

Africom to Continue Under Obama

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With the Obama administration set to oversee significant increases in US security assistance programmes for African countries, Daniel Volman examines the US government's plans for its military operations on the African continent over the coming financial year. Stressing that the US president is essentially continuing the policies outlined under his predecessor George W. Bush, the author considers the proposed funding increases for initiatives like the Foreign Military Financing programme and the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme. Pointing out that the administration is yet to offer any public explanation of its policy, Volman concludes that it would be a mistake to assume that there will be no US military action if the situation in Somalia deteriorates.

At the beginning of May 2009, President Obama submitted his first budget request to Congress. The Obama administration's budget for the 2010 financial year proposes significant increases in US security assistance programmes for African countries and for the operations of the new US Africa Command (AFRICOM). This shows that – at least initially – the administration is following the course laid down for AFRICOM by the Bush administration, rather than putting these programmes on hold until it can conduct a serious review of US security policy towards Africa. This article outlines the administration's plans for Africa in the coming year and the money it intends to spend on military operations on the continent.

FOREIGN MILITARY FINANCING

The Obama administration proposes maintaining or significantly increasing funding for the Foreign Military Financing programme, which provides loans for the sale of weaponry and other military equipment to a number of African countries. The administration's request raises the total funding for arms sales to Africa from \$8.3 million in financial year (FY) 2009 to \$25.6 million in FY 2010. The new funding includes funding for arms sales to Chad (\$500,000), the Democratic Republic of Congo (\$2.5 million), Djibouti (\$2.5 million), Ethiopia (\$3 million), Kenya (\$1 million), Liberia (\$9 million), Nigeria (\$1.4 million), South Africa (\$800,000) and African regional programmes (\$2.8 million).

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Obama administration proposes small increases in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programmes for African countries, raising the total funding for this programme from \$13.8 million in FY 2009 to \$16 million in FY 2010. Significant increases in funding are requested for Chad (\$400,000), Djibouti (\$350,000), Ethiopia (\$775,000), Ghana (\$850,000), Kenya (\$1,050,000), Liberia (\$525,000), Mali (\$350,000), Niger (\$250,000), Nigeria (\$1,100,000), Rwanda (\$500,000), Senegal (\$1,100,000), South Africa (\$900,000) and Uganda (\$550,000). The United States will continue its major IMET programme in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (\$500,000), and the Obama administration is proposing to start new IMET programmes in Equatorial Guinea (\$40,000), Somalia (\$40,000) and Zimbabwe (\$40,000).

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The Obama administration proposes major new funding for security assistance provided through the Peacekeeping Operations programme. The FY 2010 budget proposal includes increasing funding for the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership – from \$15 million in FY 2009 to \$20 million in FY 2010 – and for the East Africa Regional Strategic Initiative – from \$5 million in FY 2009 to \$10 million in FY 2010. It also includes \$42 million to continue operations in support of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accords in southern Sudan, \$10 million to continue operations to create a professional 2,000-member armed force in Liberia, \$21 million to continue operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo to reform the military (including the creation of rapid reaction force for the eastern Congo), and \$3.6 million for the Africa Conflict Stabilization and Border Security Program, which will be used to support monitoring teams, advisory assistance, training, infrastructure enhancements, and equipment in the Great Lakes region, the Mano River region, the Horn of Africa, Chad, and the Central African Republic. The budget request also includes \$67 million to support the African Union Mission in Somalia. And it contains a request for \$96.8 million for the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). The request for GPOI includes funding for the African Contingency Operations and Training Assistance Program (ACOTA) – which provides training and equipment to African military forces to enhance their peacekeeping capabilities – although the specific amount requested for ACOTA is not provided in the budget summary.

INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The budget request for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) programs contains \$24 million for Sudan to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accords (CPA) in southern Sudan and to assist programmes to stabilise Darfur by providing technical assistance and training for southern Sudan's criminal justice sector and law enforcement institutions as well as to contribute to UN civilian police and formed police units in southern Sudan and Darfur. It also includes funds for police reforms in the DRC; for training, infrastructure, and equipment for police units in Liberia; to operate the American-run International Law Academy in Gaborone, Botswana; and to create a Regional Security Training Center for West, Central, and North Africa. The Obama administration is also asking for funding to be provided through the INCLE programmes for the first time to provide security assistance to countries participating in the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Chad and Nigeria.

