

# U.S. Military Intervention in Africa: The New Blueprint for Global Domination

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The United States' intervention in Africa is driven by America's desire to secure valuable natural resources and political influence that will ensure the longevity of America's capitalist system, military industrial complex, and global economic superiority – achieved through the financial and physical control of raw material exports. While America's prosperity may be waning due to a number of current factors, policy makers are bent on trying to preserve America's global domination and will pursue policy objectives regardless of the downturn in the economy at large.

The U.S. has a long history of foreign intervention and long ago perfected the art of gaining access to other countries' natural, human, and capital resource markets through the use of foreign trade policy initiatives, international law, diplomacy, and, when all else fails, military intervention. Typically and historically, diplomatic efforts have largely been sufficient for the U.S. to establish itself as a player in other nations' politics and economies. While U.S. intervention in Africa is nothing new, the way the U.S. is going about the intervention features a new method that is being implemented across the globe.

The U.S. has followed a great deal of its diplomatic interventions with the establishment of extensive networks of foreign military posts – designed to influence other nations and protect what are defined as U.S. strategic national interests. This global reach is evidenced by an extensive network of over 737 military installations [1] all around the globe, from Ecuador to Uzbekistan, Colombia to Korea. The model for successfully accessing these nations and their critical financial and commodities markets is changing, however, particularly as it relates to renewed intervention in Africa. The new intervention is directly linked to two factors: the fast paced and heated battle with rivals China and Russia over their access to key natural resources, and the U.S.' declining ability to manage a bloated international network of overseas military outposts.

## I. Resources Rivalry

Access to natural resources – particularly oil and rare earth elements – is critical for the U.S. to remain a dominant industrial and military power, especially since the U.S. has experienced a decline in natural resource production while China's production and foreign access to strategic materials has only increased. A sustained increase in oil imports has been underway since domestic U.S. oil production peaked in the 1970s, with oil imports surpassing domestic production in the early 1990s. Strategic metals, such as the titanium used in military aircraft, and rare earth elements used in missile guidance systems are increasingly produced by China or under the control of Chinese companies. The issue is of such importance that 2009 saw the creation of the annual Strategic Metals Conference, a

forum designed to address concerns related to US access to metals with important industrial and military uses. The second annual conference, held in Cleveland, Ohio in January 2010, saw dozens of engineers and military personnel express heightened concern over China's near monopoly over rare earth metals. [2] China controls around 95% of the world's rare earth output and has decided to restrict the export of these metals, leaving international consumers short by approximately 20,000 tons in 2010. [3]

China's rapidly developing economy, recently overtaking Japan as the world's second largest, continues to log nine to ten percent annual growth in Gross Domestic Product, and is fueled by a rapidly growing middle class as well as new export markets around the world. The demand for raw materials has led to new policy initiatives in which Africa has taken center stage for Chinese investment. China has gained access to Africa by, in large part, offering favorable aid packages to several nations which include loans, debt forgiveness, and job training. [4] In contrast to Western aid packages, Chinese aid has few if any strings attached.

China's platform for developing trade with and providing aid to Africa was of such importance that in October 2000, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was launched. Fifty African nations participate in the forum which serves as the foundation for building bridges of economic trade as well as political and cultural exchange. [5] The forum, and indeed China's Africa strategy as a whole, has been so successful that Africans view China as an equal partner in trade and development, validating the politically and culturally significant "South-South" economic alliance that the FOCAC maintains is at the foundation of its engagement with Africa. This plays on the historical disparities that Western powers created and exploited in their former "North-South" colonial relationships with Africa and has been a key factor in developing strong bonds and a highly favorable opinion of China among Africans. Survey data indicates that most Africans share the view of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade when he says:

"China's approach to our needs is simply better adapted than the slow and sometimes patronizing post-colonial approach of European investors, donor organizations and nongovernmental organizations. In fact, the Chinese model for stimulating rapid economic development has much to teach Africa. With direct aid, credit lines and reasonable contracts, China has helped African nations build infrastructure projects in record time—bridges, roads, schools, hospitals, dams, legislative buildings, stadiums and airports. In many African nations, including Senegal, improvements in infrastructure have played important roles in stimulating economic growth."

"It is a telling sign of the post-colonial mindset that some donor organizations in the West dismiss the trade agreements between Chinese banks and African states that produce these vital improvements—as though Africa was naive enough to just offload its precious natural resources at bargain prices to obtain a commitment for another stadium or state house." [6]

In fact, opinion polls clearly reveal that Africans see Chinese influence as being far more positive than U.S. influence. [7] China has clearly gained a substantive advantage in working with dozens of African nations as U.S. influence continues to wane.

