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# Understanding AFRICOM: A Contextual Reading of Empire's New Combatant Command

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## AFRICOM

In early February 2007 the White House finally announced a presidential directive to establish by September 2008 a new unified combatant command with an area of responsibility (AOR) solely dedicated to the African continent. While there had been chatter and debate over a period of years about the form that such a military command should take, the announcement to proceed with centralizing military resources in Africa should not have surprised anyone paying attention for the past seven years. The U.S. African Command (AFRICOM) will replace the AOR for each of three other geographic combatant commands (there are now a total of six) currently tasked with portions of the second-largest continent, with the small exception of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) retaining AOR for Egypt. Further details on operations have not been made public apart from the usual basic press briefings and the formation of a transition team, though it not a mystery to identify what role AFRICOM will play in both the U.S. and Africa's future.

In many ways, a context for the pending strategic role of AFRICOM can be gained from an understanding of the origins of CENTCOM and the role that it continues to provide in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the many "stans" popping up after the implosion of the former U.S.S.R. That context is centered on strategic energy supplies and, explicitly, that of oil. In the petroleum age, these energy stores -- along with the territories concealing them -- have taken on great significance in the foreign policies of the industrialized nations, fueled by an insatiable fever for black gold and the seemingly instant wealth and power it delivers to its possessor. The record-breaking quarterly profits reported by the major oil "producers" over the past few years are only one symbol of the power that oil can bring.

Oil is money. But it is also much more, a crucial ingredient in the continuation of modern living as people in the major power centers have come to know it. Oil is the lifeblood of contemporary, militarized western civilization, and at least that much reality has been apparent to its planners for many decades now, especially as the natural deposits in the so-called developed nations dwindle away from over-exploitation and the centers' dependence on the periphery becomes everything. Since the end of the Second World War and the intensified expansion of the modern industrial superpower, the ruling classes of the United States have strategized to guarantee themselves access to and delivery of hydrocarbons from the Persian Gulf region. Having experienced their own domestic production peak in the early 1970s, and perceiving themselves in battle with an international communist conspiracy determined to cast the western capitalist ideology into the dustbin of history, the increasingly powerful rulers of the U.S. pondered their dependency upon the Middle Eastern reserves -- containing perhaps 60% of all known accessible oil on the planet -- and adjusted their foreign policy programs accordingly. Not only was it imperative to secure the spigots, but in line with the trajectory of their long-worn practice of enforcing the Monroe Doctrine in their own hemisphere, by the beginning of the following decade a new doctrine would be in place to extend the U.S. military directly

into the Persian Gulf.

Michael Klare describes the importance of President Jimmy Carter's decision "in response to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Islamic revolution in Iran"<sup>1</sup> as

...the transformation of the U.S. military into a global oil-protection service whose primary function is the guarding of overseas energy supplies as well as their global delivery systems (pipelines, tanker ships, and supply routes). This overarching mission was first articulated by President Jimmy Carter in January 1980, when he described the oil flow from the Persian Gulf as a "vital interest" of the United States, and affirmed that this country would employ "any means necessary, including military force" to overcome an attempt by a hostile power to block that flow.

When President Carter issued this edict, quickly dubbed the Carter Doctrine, the United States did not actually possess any forces capable of performing this role in the Gulf. To fill this gap, Carter created a new entity, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), an *ad hoc* assortment of U.S.-based forces designated for possible employment in the Middle East. In 1983, President Reagan transformed the RDJTF into the Central Command (CENTCOM), the name it bears today. CENTCOM exercises command authority over all U.S. combat forces deployed in the greater Persian Gulf area including Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. At present, CENTCOM is largely preoccupied with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it has never given up its original role of guarding the oil flow from the Persian Gulf in accordance with the Carter Doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, as one only need recall the priority assigned to protecting the oil infrastructure in the 2003 invasion of Iraq (reportedly the campaign was to initially be named Operation Iraqi Liberation, or OIL) and the positioning of military bases along oil routes to see how central these energy supplies are to CENTCOM's missions. In fact, as Klare pointed out in an article from 2004, "[i]n the first U.S. combat operation of the war in Iraq, Navy commandos stormed an offshore oil-loading platform."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Michael Klare, "Oil Wars: Transforming the American Military into a Global Oil-Protection Service," *TomDispatch*, October 7, 2004, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/indexprint.mhtml?pid=1888>

<sup>2</sup>. Michael Klare, "The Global Energy Race and Its Consequences," *TomDispatch*, January 14, 2007, <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=11862>

<sup>3</sup>. Klare, "Oil Wars"

Originally covering the Gulf states and the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan) CENTCOM's AOR expanded in the 1990s to include the newly independent Central Asian republics after President William Clinton extended the Carter Doctrine to qualify the Caspian Sea basin as another "vital interest" for securing oil and natural gas redistribution. Paradoxically, as the military reach grew, so too did the need for more oil. The Pentagon is currently "the single largest oil consumer in the world."<sup>4</sup> The modern combatant command is an integral component of U.S. national security strategies regarding energy resources, plain and simple. And that is the role which AFRICOM will take up on the resource-rich continent of Africa as the amount of petroleum available globally continues to diminish. This was made clear through the Bush administration's May 2001 National Energy Policy and ensuing governmental objectives.

In May 2001 the Cheney report warned that the U.S. would grow increasingly dependent upon foreign oil in the years to come and recommended that as a matter of policy the Bush Administration work to increase production and export of oil from regions other than the Middle East, noting that Latin America and West Africa were likely to be the fastest growing sources of future U.S. oil imports. ... Three months later, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner declared that African oil "has become a national strategic interest." This statement is particularly noteworthy in that it uses the language of the Carter Doctrine in the Middle East, in which President Carter went on to declare that the U.S. would intervene by any means necessary to protect its national interest in Middle Eastern oil. In April 2002, Donald Norland, former U.S. Ambassador to Chad told a Congressional subcommittee: "It's been reliably reported that, for the first time, the two concepts -- 'Africa' and 'U.S. national security' -- have been used in the same sentence in Pentagon documents."<sup>5</sup>

The 2002 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) outlined a blueprint for military cover enabling increased activity on the continent, positioning the global war on terror (GWOT) as both a key task for military forces and as an amorphous talking point, necessary to justify the stepped up interest in the area. The image of Africa portrayed as a haven of "terrorist cells," "porous borders," "civil wars," "poverty" and "disease", all of which not only makes humanitarian efforts more difficult, but also "threatens .. a core value of the United States -- preserving human dignity." The document also identified "South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ethiopia" as "anchors for regional engagement." One of the only allusions to the role that the National Energy Policy played in this new NSS was the proclamation that "We will strengthen our own energy security and the shared prosperity of the global economy by working with our

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<sup>4</sup> . Sohbet Karbuz, "US Military Oil Pains," *Energy Bulletin*, February 17, 2007, <http://www.energybulletin.net/print.php?id=26194>

<sup>5</sup> . Letitia Lawson, "U.S. Africa Policy Since the Cold War", *Strategic Insights*, Volume VI, Issue 1 (January 2007), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jan/lawsonJan07.asp>

allies, trading partners, and energy producers to expand the sources and types of global energy supplied, especially in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, Central Asia, and the Caspian region." <sup>6</sup> Nigerians' ears perked up especially. To the military, the goose chase was on. All branches set their main focus on 'winning the war on terror,' and before long, as one former Bush administration official told reporter Raffi Khatchadourian, "Rumsfeld had his goons running all over the continent." <sup>7</sup>

## The Horn of Africa

In 2002, CENTCOM's Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) began establishing a permanent forward operating base at Camp Lemonier, an old French Foreign Legion base in Djibouti, using the pretext of the GWOT.

