawi	--	–	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	0.5	2.0	0.5	1.0	0.3	1.2
Niger	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.8	5.0	1.5	4.0	1.0	3.0	–	2.0
Senegal	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	4.0	1.5	4.5	0.8	2.0	0.5	2.0
Somalia	32.0	40.0	33.0	40.0	19.1	40.0	7.5	35.6	5.5	22.0	2.5	17.0
Sudan	45.0	60.0	45.0	69.0	19.1	58.5	5.0	50.0	--	10.0	–	5.0
Zaire	7.0	10.0	7.0	15.0	6.7	10.4	4.0	12.0	3.0	10.0	3.0	10.0
Civic Action Programs	--	–	5.0	5.0	4.8	7.0	4.1	10.0	3.0	6.0	2.0	5.0
Total	119.5	156.0	147.6	187.5	96.6	186.4	46.9	174.1	25.3	98.0	25.8	73.7

While the new Administration has yet to make known its foreign assistance program priorities, a return to the assistance levels which sub-Saharan Africa received during the Mid-Reagan years seems unlikely. Congressional earmarks of the security assistance program--which reached 94 percent of the FY 89 appropriations--seem likely to continue, and the need to develop

an appropriate response to a less threatening Soviet foreign policy will be the central focus of the new Administration, at least in the near term.

FIGURE 2
U.S. Foreign Military Assistance to Africa
Credit and MAP Appropriations
($ in millions)

Year	Credits	MAP
1978	52.0	--
1979	26.2	--
1980	74.6	--
1981	78.0	--
1982	153.1	33.0
1983	37.7	79.5
1984	25.0	119.5
1985	10.0	147.6
1986	--	93.7
1987	3.0	46.9
1988	--	25.3
1989	--	25.8

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and its at least tacit support for an Angolan peace settlement will tend to reinforce this trend by lessening perceptions in the U.S. of a continued U.S./Soviet competition in the Third World. This will work against a return to previous security assistance levels. A less activist Soviet foreign policy in Africa will translate into reduced weapon deliveries to the continent and greater difficulties in obtaining spare parts and service. Assuming reduced Western and Soviet assistance, African militaries will need to get the maximum possible return from the declining external defense resources.

DUAL-PURPOSE FORCE STRUCTURE

Although it is always dangerous to generalize, many African governments would probably agree that their most pressing need is economic development and the improvement of the quality of life for their populations. This is not to deny that African nations have legitimate security needs; however, given reduced external military aid flows and restrictions imposed by international lending institutions, future military purchases may be limited primarily to those made from available national funds, commercial loans, and barter arrangements with private industry. African governments thus might look toward developing force structures and equipment procurement programs capable of meeting both legitimate security needs and contributing to economic and social development: a "dual-purpose" force structure.

SECARM EXHBITION

Many African nations have a history of using their military forces in developmental roles, which contributes to overall nation-building. The theme of this month's [January 1989] exhibition for Security in the Army (SECARM) in Libreville, Gabon--"Application of the Peacetime Army for Civic Action"--underscores this nascent African interest in the developmental/civic action concept for their armed forces. To support this trend, in 1985 the U.S. State and Defense Departments initiated a small grant-funded program (Military Civic Action) to provide assistance to African militaries involved in infrastructure development. Annual funding averaged approximate $2

million during the first three program years, with lower levels in FY88 [and FY89] due to overall foreign assistance reductions.

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

The basic thrust of the dual-purpose force concept is to train and equip portions of a military force to contribute directly to nation-building activities in addition to fulfilling their assigned security missions. This implies, for example, moving away from sophisticated, single-mission aircraft to multi-mission-capable planes, and cross-training military personnel in additional, "nonmilitary" skills. Inherent in the concept is the adoption of what can be termed "appropriate technology." High-performance single-mission jet aircraft and sophisticated ground forces equipment requires a timely flow of expensive spare parts and an extensive maintenance capability, which are often lacking.

For many African air forces, the most pressing needs are for transportation, aerial surveillance, and possibly, limited close air support--missions which can be fulfilled with less complicated propeller-driven aircraft. These aircraft are much more easily maintained and could be used for other purposes such as fisheries surveillance, customs enforcement, humanitarian assistance, and aerial agriculture spraying programs. Commercial aircraft exist today which can be equipped to accomplish both military and civil missions. A Cessna Caravan equipped for just such missions was exhibited at the recent Farnborough Air Show.

For ground forces, military engineer units traditionally represent a wealth of expertise and inexpensive trained manpower which can, and should, contribute to national development. Emphasis can be placed on equipping combat and heavy engineer units to participate directly in infrastructure development, such as road and bridge building. These engineer units can be cross-trained as light infantry, as they are in Western militaries, and could then fill part of the need for ready reaction forces.

The adoption of the dual-purpose structure offers several benefits. The procurement of less technologically sophisticated equipment often means lower training costs and reduced investment in maintenance infrastructure, and should provide higher operational readiness rates. Dual-purpose aircraft, for example, might also be chartered to various domestic, neighboring, and international civilian agencies for a wide range of missions, thus earning operating revenue while providing valuable aircrew flight time.