Russia has also taken a renewed interest in Africa, reminiscent to some in the U.S. media as a revision of the Soviet Union's Africa Strategy in which the Soviet Union created numerous "Soviet Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation" as a counterweight to Western capitalism and institutions like the United States Agency for International Development. [8] Russian

President Medvedev, and Prime Minister Putin have been making their rounds in Africa with “legions of Russian businessmen, targeting diamonds, oil, gas, and uranium” and have been establishing commodities production agreements with several nations. [9] Putin’s push to restore Russia’s international stature, power, and prestige has led Russia to purchase in excess of \$5 billion of African assets between 2000 and 2007. [10] Russia’s investments in and trade with Africa are quite small when compared with both the U.S. and China. Still, Russia has made an increase in trade and the acquisition of African raw materials a geostrategic imperative.

Chinese and Russian influence is quickly spreading and is seen in many cases as a viable and preferable alternative to the Western model which, particularly considering Africa’s colonial past, is seen to attach unfavorable conditions to aid and development that are designed to enrich the West at the expense of the people of Africa. Africans have in effect identified what sociologist Johan Galtung considers to be a “disharmony of interests” that the U.S. is trying to manage through new diplomatic efforts. The U.S. continues to lose influence in Africa to China and Russia, both of which are increasing their influence at a steady clip, and continues to be branded as imperialist in the eyes of Africans. The U.S. is well aware that it needs to improve its image in Africa in order to realize its strategic goals.

## II. The Weight of Empire

While there is no reliable data on the precise cost of maintaining the United States’ network of over 700 military bases, it is estimated that the cost is \$250 billion per year. [11] This is 38% of the entire disclosed 2010 budget for the Department of Defense of \$663.7 billion. The cost includes facilities, staff, weapons, munitions, equipment, food, fuel, water, and everything else required to operate military installations.

In 2004, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that the U.S global military presence had to change and adapt to the post-cold war world. The post-cold war world did not require large garrisons of heavy armor throughout the European theater – garrisons stocked with enough soldiers and armament to challenge the massive Soviet military and Warsaw Pact nations on the borders of Eastern and Western Europe. The new military would be lighter, faster, rely more on light infantry and special-forces, and would be used to fight multiple smaller scale wars across the globe in what was branded as an eternal Global War on Terror (GWOT). In Rumsfeld’s opinion, the U.S. would save up to \$6 billion of its annual operating budget by closing (or realigning) 100 to 150 foreign and domestic bases [12] and save \$12 billion by closing 200 to 300 bases. [13] Clearly, the cost of maintaining America’s legions was central to the Rumsfeld’s transformation initiative and to the U.S. military’s new role.

This military transformation would reduce the number of heavy garrisons abroad and would increasingly rely on pre-positioned war materials managed by smaller staffs at foreign military installations. These military installations would be available for a massive influx of U.S. troops if needed. Bilateral treaties and Status of Forces Agreements created by the Department of Defense and host nations would ensure that these installations would be available, to the extent required, to the American military and would ensure that the American military could operate freely with few constraints on its activities, legal or otherwise.

In the case of Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, a key military outpost and strategically important

piece of real-estate in the Horn of Africa, precisely where the Red Sea meets the Gulf of Aden, the United States government entered into an agreement [14] with the government of Djibouti that has several striking features:

- U.S. military personnel have diplomatic immunity
- The United States has sole jurisdiction over the criminal acts of its personnel
- U.S. personnel may carry arms in the Republic of Djibouti
- The U.S. may import any materials and equipment it requires into the Republic of Djibouti
- No claims may be brought against the U.S. for damage to property or loss of life
- Aircraft, vessels, and vehicles may enter, exit, and move freely throughout the Republic of Djibouti.

Such an agreement allows the U.S. to maintain a small permanent presence in Djibouti, but staff and stock up with as many military personnel and weapons as it deems fit for any particular operation inside or outside of Africa as needed. Additionally, the agreement gives the U.S. the flexibility it wants to operate freely without interference from or liability to the people and government of Djibouti.