CJTF-HOA, staffed by about 1500 troops, has the mission of "detecting, disrupting and ultimately defeating transnational terrorist groups operating in the region -- denying safe havens, external support and material assistance for transnational terrorism in the region." Initially, it was driven by concerns that terrorists fleeing from Afghanistan would be attracted to the 'vast ungoverned spaces' of the Horn of Africa. When such a mass influx failed to materialize, and the local terrorist threat proved to be relatively limited, CJTF-HOA began giving greater emphasis to its role in preventing terrorism by providing humanitarian assistance and waging a hearts and minds campaign.<sup>8</sup>

And a foot in the door...

Similar to the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) that preceded USCENTCOM, these operations have initiated much ground work to gain better insight into the region and increase engagement in Africa. In the majority of cases, interaction within the region meets with less resistance than that experienced by the RDJTF. Specifically with other agencies within the U.S. government, this is best evidenced by the fact that TSCTI and CJTF-HOA have significant interaction with

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<sup>6</sup>. The *National Security Strategy of the United States*, September 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

<sup>7</sup>. Raffi Khatchadourian, "War in the Greatest Desert: The U.S. Military's \$500 Million Gamble to Prevent the Next Afghanistan," *International Reporting Project*, Spring 2005, [http://www.journalismfellowships.org/stories/algeria/pf\\_algeria\\_war.htm](http://www.journalismfellowships.org/stories/algeria/pf_algeria_war.htm)  
[http://www.journalismfellowships.org/stories/algeria/pf\\_algeria\\_war2.htm](http://www.journalismfellowships.org/stories/algeria/pf_algeria_war2.htm)

<sup>8</sup>. Lawson

agencies such as the Department of State or USAID.<sup>9</sup>

A *Congressional Research Service (CRS)* report in 2004 informed members of Congress that "SOF units operating with Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) are involved in training selected regional armies in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency tactics as well as assisting in the apprehension of terrorists operating in the region."<sup>10</sup> Another CRS report for Congress, this time in 2006, stated that

Originally, the reported mission of CJTF-HOA was to conduct raids on Al Qaeda targets in the region -- particularly Somalia -- but due to a lack of targets, the mission has instead evolved into gathering intelligence, military training for some of the region's military forces, and building infrastructure and goodwill to create an environment hostile to terrorist organizations.<sup>11</sup>

William Arkin's directory, *Code Names*, summarizes the role of CJTF-HOA as: "The 1,800 personnel at Camp Lemonier coordinate military operations in Kenya, Somali, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Yemen."<sup>12</sup> And a report to the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) ascribes to it a more enlightened Good Samaritan mission:

Such an expansion of military-provided humanitarian and civic assistance is nowhere more evident than in the Horn of Africa. U.S. Central Command oversees some 1800 troops stationed at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti, who are tasked with building health clinics, wells and schools in remote areas where government influence is weak and terrorists are known to be recruiting. In an effort to provide evidence of alternatives to religious extremism, small military teams train local forces, gain access and gather information, and provide practical assistance in an attempt to improve the lives of local residents in areas that terrorists may be targeting.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>. CDR Otto Sieber, "Africa Command: Forecast for the Future", *Strategic Insights*, Volume VI, Issue 1 (January 2007), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jan/sieberJan07.asp>

<sup>10</sup>. U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress, *CRS Report for Congress*, Sept 28, 2004, <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RS21048.pdf>

<sup>11</sup>. CRS Report for Congress, "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia," January 20, 2006, available at <http://www.opencrs.com/>

<sup>12</sup>. William M. Arkin, "Code Names: Deciphering U.S. Military Plans, Programs, and Operations in the 9/11 World," (Steerforth Press, 2005), p.45

<sup>13</sup>. "Embassies As Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign," *A Report to Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, United States Senate, December 15, 2006, p.9, [http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2006\\_rpt/embassies.html](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2006_rpt/embassies.html)

Hearts, minds, and souls aside, there is more going on here, as should be expected when placing CJTF-HOA's role into the global energy protection context. As John Foster Bellamy wrote in June 2006,

At present the main, permanent U.S. military base in Africa is the one established in 2002 in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, giving the United States strategic control of the maritime zone through which a quarter of the world's oil production passes. The Djibouti base is also close in proximity to the Sudanese oil pipeline. ... The Djibouti base allows the United States to dominate the eastern end of the broad oil swath cutting across Africa that it now considers vital to its strategic interests -- a vast strip running southwest from the 994-mile Hagleig-Port Sudan oil pipeline in the east to the 640-mile Chad-Cameroon pipeline and the Gulf of Guinea in the West.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to Djibouti, there are prominent forward-operating bases located in Kenya, Ethiopia (two of the nations identified as regional anchors in the NSS), and Uganda, geographically situated near both the southern edge of Sudan (the part where most of the oil is) and the resource-rich, highly-prized Great Lakes region.

The first country to conclude a formal agreement with Washington for the use of local military facilities was Kenya, which signed an agreement in February 1980. The Kenyan agreement allows U.S. troops to use the port of Mombassa, as well as airfields at Embakasi and Nanyuki. These facilities were used to support the American military intervention in Somalia 1992-1994 and have been used in the past year [written in 2005] to support forces from the United States and other coalition forces involved in counter-terrorism operations in the region. The United States has signed agreements with Ghana, Senegal, Gabon, Namibia, Uganda, and Zambia to allow American aircraft to refuel at local air bases. In its efforts to secure other basing options, the United States has negotiated agreements granting it access to airfields and other facilities in several African nations. These facilities are often referred to as "lily pad" facilities, because American forces can hop in and out of them in times of crisis while avoiding the impression of establishing a permanent – and potentially provocative – presence. They include Entebbe Airport in Uganda, where the United States has built two "K-Span" steel buildings to house troops and equipment; an airfield near Bamako, the capital of Mali; an airfield at Dakar, Senegal; an airfield in Gabon; and airfields and port

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<sup>14</sup>. John Bellamy Foster, "A Warning to Africa: The New U.S. Imperial Grand Strategy," *Monthly Review*, June 2006, <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0606jbf.htm>

facilities in Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>15</sup>

Investigative reporter Keith Harmon Snow, in an article from 2004, wrote of training camps in Ethiopia:

In 2003, the U.S. Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (Special Operations Forces) completed a three-month program to train an Ethiopian army division in counter-terrorism tactics. Operations are coordinated through the Combined Joint Task Forces-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) base in Djibouti.

In January 2004, Special Operations soldiers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment replaced the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division forces at a new Hurso Training Camp, northwest of Dire Dawa near the border with Somalia, to be used for launching local joint missions in "counter-terrorism" with the Ethiopian military. Soldiers will continue to operate missions out of Hurso for several months from a new forward base named "Camp United."

From April 12-25, 2003, under the U.S. State Department-sponsored Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program, CJTF-HOA provided instruction to nearly 900 Ethiopian soldiers at a base in Legedadi. CJTF-HOA forces from the U.S. Army's 478<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion also operated in Ethiopia in 2003 in and around Dire Dawa, Galadi, and Dolo Odo, among other areas.<sup>16</sup>

The December 2006 invasion of Somalia was coordinated using these and other bases throughout the region. While efforts to replace the popular Islamic Courts Union in Somalia with the warlord-led Transitional Federal Government (TFG) appear to be failing, the arrival of AFRICOM may bring more boots on the ground into that unstable, geostrategic nation. Especially now that TFG spokesman Abdirahman Dinari has dangled a carrot before foreign investors: "Somalia has a lot of oil, and our ministers have just approved a key exploration law to regulate how concessions are given out.... But what we need now is international support to restore security and build our nation, and we will be noting who helps us and who doesn't when these decisions are taken." <sup>17</sup>

The persistent Western calls for "humanitarian intervention" into the Darfur region of Sudan also sets up another possibility for military engagement to deliver regime

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<sup>15</sup>. Daniel Volman, "U.S. Military Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2005-2007," *African Security Research Project*, <http://allafrica.com/peaceafrica/resources/view/00010822.pdf>

<sup>16</sup>. Keith Harmon Snow, "State Terror in Ethiopia: Another secret war for oil?," *Z Magazine Online*, May 2004, <http://zmagazine.zmag.org/Jun2004/snowpr0604.html>

<sup>17</sup>. Daniel Wallis, "Oil profits boost east Africa exploration," *Reuters*, <http://uk.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=UKL1921930120070222>

change in another Islamic state in the Horn. However, since the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are grinding down available U.S. resources, for now, any increased involvement in these two areas will likely consist primarily of U.S.-organized and directed regional militaries, private contractors and mercenaries, or potentially African Union and United Nations forces. The training and arming of national militaries is taking place throughout the continent already, although the most visible efforts have been taking place in the European Command's AOR.

