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# Security Assistance Community

## **An Overview of AFRICOM: A Unified Combatant Command**

By

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[The following are excerpts from an address presented at the Women in International Security (WIIS) - U.S. Army War College Africa Command (AFRICOM) Conference in Washington, D.C.]

I am delighted to be participating in this program sponsored by Women in International Security and Center for Peace and Security Studies of Georgetown University. I'd like to take this opportunity to underscore the many contributions of women to national security policies such as our own Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and my boss, Ambassador Jendayi Frazer, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Let me also note that Kate Almqvist heads the U.S. Agency for International Development and that many women, like DAS [Deputy Assistant Secretary] Theresa Whelan, are making significant contributions to military policy, including the creation of AFRICOM.

This year, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Africa Bureau—50 years of enhancing relations with the nations of Africa and developing Africa policy. My office, the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, will be organizing a series of programs to mark the anniversary. Based on a 1957 report from his Vice President, President Dwight Eisenhower established the Africa Bureau on September 2, 1958. Creation of the Bureau signaled the importance that the U.S. placed on its relations with the growing number of independent African countries and that the U.S. would have direct relations with Africa, no longer dealing with Africa through European allies. The establishment of Embassies in these new nations followed and now number 44, with 4 consulates.

Fifty years later, the DoD is acknowledging the strategic importance of Africa by establishing a military command devoted solely to African security needs and will no longer have to deal with Africa through three military commands—the European Command, the Central Command, and the Pacific Command. I was honored to be a member of the AFRICOM planning and implementation team. Adm. Robert Moeller was leader of our team, and Ambassador Robert Loftus from the State Department was his deputy. We believed, and continue to believe, that AFRICOM is “history in the making.”

My remarks this morning are directed to the second objective of this panel: Expanded Mission and the 3 Ds (Defense, Diplomacy, and Development).

I have seen many PowerPoint slides on AFRICOM, and my favorite slide is very simple. At the base or foundation are security activities. In the middle are columns representing U.S. development, diplomatic, and humanitarian activities and the activities of our African partners support. At the top are the words “peace, stability, and prosperity”—the goals that we are all striving for. I want you to keep that image in mind, as I outline the reasons why the State Department strongly supports AFRICOM.

First, the Africa Command will support USG efforts to work with African nations to achieve common goals through partnership and collaboration. The Secretary's policy of Transformational Diplomacy stresses partnership and treating African partners as equals. Thus AFRICOM's mission will support the Secretary's

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diplomatic policies. We also believe that AFRICOM compliments the desires of African countries as expressed by the African Union.

Second, the Africa Command will improve DoD's ability to support other USG programs in Africa. No longer will USG agencies and African partners have to deal with three separate commands, and coordination will be easier.

Third, an expanded interagency role in AFRICOM presents opportunities for all USG agencies working in Africa. The interagency component of AFRICOM will provide an opportunity for continuous dialogue so that there will be a greater understanding of upcoming issues and afford an opportunity for better planning. I'll say more on this later.

Fourth, the Africa Command will foster security, stability, and safety, all of which promote economic prosperity and stability on the African continent. If done right, AFRICOM can prevent problems from turning into crises and crises from turning into conflicts.

Allow me to expand on how AFRICOM's structure can help other USG agencies. Those of us engaged in public diplomacy or other USG activities are particularly interested in the Directorate for Civil – Military Activities. While military commands have traditionally had advisors and some few even had small interagency advisory groups working in them, the Africa Command will integrate a greater number of staff members from other parts of the USG into the command. Their work will be directed by a civilian deputy to the commander.

Ambassador Mary Carlin Yates, a senior State Department Official and former ambassador to Ghana, is the civilian Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities [DCMA]. She is also a Public Diplomacy Officer. Ambassador Yates will direct the commander's civil-military planning and programs, with emphasis on aligning the Africa Command's activity with that of other U.S. Government departments and agencies.

As DCMA, Ambassador Yates will be responsible for policy development, resourcing [sic], and program assessment. She will also direct all the command's plans and programs associated with health, humanitarian assistance, humanitarian mine action, disaster response, and security sector reform.

The DCMA will ensure that the command's programs and projects do not compete with or duplicate other USG programs. Policy responsibility for the non-military programs will remain with the civilian USG agency as it does currently.

Improved coordination between the numerous USG programs in Africa will allow the U.S. Government and its African partners to make the best use of USG resources in achieving their mutual goals of peace, prosperity, and stability on the African continent.

In conclusion, in the 50 years that the Africa Bureau has managed our relations with Africa, and in those 50 years that we have engaged in public diplomacy activities in Africa, we have learned a few things that can benefit AFRICOM. I like to think that implementing these lessons is why Africa in poll after poll is still favorably disposed to the U.S.

Lesson #1: Personal relationships are crucial. Everything in Africa is personal, and this means getting to know Africa and Africans at first hand.

Lesson #2: We have to listen. Listening and dialogue leads to mutual understanding.

Lesson #3: We are looking toward at least another 50 years and more of relations with Africa. We are talking about long-term commitment. Nothing happens quickly in Africa. Commitment and perseverance are essential.

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Lesson #4: We understand that actions speak louder than words. The image of America in much of Africa is of a 20-year old Peace Corps Volunteer who lives among Africans, learns their language, earns little, and is eager to learn. Another image is of an NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] worker, or a Fulbright professor, or a missionary. This last lesson is already being implemented by AFRICOM. General Ward, the AFRICOM Commander, wants to emphasize programs and deeds. A good example is the African Partnership Station. The U.S.S. Forester toured the coast of West Africa working with NGOs and African partners on health and other community projects. The Interagency and NGOs were involved in the planning. Thus are new images of America being created—all of which demonstrate American goodwill and concern.