### III. The New Model – AFRICOM

With all of the concern over U.S. access to key natural resources, it is hardly a surprise that United States conceived of and finally launched United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2007. The unveiling AFRICOM was done under the auspices of bringing peace, security, democracy, and economic growth to Africans. The altruistic rationale for the creation of a new military command was belied by the fact that from the start it was acknowledged that AFRICOM was a “combatant” command created in response to Africa’s growing strategic importance to the United States; namely, “the size of its population, its natural resource wealth, its potential”. [15]

Africans were aware of U.S. described strategic national interests in their oil and gas fields, and raw materials long before most Americans were had any idea that renewed intervention in Africa was being planned. In November 2002, the U.S. based Corporate Council on Africa held a conference on African oil and gas in Houston, Texas. The conference, sponsored by ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco among others, was opened by United States Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Walter Kansteiner. Mr. Kansteiner previously stated that, “African oil is of strategic national interest to us and it will increase and become more important as we go forward,” while on a visit to Nigeria. [16] In fact, President Fradique de Menezes of Sao Tome and Principe said at that time that he had reached agreement with the United States for establishment of a U.S. naval base there, the purpose of which was to safeguard U.S. oil interests. [17] The U.S. Navy has in fact proceeded with its basing plans in Sao Tome and recently reported on its activities in that nation on its website in July, 2010. [18] Since the establishment of AFRICOM, numerous training exercises have been carried out in Africa by U.S. military forces, and basing agreements have been worked out with several African partners across the continent – even in the face of strong dissent from the citizens of several countries. The U.S. has been able to create these relationships through the careful structuring of its operations, size and make-up of its staff, and public relations efforts.

The structuring of AFRICOM was a critical component in making AFRICOM palatable to Africans. After several nations objected to the presence of a physical headquarters in Africa, AFRICOM's commander, General William E. Ward, went on record several times to say that a physical command presence was not needed in Africa (even though the U.S. initially did try quite hard but unconvincingly to establish a permanent headquarters there). The command is currently based in Stuttgart, Germany, and will remain there for the foreseeable future, mainly in deference to African objections.

AFRICOM's size was also an important factor. It has no large garrisons, no sizeable staff beyond the headquarters in Germany and the small number of forces and civilian support personnel based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti as part of Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), and no large armory to sustain division or brigade sized operations. The small size and staff of U.S. basing operations like CJTF-HOA is the new model for U.S. foreign intervention. Instead of large garrisons, the U.S. has created a series of Forward Operating Locations (FOLs). FOLs are "smaller, cheaper, and can thus be more plentiful. In short, the FOL can lie in wait with a low carrying cost until a crisis arrives, at which point it can be quickly expanded to rise to whatever the occasion demands." [19] Arrangements have been made with several countries, north, south, east, and west, including Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, Namibia, Sao Tome, Senegal, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Zambia. [20]

AFRICOM's staffing structure is a military-civilian hybrid for two reasons: to convey the message that the combatant command does not have an exclusive military purpose, and to gain influence over African nations' domestic and foreign policies. AFRICOM has a civilian deputy commander and a large civilian staff, in part made up of U.S. State Department personnel. These civilian personnel include foreign policy advisors from the U.S. Bureau of African Affairs, humanitarian assistance advisors from the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as advisors from the U.S. Department of Treasury and the Department of Homeland Security. [21] Africa's burgeoning relationships with China are seen as undermining Western "efforts to bolster good governance, improve respect for human rights, and reduce corruption," [22] hence the need for civilian subject matter expertise to help the Africans manage their civil affairs and security.

U.S. officials have long been cognizant of African hostility to any efforts that could be perceived as neo-colonialist and imperialist. A number of missteps to rectify were (and continue to be) identified as the new command took shape. Several contradictory statements were made with respect to AFRICOM's role, whether with respect to terrorism, natural resources, China, or the militarization of the continent. Even the timing of the command's creation was criticized, it being created during a dramatically deteriorating time of war in Iraq. The actions of the U.S. government sent "mixed signals" [23] and fueled anti-Americanism among the citizens that would eventually become unwilling hosts of American forces. To overcome poor public relations, the command built several activities into the structure of AFRICOM, to include the building of schools in poor villages, air and sea port construction projects, the distribution of medicine and textbooks to children, military-to-military training programs, and legal operational support. Military personnel have also taken a more deferential tone in speaking about the way AFRICOM interfaces with African nations. Vice Admiral Robert T. Moeller explained: "We do not lead or create policy . . . . Our programs are designed to respond to what our African partners have asked us to do." [24]

Public relations efforts have been of such importance to the military, the U.S. Army War College published a research paper in March 2008, entitled "Combating African Questions about the Legitimacy of AFRICOM". The paper expressed Africa's strategic importance to the



United States, yet offense that the creation of AFRICOM prompted a “hostile” response from African leaders. [25] It urged the U.S. to learn more about African institutions and to engage them rather than ignore them. It also advocated that U.S. personnel gain a stronger understanding of Africa’s colonial past while pushing for African nations to become more multilateral in working towards a common goal. It called for the increased use of “soft power that could be leverage by the U.S. Department of State in winning the public relations fight for Africa. [26]

AFRICOM has certainly run into a number of roadblocks but it appears that the new command will flourish as a result of intensive diplomatic and public relations efforts by the United States government. The structure and domestic operations of AFRICOM also makes it more palatable to African leaders who can more easily claim that they have a harmony rather than a disharmony of interests with the U.S. while the U.S. is building roads, training military forces, and passing out textbooks to children. A leaner, smaller, less intrusive, and more culturally engaged network of military outposts is America’s new blueprint for foreign intervention and global domination.

