

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL STEPHEN J. TOWNSEND, UNITED STATES ARMY
COMMANDER
UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

April 21, 2021

Africa: Securing U.S. Interests, Preserving Strategic Options

INTRODUCTION: *Strong return on our modest investment in this dynamic theater.*

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Calvert, and distinguished members of the Committee, It is an honor to come before you again to represent the dedicated and professional service members and civilians of United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM). Since the last time I briefed you, USAFRICOM participated in a Command review and has developed a new campaign plan to ensure our alignment with the National Defense Strategy (NDS). USAFRICOM's Campaign Plan (ACP) aligns with our nation's strategic objectives to protect our people and our homeland, assure our allies and partners, and counter malign actors. Our national interests guide our campaign plan and our mission: *U.S. Africa Command, with partners, counters malign actors and transnational threats, responds to crises, and strengthens security forces in order to advance U.S. interests and promote regional security, stability, and prosperity.* I am confident the American people are getting a good value for our very modest investment of defense resources in Africa.

The African Continent is important to the United States politically, economically, and militarily. It is home to the fastest growing economies and populations in the world, sits at crossroads of international commerce, trade and global force flow, and watches over important sea lines of communication. Our future security, prosperity, and ability to project power globally rest on free, open, and secure access in and around Africa. Activities of competitor states, violent extremist organizations, instability and fragility all challenge our access. Despite these challenges, this dynamic continent presents a number of opportunities for the United States to advance our interests.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the coupling of challenges and opportunities in Africa. Our forces remained in place and continued to operate within the limits of our force health protection measures. Our nation's values and long-term whole-of-government commitment to support and build partner capacity has been our strongest assets over the last year. To combat and contain the pandemic, African partners have mobilized medical capabilities built over decades of U.S.-led efforts to combat infectious diseases. USAFRICOM supported U.S. efforts to provide COVID-19 assistance in 43

countries, including the delivery of nearly \$500M in medical supplies. While force health protective measures required us to re-scope many of our activities, we have stayed connected with our African partners during their time of need.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT: *Incredible potential checked by incredible obstacles*

A Vast Continent of Opportunity and Challenge

The land mass of Africa is larger than the United States, China, India, Japan, and most of Europe combined. Over half of the world's arable land is on the continent, along with much of the planet's untapped mineral resources,¹ including strategic minerals. Africa is home to 11 of the world's 25 fastest growing economies, as measured by gross domestic product data for 2020.² Africa's population is young, growing fast, and expected to top two billion in 2050, when more than a quarter of the world's inhabitants will live on the continent. By 2100, Africa's population could nearly double again. Not only is the continent's growth rate the highest in the world, but the population is the youngest, with 41% under the age of 15.³ The growing size of the population, illustrates the rising global importance of the African continent and the momentum of Africa's expanding markets.

Africa's rapid population growth also amplifies several challenges. Over two-thirds of Africans live in poverty.⁴ Natural resource exploitation, impacts of climate change, and infectious disease outbreaks all fuel instability and conflict. Desertification, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin where the Sahara Desert is expanding into the Sahel, has dramatically reduced arable land, threatened food security, and created conditions for instability and insecurity. Lack of economic opportunities and a search for a better life lead to migration, which creates compounding challenges. An increase in

¹ Grow Africa: "60% of Arable Land is in Africa and it has Billions in Investment Potential," 2020.

² International Monetary Fund, 2020 GDP growth (annual %) <https://www.imf.org/> (South Sudan, Egypt, Rwanda, Benin, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, and Niger), 2021

³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division World Population Prospects, 2019

⁴ 85% of Africans live off less than 5.50 USD per day, World Bank, 2019

migration across Africa, as well as into Europe and North America, feeds a lucrative market for extremist organizations and criminal networks. The Fund for Peace “Fragile State Index” captures the aggregation of these challenges. Fourteen of the world’s top twenty most fragile states are in the USAFRICOM Area of Responsibility (AOR).⁵ Despite these challenges, Africa’s potential and strategic location continue to attract investment and engagement by geo-strategic competitors.

Strategic Geography

Africa has global strategic importance relative to NATO’s Southern Flank, the flow of commerce through the Red Sea, and protecting access to the Middle East, Indian Ocean, and South-East Asia. Located at the crossroads of the world, Africa watches over strategic choke points including the Strait of Gibraltar, the Strait of Sicily, the Red Sea, the Bab al Mandeb, and the Mozambique Channel. The sea line of communication (SLOC) running through the Mediterranean and Red Seas, and a second, dipping around the Cape of Good Hope, connect the East Coast of the U.S. to East Africa, the Middle East, India, and South East Asia. These pathways are essential to global trade, ongoing operations and contingency plans of seven other Combatant Commands. These corridors facilitate one-third of the shipping between North America and Asia, and one-third of global oil shipping. U.S. and global security depend on unhindered access to these waters.

Strategic Competition

The NDS prioritizes geo-political competition due to the “magnitude of the threats [China and Russia] pose to U.S. security and prosperity, and the potential for those threats to increase in the future.”⁶ Both Beijing and Moscow have long recognized the political, military, and economic importance of Africa and each continues to seize opportunities to expand their influence across the

⁵ The Fund for Peace, “Fragile State Index” <https://fragilestateindex.org/data/> (Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Burundi, Haiti, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, Iraq, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Libya). Three of the top 20 (Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq) represent \$1.5T in “war-related” expenses from FY01 to FY19 according to the DOD Comptroller., 2021

⁶ 2018 National Defense Strategy: Sharpening the American Military Competitive Edge, 2018, p 7.

continent. Unencumbered by international norms and standards of transparency, our competitors are able to combine both government and private resources to gain influence. Exploitative practices for trade, resource extraction, weapons sales, and debt manipulation ultimately weakens governance, slows economic growth, and fosters instability.

