

Pentagon And NATO Apply Afghanistan-Pakistan War Model To Africa

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The New Year began with three North Atlantic Treaty Organization soldiers killed in Afghanistan and 20 people, all portrayed as militants, killed in four American missile strikes in northwest Pakistan. The third drone missile attack killed four people attempting to rescue and remove the bodies of the victims of the first, a technique used by the U.S. and NATO in their war against Yugoslavia in 1999.

The West's war in Afghanistan and Pakistan is currently the longest, largest and deadliest in the world. Fatalities among U.S. troops, non-U.S. NATO and allied forces, Afghan National Army soldiers and anti-government fighters reached a record high last year: 498, 213, 800 and an unknown number (by U.S. and NATO accounts well into the thousands), respectively. The United Nations estimated 2,400 Afghan civilians were killed in the first ten months of last year, a 20 percent increase over the same period in the preceding year. Approximately a thousand people were killed by U.S. drone missile strikes in Pakistan.

It says something discouraging about a world of almost 200 nations that perhaps no more than half a dozen countries – so-called rogue states (alternatively Condoleezza Rice's "outposts of tyranny") – have voiced opposition to the war.

Washington's self-designated global war on terror (sometimes capitalized), in recent years more politely and antiseptically called overseas contingency operations, has not diminished in intensity but rather escalated in breadth and aggressiveness from West Africa to East Asia and against targets not remotely related to al-Qaeda, which has proven as nebulous and evasive as the West portrays it being ubiquitous.

From 2001 to the present the U.S. has engaged in and supported military operations against Marxist guerrillas in Colombia and the Philippines, ethnic Tuaregs in Mali, nominally Christian insurgents in Uganda and Shiite Houthi militia in northern Yemen in the name of combating...al-Qaeda. The Wahhabist school of extremism that characterizes al-Qaeda and analogous groups derives its doctrinal inspiration and material support from Saudi Arabia, yet last October Washington announced a \$63 billion arms package with the kingdom, the largest foreign weapons deal in American history.

Washington and its NATO military allies have opened a war front across the Arabian Sea from Pakistan in the east to Somalia and Yemen in the west as the central focus of operations that began almost ten years ago. [1]

On October 1, 2008 the Pentagon formally launched its first overseas military command in the post-Cold War era, U.S. Africa Command, which takes in 53 nations and an entire continent except for Egypt, which remains in Central Command.

The second command's area of responsibility reaches from the eastern border of Libya to the western border of China and southern border of Russia. From Egypt to Kazakhstan. The Horn of Africa region, including Somalia, was ceded by Central Command to Africa Command (AFRICOM), but the Arabian Peninsula, including Yemen, remains in Central Command.

Though the Pentagon's Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa, now subsumed under AFRICOM and based in the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti, includes thirteen nations in East Africa, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Peninsula in its area of operations: Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen. Operation Enduring Freedom, under which the U.S. conducts its greater Afghan war, encompasses sixteen countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Cuba (Guantanamo Bay), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines, Seychelles, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Yemen.

The U.S. maintains at least 2,500 troops in Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti and in late 2009 deployed over 100 troops, Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) equipped for guided bombs and missiles and three P-3 Orion anti-submarine and maritime surveillance aircraft to Seychelles.

Washington was accused by Houthi rebels in the north of Yemen of participating with Saudi Arabia in deadly bombing raids against them in the northwestern province of Sa'ada in December of 2009. They stated American jet fighters launched 28 attacks in the province which included bombing the governor's house and killing 120 people in one attack. [2]

Later in the same month the U.S. conducted cruise missile and air strikes with the use of cluster bombs in southern Yemen which killed over 60 civilians, mostly women and children. Another air strike was launched in March of 2010.

Leading American officials have demanded drone missile strikes in Yemen and several hundred U.S. special forces are deployed to the country.

The U.S. and its allies in NATO and the European Union are actively involved in the civil war in Somalia, across the Gulf of Aden from Yemen.

The Pentagon supported the Ethiopian invasion of the country in 2006 and launched two days of air strikes in January of the following year. In the autumn of 2009 U.S. special forces conducted a deadly helicopter gunship raid in southern Somalia.

The New Year in Somalia started with a fierce battle between foreign troops backing the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and al-Shabaab rebels, resulting in at 15 dead and 25 wounded. Inhabitants of the Somali capital reported that "the Mogadishu sky turned red [and] kids were crying and had been unable to sleep as the crackling of machine guns and barrages rocked throughout the city." [3]

There are approximately 6,000 troops from U.S. military client states Uganda and Burundi fighting on behalf of the formal government of the country under the banner of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Although approved by the African Union, AMISOM and its predecessor, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM), primarily have been initiatives by Washington and its allies in NATO and the EU.