## West Africa

Prior to the announcement of AFRICOM, the remaining portion of Africa fell under the AOR of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), with the exception being U.S. Pacific Command's responsibility for the island of Madagascar. It is in Western and Sub-Saharan Africa where the most active presence of U.S. forces is taking place. It is also, not surprisingly, where most of Africa's oil and natural gas resources are located. The Cheney report identified the six largest Sub-Saharan oil-producing African nations as the focus for U.S. attention in expanding reliable oil supplies – Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea.<sup>18</sup>

As Bellamy noted, the introduction to a 2005 *Council on Foreign Relations* document, "More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa", declared that "By the end of the decade sub-Saharan Africa is likely to become as important as a source of U.S. energy imports as the Middle East." The end of the decade, accordingly, is not very far into the future.

The authors of a recent report for the *Center for International Policy*, titled "Convergent Interests: U.S. Energy Security and the 'Securing' of Nigerian Democracy," elaborate:

U.S. military involvement in West Africa has only mushroomed since 2001, focusing on three broad goals: (i) getting U.S. forces on the ground in order to advise and upgrade the region's militaries in support of the GWOT; (ii) establishing maritime dominance in the Gulf in order to secure offshore oil installations and, if necessary, unilaterally defending American energy assets; and (iii) building or subcontracting access to new air and naval bases, to provide both forward supplies, surveillance and air cover capacities. As EUCOM's General Jones recently told the *Wall Street Journal*, "Africa plays an increased strategic role militarily, economically and politically..." for his command, which now spends "70 percent of its time and energy on Africa .. up from nearly none when he took it over three-plus

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<sup>18</sup>. Daniel Volman, "The Bush Administration and African Oil: The Security Implications of U.S. Energy Policy," African Security Research Project, *ACAS Bulletin*, No. 66, Winter 2003/2004, pp.15-25, available at <http://acas.prairienet.org/pubs.html> ; also see Daniel Volman, "The Scramble for African Oil," allAfrica.com, May 25, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200605251026.html>

years ago."<sup>19</sup>

EUCOM's AOR, prior to the AFRICOM announcement, consisted of 93 countries and territories, including all of Europe, most of Africa, Russia, three-quarters of Greenland, and Israel. Using the pretext of fighting terrorism, EUCOM has made significant steps toward planting a large boot print in West Africa. One of their first targets was the southern border of the world's largest desert, the Sahara, which GWOT strategists described as an ungoverned space (i.e. not measuring up to western ideas of governance), replete with smugglers, bandits, and 70 million Muslims who not only possibly harbored transnational terrorists, but were themselves susceptible to becoming "seeds" in the international network of terror, easily persuaded by outsiders into a jihad against the West. Of course, there is also a capital-intensive oil infrastructure, including pipelines, in this 3,000-mile stretch of land – called the Sahel – that runs through Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad, on into Sudan.

Some Africa specialists complain that since 9-11 the United States has wrongfully collapsed the Sahel's manifold problems into an all-too-simple issue: hunting bad guys. "We are exaggerating the whole terrorism thing," said Robert Pringle, a former ambassador to Mali. ... Similar views can be found in Washington, where a number of people said that the European Command had a bureaucratic imperative to cast militant Islam in the region as an impending danger. A retired CIA specialist in counterterrorism told me that European Command had its "nose out of joint" because the main theaters of the war on terrorism fell under Central Command, the division responsible for American forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. A former U.S. diplomat who worked closely with the Defense Department said, "I mean, for European Command, when they tore down the Berlin Wall, a lot of their missions evaporated -- so it's a matter of having resources [allocated by Congress] and then trying to find missions to justify them." A State Department official familiar with the military's Saharan strategy called it "a hammer looking for a nail."<sup>20</sup>

Undoubtedly, EUCOM has benefited under a renewed sense of purpose, reversing earlier cuts in both personnel and financing after the crimson specters of the Cold War reanimated in traditional Islamic garb for the GWOT. Actual proof of transnational terrorist networks and international financing in Africa, however, has not been delivered, and specialists have debunked many of the perceptions advanced in the GWOT. In addition to the observation that "[t]here is little evidence of a significant terrorist threat in the West African countries visited," the SFRC team

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<sup>19</sup>. Paul M. Lubeck, Michael J. Watts and Ronnie Lipschutz, "Convergent Interests: U.S. Energy Security and the "Securing" of Nigerian Democracy," *Center for International Policy* Report, February 2007, [http://ciponline.org/nigeria\\_summary.html](http://ciponline.org/nigeria_summary.html)

<sup>20</sup>. Khatchadourian

reported to the Senate committee that U.S. embassy officials also downplayed the GWOT dangers.

Section 1206 funding is supporting both the Gulf of Guinea initiative in West Africa and the Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership. In neither case did embassy officials in countries visited see Section 1206 funding as addressing an emergency. Rather, it is seen as a new source of money for long-desired components in a military relationship. Old wish lists were dusted off and used to justify submitting a request for Section 1206 funding.<sup>21</sup>

If an organized, non-state international terrorist structure actually even exists, it has little chance, and no luck so far, penetrating and organizing clan and tribal societies in Africa. Much of the "terrorist" rhetoric amply demonstrates the biases and ignorance of the strategists and promoters.<sup>22</sup>

After 911, the U.S. Special Forces programs operating in a multitude of African nations switched from a narrative centered on building peacekeeping capabilities to that of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency training. Throughout the continent, U.S. forces worked with militaries such as those in Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Congos, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In some cases, SOF has worked alongside the militaries it trains, engaging in battle with "terrorist" outfits, as it did in 2004 in the Sahel helping the Algerian government eliminate opposition forces.<sup>23</sup>

As Daniel Volman wrote, DoD's focus in these countries is on "efforts to strengthen the security the security forces of oil-producing countries and enhance their ability to ensure that their oil continues to flow to the United States."

It is doing this through three main channels. The first of these is the sale of arms to African governments through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program and the Commercial Sales program. The second is the provision of military training and education programs both in Africa and in the United States for African troops and officers through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program (the

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<sup>21</sup>. "Embassies As Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign," p.14

<sup>22</sup>. On terrorist financing see, for instance, R.T. Naylor, *Satanic Purses: Money, Myth, and Misinformation in the War on Terror*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. On terrorist threats in Africa see Jessica R. Piombo, "Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview," *Strategic Insights*, Volume VI, Issue 1 (January 2007), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jan/piomboJan07.asp>

<sup>23</sup>. Khatchadourian

successor to the African Crisis Response Initiative program created by the Clinton Administration in 1997), and the African Regional Peacekeeping Program. Finally, the Pentagon is conducting joint military exercises with military forces throughout the continent in order to train local forces and to enhance the ability of U.S. forces to engage in military operations in Africa.<sup>24</sup>

Volman also points out that “these programs are intended to bolster the capacity of African military forces to protect oil production and transportation facilities from any conflict that might disrupt oil shipments.” Not surprisingly, “In the case of all sub-Saharan recipients, the U.S. government waives the repayment of these loans.”<sup>25</sup>

Overt military funding from the United States for these programs comes mainly through two main channels, the 150 Foreign Affairs account, controlled by the State Department, and Section 1206 Security Assistance, under the control of the Defense Department. The former covers the basic programs, like foreign military financing (FMF), IMET, and the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). In the past year, as the DoD has taken a leading role in setting U.S. policies, the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act has broadened the powers of the Secretary of Defense to authorize and allocate funds for special security programs, bypassing the oversight of the Secretary of State and the need for Presidential direction. Under the umbrella of the GWOT, these programs focus on training and equipping military and police forces, building up maritime security, securing borders, and countering resistance movements.

