

UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

THEATER STRATEGY 2018-2027



A Partner-Centric Strategy

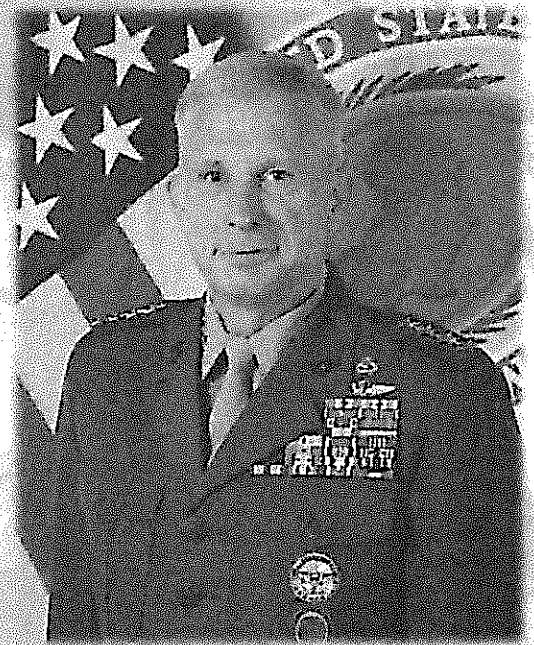
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U.S. interests in Africa are best served by stable nations with effective and accountable governments, well-trained and disciplined militaries, and growing economies. The U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) Theater Strategy describes the partner-centric approach we will employ over the next 10 years in pursuit of these interests.

The strategy takes into account key trends in Africa's security environment, most notably the persistence of state fragility in areas of strategic importance and the increasing involvement of competitor states such as China and, to a lesser extent, Russia. These trends combine to create critical challenges to U.S. interests, including the increased risk of regional instability, the expansion of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), and threats to U.S. access and influence. To address these challenges, this 10-year strategy prioritizes a set of five strategic objectives: (1) African Partners Contribute to Regional Security, (2) Threats from VEOs and TCOs are Reduced, (3) U.S. Access and Influence are Ensured, (4) The USAFRICOM Theater is Set, and (5) U.S. Personnel and Facilities are Protected.

As African, international, and interagency efforts are fundamental to achieving our strategic objectives, USAFRICOM's **partner-centric** strategic approach comprises the following three cross-cutting themes: First, all USAFRICOM activities provide **military support to diplomacy and development**, as Africa's challenges cannot be resolved through military force as the primary agent of change. Second, we work **by, with, and through** partners to strengthen enduring relationships and ensure partner ownership. Third, USAFRICOM works with our partners to continue to put **pressure on the networks** that resource VEOs and TCOs in order to provide time and space for good governance. Over time, this balanced approach will effectively strengthen African partners and decrease requirements for U.S. security assistance.

The USAFRICOM Theater Strategy serves as a bridge between U.S. policy and the forthcoming USAFRICOM Campaign Plan. The campaign plan provides broad synchronization through an operational approach and will focus operations, align resources, and manage risk over the next 3-5 years. Taken together, these two documents outline the command's approach for helping achieve U.S. interests in Africa during the coming years.



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STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Persistent state fragility and increased competitor-state influence combine to pose three distinct strategic challenges for USAFRICOM:

1. Instability. Fragile states are vulnerable to instability, which disrupts governmental capacity to exercise authority, protect the rights of their citizens, and deliver basic services. These states are also likely to be destabilized by intentionally or inadvertently disruptive activities of competitor nations. Addressing root causes of instability, to include poor governance, will remain an enduring U.S. interest in order to hedge against the higher cost of crisis response and stabilization.

2. VEOs and TCOs. VEO expansion poses serious threats to the security of many African countries and regions. Extremist groups such as al-Qa'ida, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Boko Haram exploit local grievances, under-governed regions and porous borders. Beyond the direct threat of attacks, VEO activities force our partners to focus on short-term operational security requirements to the detriment of long-term capacity building. Some VEOs could pose a threat to our NATO allies in Europe. Additionally, we cannot discount the possibility that extremists in Africa could seek to threaten the U.S. homeland.