NON-PROLIFERATION, ANTI-TERRORISM, DE-MINING AND RELATED PROGRAMMES

The Obama administration proposes to almost double funding for counter-terrorism programmes. These include the Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, which provides training to countries throughout the world; the Terrorist Interdiction Program/Personal Identification, Secure Comparison, and Evaluation System Program, which supports identification and watch listing systems to 18 countries (including Kenya); the Counterterrorism Financing Program, which helps partner countries throughout the world stop the flow of money to terrorists; and the Counterterrorism Engagement Program, which is intended to strengthen

ties with key political leaders throughout the world and ‘build political will at senior levels in partner nations for shared counterterrorism challenges’.

AFRICOM

The Obama administration’s proposed FY 2010 budget for the Department of Defense requests some \$300 million in operation and maintenance funds to cover the cost of AFRICOM operations and Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership operations at the AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. The administration is also requesting \$263 million to provide additional personnel, airlift and communications support to AFRICOM. And the budget includes a request for a total of \$451 million to replace or upgrade facilities at enduring CENTCOM and AFRICOM locations, but does not provide a separate figure for AFRICOM. According to the budget, the administration intends to carry out significant investment at Camp Lemonier in FY 2010. In addition, the administration is requesting \$30 million to pay the annual lease for the 500-acre base at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti and \$170 million to cover the annual operational budget of the base.

The administration is requesting some \$400 million for Global Train and Equip (Section 1206) programmes, some \$200 million for Security and Stabilization Assistance (Section 1207) programmes, and some \$1 million for the Combatant Commander’s Initiative Fund. This money will be used primarily to pay for emergency training and equipment, the services of personnel from the State Department, and humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi and Afghani armed forces, but it will be available for the use of AFRICOM as well. The administration’s budget request also contains \$1.9 billion to buy three Littoral Combat Ships and another \$373 million to buy two Joint High Speed Vessels, ships that will play a crucial role in US Navy operations off the coast of Africa. It also includes \$44 billion to fund US Navy operations throughout the world – of which a significant proportion will be needed to cover the costs of US Navy operations in African waters – but the budget does not provide enough information to estimate these costs.

SECURITY POLICY TOWARD THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND SOMALIA

Obama administration officials have not said anything in public to explain why they are proceeding with the Bush administration’s plan to increase US security assistance to African countries and to expand US military activities on the continent. General William Ward, commander of AFRICOM, at a news conference that he held during his visit to Kinshasa in April 2009, provided one of the few pieces of evidence we have about the administration’s thinking. The United States will continue working in training and advising the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo ‘to help the host nation build capacity to more effectively conduct its military operations and provide for its own security.’ The United States currently has a seven-member mobile training team training Congolese military officers. This training, Ward said at the news conference, is intended ‘to support the increased professionalization of the Congolese armed forces as best we can as they work to bring security and stability here in Congo.’ This suggests that President Obama – despite his rhetorical commitment to multilateralism and ‘soft power’ and the abysmal record of military incompetence and human rights violations by the Congolese armed forces – is convinced that unilateral US military involvement can still work and that he can succeed where his predecessor failed.

The only other indication we have about the president’s true intentions is provided by his

decision to authorise the use of force to rescue the kidnapped captain of the Maersk Alabama in May 2009. When he was a candidate, President Obama declared that he believed that 'there will be situations that require the United States to work with its partners in Africa to fight terrorism with lethal force.' But his action during the kidnapping episode show that he is also willing to use military force in situations that have nothing to do with terrorism. According to recent news articles, a debate is currently underway within the administration about the wisdom of direct US military intervention against Somali pirates or against the al-Shabaab insurgents. Top administration officials and military officers are convinced that, in the words of Defense Secretary Robert Gates, 'there is no purely military solution' to piracy and political conflict in Somalia. And Johnnie Carson, the president's new assistant secretary of state for Africa, told the BBC that 'there would be no case of the US re-engaging on the ground with troops' in Somalia. But some in the military and a number of prominent neo-conservative leaders contend that the United States must strike back at the pirates and the insurgents to prevent future acts of piracy and terrorism against Americans. It would be a mistake to assume that Obama will not take further military action if the situation in Somalia escalates.

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