The SFRC report states that

Overall in fiscal year 2006, \$200 million in funding was appropriated. Only \$100 million of that amount has been obligated, an indication that the initially claimed urgency for the funding was questionable. In the 2007 budget, \$300 million has been authorized for Section 1206 funding and a request of \$750 million is expected for 2008.<sup>26</sup>

There are multiple objectives going on the various locations, with not all necessarily following the GWOT narrative. Integration of U.S. access into these nations through their military is one aspect, providing channels for influence and gathering intelligence. There is also an attempt to network communication between the militaries of various nations, providing for regional response of armed forces, orchestrated accordingly with U.S. objectives. And some forces receive training for

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<sup>24</sup>. Volman, “The Bush Administration and African Oil”

<sup>25</sup>. Volman, “U.S. Military Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2005-2007”; also see William D. Hartung and Frida Berrigan, “Militarization of U.S. Africa Policy, 2000 to 2005,” Arms Trade Resource Center, World Policy Institute, [http://www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/reports/Africa\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_EAD\\_March\\_2005.pdf](http://www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/reports/Africa_Fact_Sheet_EAD_March_2005.pdf)

<sup>26</sup>. “Embassies As Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign,” p.8

specific purposes, such as guarding pipelines and hydrocarbon production facilities, and for covert missions. As one influential and well-connected lobby group, *Securing America's Energy Future*, pointed out in a recent publication, "EUCOM soldiers are training locals to guard the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and working to curb corruption and improve the security of facilities in West Africa."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the military front, advances are being made on the civil side too. That same 2004 CRS Report for Congress stated that "[t]he most frequently deployed SOF assets are civil affairs (CA) units, which provide experts in every area of civil government to help administer civilian affairs in the theater."<sup>28</sup> Special Forces have also greatly expanded their propaganda operations, which are now considered an integral part of population control. Psyops teams consisting of 3-4 individuals now operate out of at least 18 embassies around the world, with plans for more on the way.

While the motives of the many different individuals involved in the humanitarian and civil capacity-building (nation-building, in this regard) efforts should not be necessarily suspect, from a broader perspective many of these programs can be recognized as a means of altruistic cover, defusing public opposition by masking neo-colonial imperialism with talk of "helping Africans help themselves."<sup>29</sup> But it is the military actions that belie such rhetoric of "democracy-building" and of helping to set Africa on the "path of political and economic freedom."

In West Africa, the U.S. military's European Command has now established forward-operating locations in Senegal, Mali, Ghana, and Gabon -- as well as Namibia, bordering Angola on the south -- involving the upgrading of airfields, the pre-positioning of critical supplies and fuel, and access agreements for swift deployment of U.S. troops. ... [It] is developing a coastal security system in the Gulf of Guinea called the Gulf of Guinea Guard. It has also been planning the construction of a U.S. naval base in Sao Tome and Principe, which the European Command has intimated could rival the U.S. naval base as Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. The Pentagon is thus moving aggressively to establish a military presence in the Gulf of Guinea that will allow it to control the western part of the broad

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<sup>27</sup>. Oil Dependence: A Threat to U.S. Economic and National Security, *Securing America's Future Energy*, <http://www.secureenergy.org/reports.php>

<sup>28</sup>. *CRS Report for Congress*, Sept 28, 2004

<sup>29</sup>. One will also come across occasional relapses into the Euro-Imperial "White Man's Burden" syndrome, as evidenced in the conclusion to one recent *Strategic Insights* article: "Over the past years, Africans have been undertaking impressive initiatives to resolve their continent's manifold perils, but without such an increased U.S. commitment these initiatives will fail and so too will many of the U.S. hopes and objectives for the continent." Benedikt Franke, "Enabling a Continent to Help Itself: U.S. Military Capacity Building and Africa's Emerging Security Architecture," *Strategic Insights*, Volume VI, Issue 1 (January 2007), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jan/frankeJan07.asp>

trans-Africa oil strip and the vital oil reserves now being discovered there.<sup>30</sup>

## Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and the Gulf of Guinea

As the authors of the Convergent Interest report warn,

EUCOM's main strategic objective focuses on securing Nigerian and Gulf energy supplies

To achieve this strategic goal, American military planners have launched a two-pronged pincher movement whose main objective is "Ring-Fencing Nigeria" from the north and south. To the South, the Navy is rapidly increasing their patrols in the oil fields of the Gulf of Guinea, bolstered by U.S. funding of an \$800,000 port and airfield feasibility study of STP [the island state of Sao Tome and Principe]. To the north, American troops funded by the TSCTI [the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative] are being deployed in training and advising missions designed to monitor and, if necessary, seal Nigeria's northern border. An intensive search is on for any evidence linking northern Nigerians with international Islamist terrorism. A *Reuter's* story describing the TSCTI as a "ring fencing" strategy reports that "privately, some (American) officials acknowledge that the main concern in the region is protecting Nigeria, the continent's biggest oil producer...."<sup>31</sup>

Nigeria is the most populous African nation with more than 131 million citizens -- one-fifth of the total population. There are perhaps 300 different ethnic groups in Nigeria, distributed across a patchwork of states and territories. The Northern states contain some 50-60 million Muslims, largely members of the Hausa and Fulani, who have become very familiar with the preconceptions of EUCOM and the war on terror. Though Nigeria is officially a secular nation, twelve northern states have adopted the framework of Shari'ah, Islamic law, for their legal and ethical codes. While the northern half of the country is majority Sunni Muslim, the rest of Nigeria is mostly composed of a mixture of Christian Independents and those retaining traditional, indigenous beliefs.

Near the center of the country sits the federal government in the capitol of Abuja. The West and East each share their own differences. And to the south lay a jigsaw pattern of states, carved out of one of the largest deltas on the planet by the Niger River, West Africa's largest, as it empties into the Gulf of Guinea over an area covering nearly 75,000 square miles. Earlier the center of a large colonial palm oil industry, the Niger Delta, containing some 30 million indigenous residents, these days still finds itself occupied by foreigners in a situation little changed from that of

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<sup>30</sup>. Foster

<sup>31</sup>. Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz

the pre-independence era. In fact, it's probably worse.

After gaining independence from British colonialists on New Year's 1960, Nigeria has literally been in turmoil. A civil war lasting from 1967 to 1970 claimed an estimated three million lives. And nine military coups between 1966 and the installation of the notoriously corrupt Sani Abacha in 1993 have forced the citizens to endure seemingly perpetual military rule (over thirty years, post-independence), which overtly ended with Abacha's death five years later. However, before turning over the government to civilian rule, the military wrote a new constitution in 1999, forcing it upon the peoples of this diverse country, and which, to this day, remains widely despised and a source of ongoing conflict.<sup>32</sup>

The current President, Olusegun Obasanjo, who actually ruled the country from 1976-1979 and was later imprisoned in 1995 for plotting a coup against Abacha, has hardly been a benefit for the nation. Holding the presidency for two terms through blatant election fraud, he has failed to respond in the face of public pressure to change the constitution so as to bring about a more just representation for the numerous states and diverse ethnic groups living within the imposed national boundaries left by the colonizers. Not that changing the constitution was completely out of the question for Obasanjo – he only recently conceded defeat amidst international condemnation for his expressed desires to amend the constitution just enough to extend his presidency for a third term, justified as critical, of course, in order to prevent the government from falling into the hands of the more corrupt.