European warships are deployed for NATO's Operation Ocean Shield and the EU's Operation Atalanta off Somalia's coast in the Gulf of Aden. (In military matters the distinction between NATO and the EU is becoming an increasingly formal one.)

At least fifteen EU member states, most of them also NATO members – Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Belgium, Portugal, Luxembourg, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Cyprus – have sent no fewer than 150 military personnel to Uganda to train 2,000 Somali troops for war in their homeland in a program financed by the U.S.

In the middle of last month the local press reported that the first 1,000 Somali soldiers “trained by officers from the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) and senior military officers from 27 European Union countries” graduated from the Bihanga military training school in Western Uganda, a “facility...set up early this year to train TFG Officers and foot soldiers in a bid to boost the military capability of war-torn Somalia....”

“The soldiers are expected to provide the core of officers and men of a new Somali army...to provide a much-needed boost to the fragile Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu.” [4]

Since June of 2007 NATO has provided airlift and sealift for AMISOM (Ugandan and Burundian) troops deployed to Somalia. The next year NATO flew a Burundian battalion into Somalia and in March of last year the Western military bloc transported 1,700 Ugandan troops into and 850 out of the Somali capital.

The month before the initial inauguration of AFRICOM in 2007, when it was still under U.S. European Command (whose top commander is simultaneously NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe), a Pentagon official announced that Africa Command “would involve one small headquarters plus five ‘regional integration teams’ scattered around the continent” and that “AFRICOM would work closely with the European Union and NATO,” particularly France, a leading member of both organizations, which was “interested in developing the Africa standby force”. [5]

In the same year the U.S. Defense Department acknowledged it had already “agreed on access to air bases and ports in Africa and ‘bare-bones’ facilities maintained by local security forces in Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.” [6]

The five regions of Africa identified by the U.S. military – north, south, east, west and central – are all represented by the locations named above and are each home to a branch of the African Standby Force (Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central), like AMISOM nominally under the control of the African Union but in fact overseen by the U.S. and NATO.

The North Atlantic Alliance inaugurated the NATO Response Force, in NATO's own words “a highly ready and technologically advanced multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly to wherever it is needed,” in and off the coast of the African island of Cape Verde in 2006 in a two-week, 7,000-troop exercise codenamed Steadfast Jaguar. [7]

The African Standby Force is modeled after the NATO Response Force. “NATO...supports staff capacity building through the provision of places on NATO training courses to AU [African Union] staff supporting AMISOM, and support to the operationalisation of the African

Standby Force – the African Union’s vision for a continental, on-call security apparatus similar to the NATO Response Force.” [8] It is a joint project of NATO and the Pentagon, formerly U.S. European Command and currently U.S. Africa Command.

To date the only fully successful implementation of the project is the Eastern Africa Standby Force, whose Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (with headquarters in Ethiopia and its Eastern African Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism in Kenya) consists of Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania (as an observer) and Uganda.

It is largely coterminous with the Pentagon’s Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa without Yemen and with Burundi and Rwanda added. In October of 2009 the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) held military exercises in Djibouti, where Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa is based.

Last month the defense chiefs of the twelve members of EASBRIG (presumably Eritrea was absent) met in the capital of Burundi to discuss “the Policy Framework for the Establishment of the Eastern Africa Standby Force [EASF] and the Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation between the Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism [EASBRICOM] and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development [IGAD] that aims to harmonise the relations of both institutions....” [9]

NATO, which has been training African Standby Force staff officers at its training center in Oberammergau, Germany, has designated the NATO Joint Command Lisbon to implement the bloc’s military cooperation with Africa. Joint Command Lisbon has what it identifies as a Senior Military Liaison Officer at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. (The territory of every nation in Africa except for Liberia, founded by the American Colonization Society in 1821-1822, was formerly ruled by nations that joined NATO: Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.)

On September 5, 2007 “the North Atlantic Council – NATO’s top political decision making body – agreed to provide assistance to the African Union with a study on the assessment of the operational readiness of the African Standby Force brigades,” according to the NATO website.

In the west of Africa, the Economic Community of West African States Standby Force brigade is being readied to intervene in Ivory Coast to depose President Laurent Gbagbo as the Dutch Defense Ministry announced last week that one of its ships was “heading for the coast of Cote d’Ivoire to provide supplies for French warships stationed there.” [10]

U.S. Naval Forces Europe – U.S. Naval Forces Africa, which is headquartered in Naples, Italy and directs its operations through the U.S. Sixth Fleet, also headquartered in Italy, launched the Africa Partnership Station in 2007 as a naval component of AFRICOM. Warships assigned to it have visited several African nations on the east, west and south ends of the continent, among them Angola, Cameroon, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Reunion, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo.