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## Notes

[1] Johnson, Chalmers, “737 U.S. Military Bases = Global Empire,” Global Research , March 21, 2009. Mr. Johnson continues: “The Pentagon continues to omit from its accounts most of the \$5 billion worth of military and espionage installations in Britain, which have long been conveniently disguised as Royal Air Force bases. If there were an honest count, the actual size of our military empire would probably top 1,000 different bases overseas, but no one — possibly not even the Pentagon — knows the exact number for sure.”

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12824>

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[3] Zhang, Yajun, Vincent, Lee, and Jung-Ah, Lee, “China Dangles Rare-Earth Resources to Investors, The Wall Street Journal , August 16, 2010,

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[http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557/china\\_africa\\_and\\_oil.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557/china_africa_and_oil.html)

[5] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, <http://www.focac.org/eng/>

[6] Cooke, Jennifer G., “China’s Soft Power in Africa and its Implications for the United States,” p.31,

[http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090310\\_chinesesoftpower\\_chap3.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090310_chinesesoftpower_chap3.pdf)

[7] Ibid, p. 41

[8] Cohen, Ariel, "Russia's New Scramble for Africa – Moscow tries to rebuild its sphere of influence on the African continent," The Wall Street Journal , July 2, 2009,  
[http://online.wsj.com/article/NA\\_WSJ\\_PUB:SB124639219666775441.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/NA_WSJ_PUB:SB124639219666775441.html)

[9] Ibid

[10] Matthews, Owen, "Racing for New Riches – Russian and Chinese investors are battling for African resources to fuel their growing empires," Newsweek , November 8, 2007,  
<http://www.newsweek.com/2007/11/08/racing-for-new-riches.html>

[11] Feffer, John, "How Much Does the U.S. Empire Cost?" Huffington Post , July 14, 2009,  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feffer/how-much-does-the-us-empire\\_b\\_231903.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feffer/how-much-does-the-us-empire_b_231903.html)

[12] Colonel Schwalbe, Stephen, "Overseas Military Base Closures," Air & Space Power Journal , January 4, 2005,  
<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/schwalbe2.html>

[13] Vine, David, "Too Many Overseas Bases," Foreign Policy In Focus , February 25, 2009,  
[http://www.fpif.org/articles/too\\_many\\_overseas\\_bases](http://www.fpif.org/articles/too_many_overseas_bases)

[14] "Agreement Between The Government Of The United States Of America And The Government Of The Republic Of Djibouti On Access To And Use Of Facilities In The Republic Of Djibouti," February 19, 2003,  
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/97620.pdf>

[15] See remarks of Ms. Theresa M. Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for African Affairs, "Foreign Press Center Briefing on U.S. To Establish New U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)," US Fed News Service, Including US State News , Washington D.C., Feb 9, 2007. Ms. Whelan foreshadowed the structure of national vertical integration into the AFRICOM framework by stating that "AFRICOM isn't going to be used to protect natural resources in Africa. To the extent that AFRICOM through its interaction with other African countries and through whatever help we can provide in terms of developing their capacities to promote security in their own country and in the region, if they will be able to protect their natural resources more effectively, then that will be a good thing."

[16] Akosah-Sarpong, Kofi, "Touting West African Oil In The U.S.," Modern Ghana , November 10, 2002,  
<http://www.modernghana.com/news/27789/1/touting-west-african-oil-in-the-us.html>

[17] Ibid. See also, "US naval base to protect Sao Tome oil," BBC News , August 22, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/2210571.stm> in which President Menendez revealed the new model for U.S. military outposts abroad. He stated, "It is not really a military base on our territory, but rather a support port for aircraft, warships and patrol ships so that they can come to this port and stay for some time."

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[http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story\\_id=54908](http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=54908)

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[21] Schaefer, Brett D. and Eaglen, Mackenzie M., "U.S. Africa Command: Challenges and Opportunities," Backgrounder , The Heritage Foundation, p.4, November 19, 2008

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[26] Ibid, p. 21

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