Yet Obasanjo has resisted calls for moving the country forward toward a true democracy, one that recognizes the self-determination of all its peoples. And shares the wealth. The living standards for most Nigerians are not much better than they were since that New Year's Day nearly fifty years ago. It is estimated that 70 percent of Nigerians – some 90 million people -- live on less than one USD per day despite the wealth and revenues being generated by its petroeconomy (the country has been a member nation of OPEC since the early 1970s). Nigeria appears regularly near the top of international corruption indices. Barrels of oil mysteriously vanish. Funds disappear. Lies are told. Bribes are the norm.<sup>33</sup>

With elections scheduled for April of this year, the presidency will change and, though it is not guaranteed to be fair or free -- nor blood-free, at that -- it will stand as an important event in determining the immediate fate of Nigeria and her people. Given the current global focus on the West African nation, much is at stake. One of the candidates is the retired General Muhammadu Buhari, who served as head of state from 1983 – 1985 (fifth coup) and, before that, as the Minister of Petroleum, though there has been vocal opposition to his candidacy, including that from the one of Nigeria's most famous sons, Wole Soyinka, who stirred up heated public debate with a speech raking Buhari across the coals for exemplifying the antithesis of democracy and justice. Buhari, in his earlier authoritarian rule, had centralized much of the power in Nigeria, especially sticking it to the states in the Delta, dropping their share of Nigeria's oil rent revenues over a period of two years from 20 to 1.5

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<sup>32</sup>. For an engaging memoir intertwined in the history of post-colonial Nigeria, see Wole Soyinka's "You Must Set Forth at Dawn," Random House, 2006

<sup>33</sup>. See, for instance, Halliburton and Nigeria: Bribing Nigeria, *Halliburton Watch*, [http://www.halliburtonwatch.org/about\\_hal/nigeria.html](http://www.halliburtonwatch.org/about_hal/nigeria.html)

percent. But then Obasanjo himself, during his rule in the 1970s, had laid the ground for Buhari by seizing lands and granting the oil majors rights to exploit the Niger Delta and, hence, its people, further undermining their abilities for representation and retaining control over their own lives.<sup>34</sup>

Nigeria is a complex country of many different peoples, struggles, and conflict. It is also a country that contains a lot of oil and natural gas.

Few Americans realize the scale and significance of Nigerian oil and gas production centered in the Delta and how this complex impacts American energy security. Since the start of commercial oil production in 1956, oil majors have operated with relative impunity in the Delta. Most oil is lifted onshore, from about 250 fields dotted across the Delta, but Nigeria's total oil sector now represents a much larger domestic industrial infrastructure with more than six hundred oil fields, 5,284 on- and off-shore wells, 7,000 kilometers of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries (Warri, Port Harcourt I and II, and Kaduna), and massive LNG [liquefied natural gas] projects (in Bonny and Brass)

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Oil from the Gulf of Guinea is especially attractive for American consumers because it has a transport advantage to oil terminals on the east coast of the U.S. and a low-sulfur, lightweight content that fetches a premium for gasoline production.

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Currently, [Nigeria's] proven oil reserves are estimated at 40 billion barrels, but new offshore discoveries will raise reserves significantly. Most of this oil derives from onshore fields in the Niger Delta, but offshore discoveries like the Bonga fields are rapidly changing this picture. Depending on the future price of oil, and internal security in Nigeria, annual production could rise from 2.5 million bbl per day in 2005 to as much as 5 million bbl per day in 2020.

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<sup>34</sup>. See Oronto Douglas, Van Kemedi, Ike Okonta, and Michael Watts, "Alienation and Militancy in the Niger Delta: A Response to CSIS on Petroleum, Politics, and Democracy in Nigeria," *Foreign Policy In Focus*, July 2003, <http://www.fpif.org/papers/nigeria2003.html>; Michael J. Watts, "Petro-Violence: Some Thoughts on Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology," *Berkeley Workshop on Environmental Politics* WP 99-1, September 1998, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/EnvirPol/pubs.html>; Ike Okonta, "Behind The Mask: Explaining the Emergence of the MEND Militia in Nigeria's Oil-Bearing Niger Delta," *Niger Delta Economies of Violence* Working Paper No. 11, Institute of International Studies, The United States Institute of Peace, Our Niger Delta

Today, Nigeria accounts for over 60 percent of the Gulf of Guinea's oil wealth. Its output makes Nigeria the eleventh largest oil producer in the world. It also contains the largest natural gas reserves in Africa (176 trillion cubic feet) and now possesses a large-scale LNG complex (e.g. five train lines) on Bonny Island with more plants planned. According to the IMF, in 2005 oil revenues accounted for 99 percent of all Nigerian export revenues, 88 percent of government income, and 50 percent of Nigerian GDP, amounting to over \$50 billion. Based on an oil price of \$50/barrel, between 2006 and 2020 Nigeria alone could pocket more than \$750 billion in oil income; the whole of West Africa, more than \$1 trillion. For Africa, these are colossal numbers. Tight and volatile markets, coupled with short-term upward price pressures, suggest there is every reason to assume that these estimates of Nigeria's and the region's future oil wealth are quite conservative.<sup>35</sup>

And the conservatives in the U.S. are very much aware of that.

...President Bush has extended the reach of the Carter Doctrine to West Africa, now one of America's major sources of oil. Particular emphasis is being placed on Nigeria, where unrest in the Delta (which holds most of the country's onshore petroleum fields) has produced a substantial decline in oil output. "Nigeria is the fifth largest source of U.S. oil imports," the State Dept's Fiscal Year 2007 *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations* declares, "and disruption of supply from Nigeria would represent a major blow to U.S. oil security strategy." To prevent such a disruption, the Department of Defense is providing Nigerian military and internal security forces with substantial arms and equipment intended to quell unrest in the Delta region; the Pentagon is also collaborating with Nigerian forces in a number of regional patrol and surveillance efforts aimed at improving security in the Gulf of Guinea, where most of West Africa's offshore oil and gas fields are located.

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Especially revealing is a November 2006 task force report from the *Council on Foreign Relations* on "National Security Consequences of U.S. Oil Dependency." Co-chaired by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger and former CIA Director John Deutch, and endorsed by a slew of elite policy wonks from both parties, the report ... struck just the

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<sup>35</sup>. Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz

militaristic note first voiced in the 2000 CSIS report (which Schlesinger also co-chaired): "Several standard operations of U.S. regionally deployed forces [presumably CENTCOM and PACOM] have made important contributions to improving energy security, and the continuation of such efforts will be necessary in the future. U.S. naval protection of the sea-lanes that transport oil is of paramount importance." The report also called for stepped up U.S. naval engagement in the Gulf of Guinea off the coast of Nigeria.<sup>36</sup>

Looking at the Niger Delta on a satellite map<sup>37</sup>, probably the first thing to catch the eye is the spidery plethora of rivers and creeks weaving across the terrain. It's an area of great ecological significance, the kidneys, quite literally, of West Africa. The mangrove forests here are the third largest of its kind on the planet, and the extent of the ecological value is known only to the locals, as the majority of scientific surveys of the Niger Delta have been done strictly for economic reasons. If you zoom in on the Delta area you will soon start seeing gas flares, the most visible sign of the results of that research. The landscape is dotted with oil and natural gas wells and the production facilities required to contain and transport these fossil fuels to foreign lands, and gas flaring here has long been a problem.

In their efforts to get to the oil underneath, the extraction industries have typically burned off the gas reserves that have collected on the top of these deposits, allowing large gas flares to burn for years, adding toxins into the atmosphere which then return to poison the lands and those living there. It is said "some children have never known a dark night even though they have no electricity."<sup>38</sup> Despite sitting on top of all these natural oil and natural gas deposits, the ethnic groups living in the Delta region have benefited minimally from its extraction. Actually, considering the environmental damage and pollution that this extraction brings, in addition to the de facto rule of the oil companies that comes with it, the people of the Delta are heavily penalized for it.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>. Klare, "The Global Energy Race and Its Consequences"

<sup>37</sup>. For example, <http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&z=9&ll=4.636655,6.748352&spn=1.314016,1.782532&t=h&om=1>

<sup>38</sup>. Watts, "Petro-Violence"

<sup>39</sup>. See, for instance, "Oil Spill Displaces 10 Ijaw Communities," Emma Arubi, *Vanguard* (Lagos) February 13th, 2007, <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=14356>

CHEVRON'S Abiteye flow station oil spill of over 1,500 barrels of crude has rendered over 10 Ijaw communities and 500 hundred persons homeless in Gbaramatu kingdom in Warri South West local government area of Delta State.