Last month the Pentagon’s Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa Vicki Huddleston and the State Department’s Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Donald Yamamoto (who was ambassador to Ethiopia when it invaded Somalia

in 2006) visited U.S. Africa Command headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. While there the Defense Department's Huddleston asserted that "East Africa becomes extremely high for DOD [the Department of Defense] in terms of priority. So the highest priority for DOD, and therefore AFRICOM, becomes East Africa because of Somalia and then West (Africa), North Africa...." [11]

The month before, Ugandan People's Defence Air Force Chief Major General Jim Owoyesigire visited 17th Air Force (Air Forces Africa) at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany, also headquarters for U.S. Air Forces in Europe and NATO's Allied Air Command.

Owoyesigire stated that his country's new air force was in part the product of an African air chiefs conference he attended in Ramstein in 2007 where he "began learning from the US Air Force."

In regards to Uganda's role as one of the two major belligerent forces in the war in Somalia and its counterinsurgency war at home (and across its borders) against the Lord's Resistance Army, the air force head confirmed that "Help from U.S. Africa Command and 17th AF has been a key enabler for the UPDAF's [Ugandan People's Defence Air Force's] contribution to these missions."

"When we started in AMISOM, we had no airlift capability. General Ward [William Ward, AFRICOM commander] came and visited and helped us to partner with the U.S. Air Force to get this airlift capability. To get training, 17th AF came and trained us in loading cargo and airdrops, and this has really helped us.

"This is a wide question, but right now, we are asking 17th AF to come and help us establish a squadron officers' school and NCO academy in Uganda. If we can develop these schools, then we can also involve our east African partners." [12]

Early in December the commander of U.S. Army Africa, Major General David Hogg, visited Algeria to meet with senior military and government officials to discuss "bilateral relations and regional issues," including joint reconnaissance and training activities and "a future visit by Algerian soldiers to the United States to investigate how the Army integrates its lessons learned center into its training regime."

U.S. Army Africa is the Army's newest service component command and is based in Vicenza, Italy, assigned to AFRICOM and tasked with "developing relationships with land forces in Africa and supporting U.S. Army efforts on the African continent." [13]

The regional issues deliberated on by the American general and his Algerian counterparts relate to Algeria's military campaign against Salafist insurgents and similar counterinsurgency operations throughout the Sahel, which consists of parts of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan.

At the end of last month U.S. military personnel assigned to Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa and Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti participated in a combat casualty course in Burundi as part of a U.S. State Department-sponsored program. According to James Cobb, State Department program country manager in Burundi, "The course is part of a U.S. Department of State initiative to provide African armies an opportunity to partner with American defense forces to develop their peacekeeping skills for operations throughout

Africa.” [14]

In December the defense chief of Djibouti, Major General Fathi Ahmed Houssein, met with AFRICOM commander General William Ward at AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart to discuss “joint security cooperation activities and potential areas of further cooperation...in East Africa and throughout the continent.”

As the AFRICOM website put it:

“Djibouti hosts approximately 3,000 U.S. and allied personnel at Camp Lemonnier, which is the only major U.S. military facility in Africa, though small teams of U.S. personnel work across the continent on short-term assignments. The main military organization at Camp Lemonnier is the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). A component of U.S. AFRICOM, CJTF-HOA sends teams throughout the East Africa region [to] protect U.S. and coalition interests.”

Among several joint programs, the generals elaborated plans for “Support to Djiboutian armed forces in the Eastern African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) field training exercise, aimed to assess the readiness and capability of EASBRIG, a component of the African Union’s Africa Standby Force....”

And expansion of the “International Military Education and Training, a program that invites foreign military officers to attend military schools in the United States, and provides funding for trainers to provide specific, localized training in African countries.”

As well as the continuation of the “Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program, designed to improve African militaries’ capabilities by providing selected training and equipment required to execute multinational...operations.”

Ward and Houssein also discussed “other ways to increase support in building partner capacity in the Horn of Africa through the U.S. Defense Department’s 1206 program [to train and equip foreign militaries for “counterterrorism or stability operations”] and the U.S. State Department’s Partnership Regional East African Counter-Terrorism program,” especially in regard to Ugandan-Burundian AMISOM operations in Somalia. [15]

Air strikes, drone and cruise missile attacks, special forces operations, helicopter gunship raids, counterinsurgency campaigns, multinational armed interventions, cluster bomb and depleted uranium weapons use, and the entire panoply of military actions associated with the Afghanistan-Pakistan war are already being conducted in Africa and will only be increased.

Notes

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2) Yemen rebels say 120 killed in US airstrikes Russia Today, December 16, 2009

<http://rt.com/usa/news/us-airstrike-rebels-yemen>

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 - 9) New Times, December 2, 2010
 - 10) Xinhua News Agency, December 29, 2010
 - 11) U.S. Africa Command, December 21, 2010
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