Boko Haram

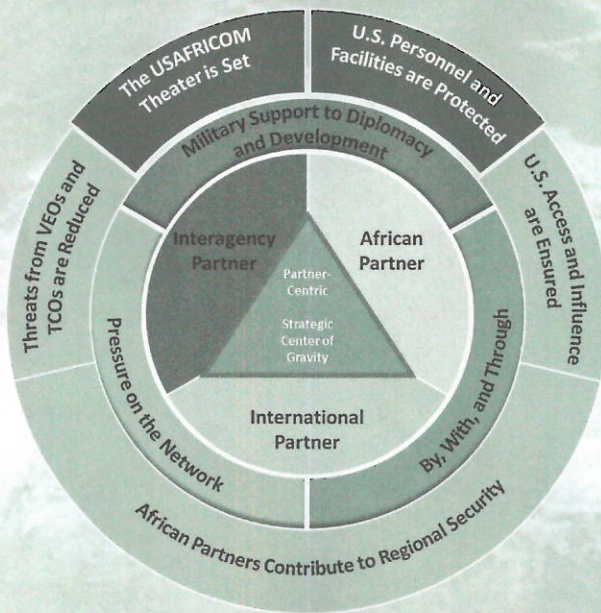
TCOs undermine the democratic institutions that foster trust in government. By exploiting weak, ineffective, or corrupt governments, these organizations contribute to regional instability. Additionally, TCO networks that transport arms, money, natural resources, drugs, and people, resource VEO operations that further decrease state legitimacy.



China is likely to establish additional military presence to secure its Maritime Silk Road while developing expeditionary military capabilities

3. Threats to U.S. Access and Influence. Africa's abundant resources, proximity to key global transportation lanes, and rich potential for future economic expansion create mutually beneficial U.S.-African commercial opportunities. The U.S. is competing for increased influence and access on the continent. Some strategic competitors take advantage of corruption, weak institutions, and fragile governments to exploit African nations for access to resources and opportunities to increase their global influence. These activities further destabilize fragile governments and developing economies. China and Russia are anticipated to become the most significant competitors that seek greater influence over Africa's economies, resources and politics in the decade to come.

USAFRICOM STRATEGIC APPROACH



Partner-Centric Approach. Partners are the strategic center of gravity in this strategy. Our allies and partners provide complementary capabilities and forces that make our collective efforts more effective on the continent. By working with African, interagency, and international partners, we amass the greatest possible strength for the long-term advancement of U.S. and partner interests. Operationally, African partners hold the key to the access, basing, and logistics networks that enable our reach. Their perspectives, regional relationships, and information sharing improve our understanding and sharpen our options. Interagency partners, who lead the U.S. whole-of-government approach, rely on USAFRICOM to play a critical supporting role. There are three cross-cutting strategic themes:

1. Military Support to Diplomacy and Development.

Africa's security challenges cannot be resolved through the use of military force as the primary agent of change. Therefore, our most important strategic theme is that USAFRICOM directly supports U.S. diplomatic and developmental efforts in Africa. While the DoS is the lead for setting foreign policy and USAID is the lead agency responsible for international development and humanitarian assistance, USAFRICOM supports their policies and programs with unique security related capabilities.



Secretary of Defense, James Mattis addressing USAFRICOM in Stuttgart.

2. By, With, and Through. To enable long-term African solutions, USAFRICOM works by, with, and through our partners. In this framework, security operations are executed almost exclusively by African partner security forces. To help improve security capacity in the long term, USAFRICOM works with partner security institutions based on their needs. The U.S. and its partners achieve shared objectives through a cooperative relationship with USAFRICOM in a supporting role. This approach employs U.S. military forces in a supporting role, not as principal participants in armed conflict. This theme recognizes the importance of partner ownership and enduring relationships.