The incident has led to anger and fresh threats to the peace and security in the areas, as the communities accused Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) of employing 'divide-and-rule' tactics in dealing with the problems arising from the spill.

Organized indigenous resistance to federal centralization, the usurpation of their local rights and resources without fair compensation, and the destruction of their landbase has picked up steam in the last two decades. Environmental and human rights activists have, for years, documented atrocities on the part of oil companies and the military in this region. Oil companies have generally been able to operate with impunity, refusing to compensate local residents for the environmental damage and medical ailments resulting from the rush to turn oil into money.<sup>40</sup> Some companies have turned to paying and even arming mercenaries to discourage or eliminate those who oppose their presence.<sup>41</sup> New, increasingly militant, movements have evolved out of the decades of fruitless efforts to seek self-determination and compensation from the federal government and the oil companies that it essentially gave free rein to. The information revolution has allowed a new means for sharing ideas, organizing, and drawing attention to their struggles.

An increasing proliferation of arms traffic combined with strong market prices fetched for bunkered oil – that is, tapped from the oil companies without their authorization – and healthy ransoms paid for the release of kidnapped oil workers, has resulted in the increase of productive campaigns of sabotage and acts of armed resistance. With their lives and those of their families being devalued in favor of five-dollar barrels of oil, tactics for many have shifted from petition and protest to more proactive measures. Attacks on pipelines and oil facilities have curtailed the flow of oil leaving the region. As the Convergent Interests report puts it, “Within the first six months of 2006, there were nineteen attacks on foreign oil operations and over \$2.187 billion lost in oil revenues; the Department of Petroleum Resources claims this figure represents 32 percent of ‘the revenue the country generated this year.’”<sup>42</sup>

Much has been made of the attempts to link these resistance groups into the GWOT, especially on the part of the oil companies, in order to use the power of the U.S. military to stabilize these areas and secure the energy flows. Perhaps the most visible group in the Western media right now are members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), largely portrayed as a fierce group of masked, painted warriors either dancing around waving AK-47s in the air, or cruising through the creeks that traverse the delta in their motorboats, again, waving AK-47s in the air. That’s when they’re not kidnapping someone, taking out a pipeline, or

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The councilor representing Benikrukru Ward in the council area, Mr. Gbabor Okrika, told Vanguard that the spill devastated over 10 communities and affected sources of drinking water and rendered homes of victims inhabitable.

<sup>40</sup>. For example, Shell has refused to pay a \$1.5 billion judgment awarded to the Ijaw after a court ruling last summer; “Shell to Pay Nigeria \$1.5bn to the Ijaw people,” *African Echo*, July 20th, 2006, <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=13918> ; United Ijaw States, <http://www.unitedijawstates.com/>

<sup>41</sup>. For instance, see “Chevron Paid Troops After Alleged Killing,” David R. Baker, *CorpWatch*, August 4th, 2005, <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=12532>

<sup>42</sup>. Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz

“stealing” oil. However, as usual, the media tends to omit a lot of context and many facts in their attempts to sensationalize or shape the perceptions of their audiences. Efforts to link MEND and the other attacks against the oil majors to Islamist organizations continue to get perpetuated in the West. Yet solid evidence for these claims is always lacking. Simply put, the situation in the Niger Delta is that of ethnic-nationalist movements fighting by any means necessary for the “political objective of advancing the cause of self-determination and equitable sharing of oil-receipts.” It has nothing to do with international terror networks or jihadists.<sup>43</sup>

The volatility surrounding oil installations in Nigeria, and elsewhere in the continent, is used by the U.S. security establishment to justify foreign (and domestic) military presence in African oil producing states while contributing to the oil industry’s windfall profits. Yet the depth of resentments, and the military capabilities of insurgent groups armed in large measure through oil theft suggests that the oil companies’ operations – what they call their social license to operate – may be in question.<sup>44</sup>

Which then becomes a matter of U.S. national security.

Charles Dragonette, a senior maritime analyst at the U.S. Office of Naval Research, revealed to participants at a March [2006] conference in Fort Lauderdale: “Shell led a group of oil companies in an approach to the U.S. military for protection of their facilities in the Delta,” and warned that “Nigeria may have lost the ability to control the situation.”

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Additional evidence confirming the increasing deployment of American naval power to secure Gulf of Guinea energy supplies appeared at a press conference during the May 2006 African Sea Power Conference in Abuja. Responding to Nigerian journalists’ questions about reports of American naval patrols at Shell’s Bonga oil field, Admiral Harry Ulrich, EUCOM’s Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa, frankly acknowledge that American ships were patrolling Nigerian oil fields within the 200 mile limit. “We are concerned for Nigeria and we want to help her protect the region from the hands of the maritime criminal. In

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<sup>43</sup>. See Okonta, “Behind The Mask”; Michael Watts, “Crisis in Nigeria: Oil Inferno,” *Counterpunch*, January 2, 2007, <http://www.counterpunch.org/watts01022007.html> ; Wole Soyinka, interview with *DemocracyNow*, April 19, 2006, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/04/19/1312253> ; Piombo; Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz

<sup>44</sup>. Anna Zalik and Michael Watts, “Imperial Oil: Petroleum Politics in the Nigerian Delta and the New Scramble for Africa,” *Socialist Review*, April 2006, <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9712>

all parts of the world, the U.S. and any good nation want a safe coast for countries who are supplying their energy and that is why we are often there. So there is nothing to fear for Nigeria."

Ulrich's reassuring admission that the U.S. Navy is "often there" protecting Shell's Bonga oil field is a revealing confirmation of EUCOM's mission creep: it is an especially interesting admission given Dragonette's reported comments about Shell's security request. Developed by Shell, not only is Bonga Nigeria's largest oil field, costing \$3.6 billion to develop and potentially producing 225,000 bbl per day (10 percent of Nigeria's production) and 150 million cubic feet/day of natural gas, it also lies squarely within Nigeria's territorial waters at 75 miles offshore.<sup>45</sup>

With AFRICOM will come an expansion of military forces into region, and that will have many effects on the people of the Niger Delta and the nations bordering the Gulf of Guinea. The increased naval presence will coordinate frequently with other branches of the armed forces in an attempt to guarantee the flow of oil back to the United States. This will likely include the sponsorship of U.S.-friendly governments, intensified military training programs and arms/hardware packages, and an active engagement in combating insurgents and saboteurs. Among the items that stood out in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR)<sup>46</sup> were several mentions of building riverine capabilities to combat asymmetrical warfare.

"Riverine warfare capabilities to improve the ability of U.S. forces to work with the security forces of partner countries to deny terrorist groups the use of waterways" (p.24)

"Provide a Navy riverine capability for river patrol, interdiction and tactical troop movement on inland waterways." (p. 48)

"...specialized naval forces configured for coastal and riverine operations further complement irregular warfare capability." (A-4)

Currently, one of the strengths of indigenous movements in their targeted attacks is a deep knowledge of the terrain and how to use the creeks and cover to their advantage in order to elude military and security forces usually from outside of the area. AFRICOM will be working on multiple ways to close that gap.

As Ike Okonta reported in a working paper on the Delta, "On August 28 [2006] Nigerian and American officials in Abuja announced a new Nigeria-United States Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Initiative aimed at 'securing' \$600 billion of new

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<sup>45</sup>. Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz

<sup>46</sup>. 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/QDR20060203.pdf>

investments in oil fields in the region." He also explained that local journalists and activists have "expressed fears that the new ring of steel being put in place in their region by the U.S. navy is an underhand attempt to militarise the region and encourage attacks on oil facilities by armed militias and then use this as a justification for military occupation of the Gulf of Guinea."<sup>47</sup> Watching the devastation that the U.S. has laid to Iraq in pursuit of securing, privatizing, and controlling that country's global energy supplies can hardly escape the notice of the peoples living in what has been referred to by some in the West as "the new Persian Gulf".