Although most dual-purpose ground equipment might not bring the same revenue-earning benefit, employing military forces in basic infrastructure program equates to training programs for skills with broad applications in the civilian sector. Units could contract with civilian or donor organizations to work on a wide variety of development infrastructure projects for the cost of material, fuel, and spare parts. Here, too, soldiers involved in the programs would develop additional, marketable skills.

Appropriate technology--the right equipment--doesn't come from any single source. It might mean less complicated nonstandard commercial equipment, appropriate current-production standard military equipment, or reconditioned items which meet military mission requirements. In many instances, nonstandard equipment exists which is more economical to purchase and maintain then standard military equipment. Communications gear is an obvious example of where money can be saved by purchasing commercially available items. Likewise, commercial engineering equipment is often less expensive than equivalent military items and can adequately serve both purposes in Third World regions.

"Obsolete" equipment should not be overlooked by Third World nations when determining acquisition needs. Although no longer supportable through military supply systems, there are many commercial firms which have both the interest and capability to refurbish and support yesterday's proven equipment. The C-47 (DC-3) aircraft is an excellent example. For the price of one reconditioned C-130A aircraft (which is very difficult to maintain), countries can purchase three reconditioned C-47 aircraft with a two-year supply of spare parts. The C-47 can serve the dual-purpose force concept by providing both military and humanitarian lift capability. It could also be equipped with weapon or communications systems for use in a low-intensity warfare role.

Excess U.S. military equipment is another option. In many cases this equipment is available at little or no cost to the recipient; however, transportation and refurbishment costs, if needed, must be paid by the receiver.

FOREIGN EQUIPMENT

Foreign-source items already in Third World inventories can also be brought up-to-date by U.S. assistance programs. Many U.S. firms can also upgrade the capabilities of foreign equipment as a low-cost alternative to acquiring new items--which would also require a new additional logistics tail. Modernizing existing equipment can do more than eliminate lengthy manufacturing lead times and extensive training costs: if local labor is used, a wealth of technical expertise can be conveyed to the domestic labor force.

Effective maintenance and an adequate spare parts supply, often so costly for African militaries to establish and maintain, are critical to any military establishment. Since nonstandard equipment may prove more appropriate in the dual-purpose role, African militaries should seek to have the manufacturer establish in country both a repair parts source and a maintenance facility. This would ensure equipment support and provide a facility where military mechanics could receive on-the-job training. Facilities could either be collocated with the host nation military, or set up with local distributors.

Where equipment density is low, support can be provided on a regional basis. Cessna and other firms already have regional arrangements in operation, and Caterpiller Corporation has developed a procedure to provide parts and maintenance service for its equipment through local distributors using Foreign Military Sales (FMS) procedures.

The establishment of in-country equipment support services serves both host nation and manufacturer interests. For the host nation, it means a continuing source of technical and management skills for future economic development. For the manufacturer, it develops local or regional facilities which support future expansion into the civilian market.

Support for standard military equipment routinely is provided through existing military supply channels, but support for nonstandard equipment has long been a problem. In the September *AFJI*, Major Eric Pettersen described a recent U.S. Air Force initiative aimed at solving support problems for nonstandard Air Force systems: called NIPARS (Nonstandard Items Parts and Repair System), the program goes into effect in June. [See the preceding article in this issue for an expanded version of Major Pettersen's *AFJI* article.] Under NIPARS, the Air Force will contract out support functions for nonstandard aircraft, while requisitions and funding continue to follow normal U.S. FMS procedures. A similar U.S. Army system would allow African (and other Third World) countries to purchase and support nonstandard equipment for ground forces through the FMS Process. This might also be a means to more effectively manage support for low-density inventories of standard U.S.-origin military equipment in developing nations.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

While armed conflicts continue in many sub-Saharan Africa countries, the eventual resolution of the conflicts will provide opportunities for those governments to use their military forces in infrastructure reconstruction. African nations might find that involving their military in serious nation-building efforts will alleviate some of the root causes of social unrest.

Manufacturers selling in Africa can help; however, they need to take the long-term view of the market and ensure that they establish adequate, cost-effective maintenance and supply systems.

Many African governments now have an opportunity to shift from expensive, technologically complicated equipment to items which can contribute to their most pressing needs. While the lure of sophisticated military equipment will always exist, often a frank appraisal of real needs might lead to a force structure better suited and equipped to address the pressing needs of national development.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hess is the Assistant for East Africa in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Prior to his current assignment, Colonel Hess served in the Africa Region of the Deputate for Security Assistance at HQ U.S European Command in West Germany. He holds a BA in history from the Virginia Military Institute and an MA in area studies from the American University.

Mr. Edward S. Henderson is a Foreign Affairs Specialist with the Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Security Assistance Operations Directorate, Washington DC.