3. Pressure on the Networks. USAFRICOM and its partners will continually pressure VEO and TCO networks that destabilize the security environment. The degradation and disruption of human, financial, information, and logistical networks that support VEOs and TCOs will isolate these organizations and enable partner forces to contain them without external assistance. USAFRICOM supports partners in executing and sustaining that pressure by providing operational support to partner-led, interagency, counter-VEO, and counter-TCO efforts. Only when U.S. interests are directly threatened will USAFRICOM undertake unilateral operations, and always with full respect for international law.

DESIRED ENVIRONMENT

USAFRICOM seeks an environment in which African partners are effectively governed, better-developed economically, and contributing to broader regional security efforts. VEO and TCO threats to U.S. and partner interests are reduced, and the U.S. has sufficient access to protect critical interests. The U.S. is a preferred security partner, and African governments have rejected predatory actions of strategic competitors. In a supporting role to the interagency lead, USAFRICOM is postured to respond to a broad range of crises. U.S. personnel and facilities are protected.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

African Partners Contribute to Regional Security. Building partner capability is the primary strategic effort. USAFRICOM will work by, with, and through partners to help Africans develop capabilities that address drivers of instability. Security cooperation enables partners to meet a broad range of security requirements from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to counter-terrorism operations. USAFRICOM will use a comprehensive and whole-of-government approach to leverage a diverse set of security cooperation resources. Institutional capacity will be enhanced through a variety of means, such as the Department of Defense State Partnership Program. USAFRICOM will distribute efforts between fragile states and those that are relatively stable and strong. Strategic investment in the latter has a greater chance of fostering regional security, potentially reducing the need for costly future U.S. interventions.



Exercise Flintlock, a multi-national exercise to develop capacity and collaboration between security forces to protect civilian populations.



Kinetic strikes being launched from USS Wasp, targeting terrorists in North Africa.

Threats From VEOs and TCOs are Reduced. VEOs in Africa principally threaten and disrupt African partners and their economies, but they also threaten U.S. interests and citizens on the continent. The command will leverage a wide range of means, from unilateral operations to security cooperation, to enhance African partners' efforts to defeat VEOs. Activities aimed at degrading VEO capability and capacity have yielded positive results. This underscores that persistent pressure on VEO and TCO networks can prevent them from becoming transnational strategic risks.

U.S. Access and Influence are Ensured. USAFRICOM will strengthen the agreements and capabilities that enable access, a host of government's agreements allowing us to enter a country when the need arises. This will create opportunities for partnership, investment and help us to counter strategic competitors.

The USAFRICOM Theater is Set.

USAFRICOM will align its forces, authorities, capabilities, footprints, and agreements to conduct day-to-day activities, respond to crises, and execute contingency operations. To reflect changes in the operational environment, USAFRICOM will continually monitor, assess, and adjust its posture. Set-the-theater efforts will also focus on gaining a shared situational awareness with neighboring combatant commands and regional partners.



U.S. Embassy in Juba being temporarily evacuated in 2014 to protect U.S. personnel.



African Union forces in support of Peace Keeping operations.

U.S. Personnel and Facilities are Protected.

Protecting U.S. personnel and facilities is an enduring objective for USAFRICOM. With 15 of 33 high-risk U.S. diplomatic posts in Africa, USAFRICOM must be prepared to respond to crisis. Vast distances between posture locations and consistent shortfalls of joint enablers require USAFRICOM to work collaboratively with partners and allies to decrease the risk to U.S. forces and citizens. To ensure U.S. personnel and facilities are protected, USAFRICOM will focus efforts to build African security capacity, improve regional stability, and counter VEOs and TCOs.

CONCLUSION

Now with a decade of experience, building understanding and developing strong partnerships on the continent, USAFRICOM continues to take the initiative and implement actions that create the conditions that lead to a stable and prosperous Africa over the next ten years. Africa is a complex continent with formidable challenges that will require innovative, African led solutions. USAFRICOM will work with partner nations to enhance security and prosperity for all our citizens and promote strong ties between the U.S. and our African partners.

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