## A New Cold War in Africa

Apart from its role in protecting oil and natural gas supplies, AFRICOM will inherit additional responsibility on a continent that is fast becoming the geopolitical centerpiece in a new Cold War. Aimed toward countering China, this context will cast the new combatant command on a parallel with that of EUCOM in its task containing the Eastern Bloc during the decades following the Second World War.

The most significant challenge to U.S. policy in Africa in the coming years may be China. The immediate topic of most strategic discussions regarding China and Africa is oil competition. "Twenty years ago, China was East Asia's largest oil exporter. Now it is the world's second-largest importer; last year, it alone accounted for 31 percent of global growth in oil demand." Just as the U.S. is recognizing the importance of African oil to its interests, China is actively seeking to expand its own market share. But China's economic (and thus political) engagement of Africa since the turn of the century goes far beyond the hunt for energy. China's overall trade with Africa doubled from 2002 to 2003, and then doubled again between 2003 and 2005. This 400% growth in three years comes atop 700% growth in the decade of the 1990s, and there is no end in sight. China is now Africa's third largest trading partner, behind the U.S. and France, and ahead of former colonial power Britain.

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Thus Chinese engagement in Africa threatens to substantially reduce the leverage of the U.S. and its Western allies, and thereby undermine the political and economic reform agendas the West has been pushing in Africa for two decades. More than this, however, successful economic engagement by China could open a huge new market for trade and investment, which it would be in position to dominate. The political implications of an economically emerging Africa in close alliance with China are disconcerting in the U.S. policy circles. China's engagement in Africa may soon challenge the longstanding American perception that

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<sup>47</sup>. Okonta, "Behind The Mask"

'there is no there there,' and encourage serious, interest-driven U.S. engagement with Africa for the first time in history.<sup>48</sup>

Africa weighs heavily in China's plans for the future. Government officials have been making regular trips to Africa for the last few years, buying stakes in oil and natural gas fields, dealing for a variety of resources & agricultural products vital to its rapidly growing economy, signing trade agreements with 45 nations, handing out loans to starving governments, canceling debts, and lining up infrastructure projects. A three-year plan revealed at last November's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing clearly outlines objectives on multiple fronts to build upon a partnership between China and the majority of African nations.

The plan pledges that China will:

- Double aid to Africa by 2009 (to about \$1bn)
- Set up a \$5 bn China-Africa development fund to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa
- Provide \$3 bn in preferential loans and \$2 bn in preferential buyer's credits to African countries
- Cancel all debt stemming from Chinese interest-free government loans that matured by the end of 2005, for the 31 highly indebted and least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa that have relations with China (an amount estimated at around \$1.4 bn)
- Further open China's markets to exports from African LDCs by increasing from 190 to 440 the number of products receiving zero-tariff treatment
- Train 15,000 African professionals, double the number of Chinese government scholarships given annually to Africans (to 4,000) and send 100 senior agricultural experts and 300 youth volunteers
- Build 30 hospitals, 30 malaria treatment centers and 100 rural schools<sup>49</sup>

Chinese entrepreneurs have also been making inroads into the continent. As one analysis pointed out, "The 800 Chinese companies in Africa are viewed by Beijing as fulfilling both political and economic roles, and as part of a diplomatic effort to

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<sup>48</sup>. Lawson

<sup>49</sup>. Ernest Harsch, "Big leap in China-Africa ties," *African Renewal*, Vol.20 #4 (January 2007), page 3, <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol20no4/204-china-africa-ties.html>

project influence.”<sup>50</sup> Africa has become both a necessary market for Chinese goods and a laboratory for new products and market campaigns. The influence is continent-wide and largely received favorably by many nations looking to get out under the claws of the Western neoliberal institutions. And this reality is making the imperialists in Washington see red.

China has secured oil fields and exploration rights in nations ranging from Kenya and Sudan in the East to Congo in Central Africa, and Angola in the West. And Nigeria, holding 70 percent of Africa’s oil, has not gone ignored either.

Obasanjo is also shaking up the oil industry in a double maneuver interpreted as a rap on the knuckles for his Western allies and a last ditch effort to secure a legacy as the one Nigerian leader who tamed corruption in that sector.

American, British, and French oil companies enjoyed a virtual monopoly of Nigeria’s oil industry. Royal Dutch Shell’s joint venture with the government produces half of the country’s daily output of 2.5 million barrels. Two U.S. companies, Chevron Texaco and Mobil, are also key players. Obasanjo’s new oil policy threatens this dominance.

China made a dramatic entry into the picture last April, when Nigerian officials announced that China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) had bought a 45% stake in a Nigerian oil field for more than \$2 billion. That field will pump 225,000 barrels per day when it begins production in 2008. Obasanjo also negotiated a loan of \$1 billion from the Chinese government to finance repair of Nigeria’s railways and buy new rolling stock.

These deals were brokered at the height of the constitutional drama, when America said it would not support an attempt by the government to extend its stay in office unconstitutionally. In addition to rolling out the welcome mat for energy-hungry China, oil ministry officials say they will tighten financial regulations and impose sanctions on companies seen as defaulting on tax and royalty payments – moves apparently aimed at local subsidiaries in the Niger Delta.<sup>51</sup>

Two months after the \$2.27 billion deal for the offshore oil-mining license, CNOOC paid Nigeria another \$60 million USD for a 35 percent stake in one more offshore license. And Nigeria has currently opened another 50-60 oil and gas blocks up for

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<sup>50</sup> . Bright B. Simons, Evans Lartey and Franklin Cudjoe, “China On Safari: Emperor Hu’s new clothes for Africa,” *Asia Times Online*, February 8, 2007, [http://www.asiatimesonline.com/atimes/China\\_Business/IB08Cb08.html](http://www.asiatimesonline.com/atimes/China_Business/IB08Cb08.html)

<sup>51</sup> . Ike Okonta, “Obasanjo’s Troubling End-Game,” Project Syndicate, July 2006, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/okonta5>

investors, of which China is only one expected taker.<sup>52</sup> Basically, China has a lot of money to invest in Africa, and securing energy supplies prominently figures into its agenda.

Obviously, this conflicts with the United States' priorities, as do the economic inroads that China has been successfully establishing in the continent, and Africa finds itself the major set piece for the grand game.

*In More Than Humanitarianism*, the Council on Foreign Relations ... depicts the leading threat as coming from China: "China has altered the strategic context in Africa. All across Africa today, China is acquiring control of natural resource assets, outbidding Western contractors on major infrastructure projects, and providing soft loans and other incentives to bolster its competitive advantage." China imports more than a quarter of its oil from Africa, primarily Angola, Sudan, and Congo. It is Sudan's largest foreign investor. It has provided heavy subsidies to Nigeria to increase its influence and has been selling fighter jets there. Most threatening from the standpoint of U.S. grand strategists is China's \$2 billion low-interest loan to Angola in 2004, which has allowed Angola to withstand IMF demands to reshape its economy and society along neoliberal lines.

For the *Council on Foreign Relations*, all of this adds up to nothing less than a threat to Western imperialist control of Africa. Given China's role, the council report says, "the United States and Europe cannot consider Africa their *chasse gardé* [private hunting ground], as the French once did in francophone Africa. The rules are changing as China seeks not only to gain access to resources, but also to control resource production and distribution, perhaps positioning itself for priority access as these resources become scarcer." The council report on Africa is so concerned with combating China through the expansion of U.S. military operations in the region, that none other than Chester Crocker, former assistant secretary of state for African affairs in the Reagan administration, charges it with sounding "wistfully nostalgic for an era when the United States or the West was the only influence and could pursue its ... objectives with a free hand."<sup>53</sup>

AFRICOM is a vital centralization of that military expansion into the 21<sup>st</sup> century scramble for Africa. The U.S. naval buildup along Africa's coasts is part of a new "force projection" that not only serves to monitor and protect strategic waterways,

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<sup>52</sup>. "Nigeria To Launch New Oil and Gas Licensing Round," Alexander's Gas & Oil Connection, January 16, 2007, <http://www.gasandoil.com/goc/company/cna70776.htm>

<sup>53</sup>. Foster

but also to intimidate and deter Empire's enemies. Pentagon and think-tank strategists, responding to perceptions of China's buildup of their own naval powers, are moving their game pieces around the world accordingly, "making sure that strategic waterways are under their control from the Straits of Hormuz to the Malacca Straits."

The United States' desperation to control and patrol one of the world's vital sea lanes – the Malacca Strait – indicates just how advanced the U.S. China geo-political containment policy is. A third of all world trade goes through the Strait, as well as eighty percent of China's oil imports. ... Due to threats of 'terrorism' and 'piracy' America has set up the PSI (Proliferation Security Initiatives) and RMSI – the 'Regional Maritime Security Initiative' – which is designed to 'protect' and 'patrol' this waterway. Discussing the issue in the *Jakarta Post* in June 2006, Ria Jaslim wrote: "China's fast-paced economic growth and strengthening defense capabilities place them in a position to challenge America's leadership in the Asia-Pacific region. This latent competition will likely prompt the U.S. to adopt a strategy to contain China. This would include controlling the sea-lines of communication and strategic maritime checkpoints, such as the Strait of Malacca, and thus indirectly controlling the movement of raw materials and goods to China.

Thus, the real reason America wants to bolster its presence in the region, and specifically the Strait of Malacca, is to limit China's access to oil, raw materials, technology and industrial equipment, and to contain China's influence in the region. Using the threat of terrorism and piracy to strengthen the Proliferation Security Initiatives is the most likely strategy."<sup>54</sup>

These increases in naval activity and initiatives in and around the Gulf of Guinea can be interpreted in the same manner. The possibility of a large strategic naval base on the island of Sao Tome and Principe<sup>55</sup> reminds one of an earlier era of U.S. imperial expansion aimed at the East. Efforts underway to sell resistant Gulf nations on the needs for maritime security programs, building maritime interoperability, forge the bottom section of the "ring fencing" of Nigeria. On the ground to the north, the TSCTI is connecting local militaries under U.S. command, fed regularly on a diet of GWOT pabulum and Congressional funding.

In FY 2005, the TSCTI received \$16 million; in FY 2006, nearly \$31 million. "The big push comes in 2008, when

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<sup>54</sup>. Maryann Keady, "U.S.-China and a New Cold War," January 14, 2007, [http://www.zmag.org/content/print\\_article.cfm?itemID=11864&sectionID=103](http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=11864&sectionID=103)

<sup>55</sup>. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/stp.htm>

the administration hopes to get \$100 million each year for five years." All of this far exceeds the \$7.75 million allocated to the earlier Pan-Sahel Initiative. If and when the new African Command is approved by President Bush, funding will be ramped up accordingly.<sup>56</sup>

The goal of building large regional battalions may very well foreshadow larger proxy wars, as well as attempts at the strategic blocking of resource routes from Sub-Saharan to Northern Africa. Efforts are already under way to block access to deep seaports along the Horn of Africa, limiting seaway lanes to China (and India). Regime changes continue in the objective of gaining accommodating client states in strategic zones across the continent. Increases in arms trade and military hardware to gain stability. Agencies and contractors on the ground, building HUMINT. Money changes hands to arm insurgents and warlords. Election results are overturned to keep useful leaders in power. Intelligence equipment and assistance are offered for neutralizing "terrorists." Already, the U.S. supports unpopular governments in nations such as Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Somalia, and Algeria.

Perhaps the most worrying of America's new military partners in the [Sahel] region is Algeria. According to [former EUCOM deputy commander General Charles] Wald, European Command is working "heavily" with the Algerian government. When asked about Algeria's contribution to the war on terrorism, Wald has said, "I think they're doing a fantastic job," and that the U.S. military has "a lot to learn from the Algerians." But as Tom Malinowski, the Washington advocacy director of Human Rights Watch, recently told the House of Representatives: "In human rights terms, Algeria, with its documented record of torture and 'disappearances,' is in many ways a model of how not to fight terrorism." During Algeria's long-running struggle with the GSPC and other Islamic insurgents, Malinowski explained, "security forces arrested and tortured thousands of suspects. They engaged in summary executions, often rounding up victims arbitrarily in reprisal for attacks on their own troops. And between 1993 and 1997, they picked up and made 'disappear' an estimated 7,000 Algerians who remain unaccounted for until this day."<sup>57</sup>

This sort of "support" is only bound to increase as rhetoric of stabilizing Africa makes the dailies, copied directly out of official AFRICOM press releases. Readers of the mainstream media can expect to encounter more frequent usages of terms like "blunder" and "misguided." Already the propagandists decry China's human rights record and support for Sudan and Zimbabwe while ignoring the ongoing violations of Western corporations engaged in the various extraction industries as they plunder natural resources and pollute other peoples homelands, of U.S. gunships mowing down villagers in the Horn, and of SOF-trained armies reportedly committing

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<sup>56</sup>. Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz

<sup>57</sup>. Khatchadourian

atrocities across the continent to pacify rebellions over territorial and resource disputes and “shore up” repressive regimes.

In that December *Report to Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, one can read the following example of U.S. priorities in the human and civil rights context.

One Central African country in particular illustrates the need for State Department perspective and guidance to temper Defense Department enthusiasm. The country is unstable, desperately poor, and run by a repressive government that is being challenged by a persistent armed resistance. Desperate for a military strong enough to protect it from the rebels, the government has signed an Article 98 agreement, exempting U.S. military personnel from International Criminal Court procedures and thus enabling it to receive military assistance. It has also signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the United States. With extensive “under-governed spaces” as potential terrorist havens and bordering countries with equally uncertain futures, the country was termed “a model country for security assistance” by the regional combatant command. Civilian embassy officials, however, are demonstrably less keen. They question the rate at which military programs are rapidly escalating and the sizable and still growing presence of U.S. military personnel in-country. A U.S.-labeled backpack, observed on a government soldier undergoing U.S. training, underscored for SFRC staff the potential complications of a too-close association with the country’s military. It would be a major setback if the United States were to be implicated in support of operations shoring up the repressive regime, regardless of the stated intent of such training.<sup>58</sup>

A new cold war is underway in Africa, and AFRICOM will be at the dark heart of it.

## Conclusion

Africa has been through this before, caught in the middle of a global chessboard during the first Cold War as competing world powers sought to win friends and contain enemies at the expense of those in the way. Militaries were trained and armed to fight proxy battles or overthrow unsympathetic regimes. Rhetorical allusions to notions of human rights and democratic governments lost out to the more pragmatic ends of protecting economic ideologies. For the most part, the blood that spilled was largely that of Africa, again prevented from achieving true independence, self-identity, and prosperity. The old Cold War blew in primarily on the exaggerated vapors of ideology. This one is not so abstract.

Africa is now perceived as the final frontier for the world’s energy supplies, crucial for

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<sup>58</sup>. “Embassies As Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign,” p.5

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the preservation of hi-tech global civilizations, and this new scramble will be much more serious. This is the context in which the new combatant command enters the history books, at the junction of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and the pending flare out of the petroleum age. Expanding the military reach of the most powerful empire the planet has ever known, AFRICOM will be tasked with the responsibility of achieving full-spectrum dominance over mother Africa for fuel. Operating as both energy-protection service and strategic Cold War front, the unified command will concentrate whatever military forces are necessary to keep the furnaces of Empire lit. Whether AFRICOM will succeed in this directive is beside the point, for, while ends may justify the means for the elite in power, their so-called "national interest" payoff, it is regular people who pay the full price at all times. And it does not require a crystal ball or great imagination to realize what the increased militarization of the continent through AFRICOM will bring to the peoples of Africa.