The People's Republic of China leads the international community in head of state and senior leadership visits to Africa over the last decade—investing heavily, pledging \$60B in infrastructure and development, and increasing arms sales to African countries. Beijing's activities in Africa are outpacing those of the United States and our allies as they seek resources and markets to feed economic growth in China and leverage economic tools to increase their global reach and influence. The People's Republic of China has 52 embassies in Africa, three more than the U.S., and they continue to expand their base in Djibouti into a platform to project power across the continent and its waters—completing a large naval pier this year. The base is only 12 kilometers from our 3,400 DoD personnel at Camp Lemonnier, the Department's primary forward operating location in the USAFRICOM AOR. Beijing seeks to open additional bases, tying their commercial seaport investments in East, West and Southern Africa closely with involvement by Chinese military forces in order to further their geo-strategic interests.

Russian strategy in Africa has long centered on building influence to facilitate economic opportunity, obtain political support for Russian initiatives, and increase military presence on NATO's southern flank. Russian private military companies (PMCs) are a destabilizing influence in Africa, frequently securing Russian investments at the expense of African interests. Russian PMCs almost certainly downed an unarmed, unmanned U.S. aircraft in Libya in November 2019 using a sophisticated Russian air defense system. This past year, USAFRICOM exposed the extent of the Kremlin's malign involvement, despite its continued denial, by identifying and publicizing their deployment of high performance fighter aircraft to Libya.

Iranian military capabilities threaten sea-lanes through the Red Sea and our posture locations in

the Horn of Africa. Iranian support to Yemen's Houthis further jeopardizes freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and increases tensions and instability in East Africa. Camp Lemonnier's geostrategic location makes it a critical posture location to support USCENTCOM plans and operations. To mitigate this risk to our people, this year USAFRICOM requested funding for improving force protection. I am thankful that Congress has authorized and appropriated these funds. With the inclusion of the Iranian threat, East Africa is a nexus of four of the five major threats identified in the National Defense Strategy: The People's Republic of China, Russia, Iran, and violent extremist organizations (VEOs).

VEOs are a Primary Threat to Many African Partners

When I meet with African leaders, their primary concern is often VEOs killing their soldiers, kidnapping their civilians, and challenging their authority to rule. Transnational VEOs, like al Qaeda and ISIS, are expanding in Africa at a rapid pace, taking advantage of weak governance and disenfranchised populations. They threaten our partners' capacity to govern effectively, protect their populations, and improve their economies. Their terror attacks on the continent exacerbate the challenges of vulnerable populations, and some of them remain committed to strike at U.S. interests in both the region and the U.S. Homeland.

East Africa is home to Al-Shabaab, the largest, wealthiest, and most violent Al Qaeda-associated group in the world. In 2019, Al-Shabaab's leadership publicly identified Americans and U.S. interests worldwide as priority targets, mirroring Usama bin Laden's declaration of war on the U.S. in 1996. In January 2020, Al-Shabaab followed through on this threat, attacking our forces at the Kenyan Naval Base at Manda Bay. This complex and well-resourced attack killed three Americans and clearly demonstrated Al-Shabaab's willingness and capability to attack the U.S. outside of Somalia. In February 2021, Al-Shabaab emir Ahmed Diriye repeated his call for violent attacks against Americans. Today, Al-Shabaab is the primary African VEO threat to American interests.

The Islamic State is rapidly franchising across Africa, becoming increasingly more capable,

violent, and difficult for our African partners to defeat without international support. In West Africa, the primary VEO threats are ISIS networks in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, Boko Haram, and al-Qa'ida's Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). Kidnapping for ransom, targeting Westerners, remains a common tactic for VEOs and criminal organizations. USAFRICOM's continued engagement in the Counter-VEO (C-VEO) fight in West Africa has developed the situational awareness and regional partnerships that sustain U.S. access and influence. These relationships enabled USAFRICOM to rescue Mr. Philippe Walton within days of his abduction in Niger last October. To conduct this rescue mission, USAFRICOM requested, and within hours received approval for, armed access, basing, and overflight from seven countries and permission to conduct a raid in Nigeria. Continued collaboration with, and support to, our French African partners as well as our European allies, is imperative to counter growing extremism with limited U.S. resources in the West. Bottom line: Our relationships and our counter-VEO efforts build U.S. influence over strategic competitors.

STRATEGIC APPROACH: *An ounce of prevention and cheap insurance for America*

A secure, stable, and prosperous Africa—aligned with the U.S.—is an enduring American interest. The U.S. must continue to work with our allies and partners to advance our mutual interests within the rules-based international system. Our campaign plan is focused on achieving four campaign objectives, developed and refined over the last year: 1) Gain and Maintain Strategic Access and Influence, 2) Disrupt VEO Threats to U.S. Interests, 3) Respond to Crises to Protect U.S. Interests, 4) Coordinate Action with Allies and Partners to Achieve Shared Security Objectives.

USAFRICOM resources offer cheap insurance and an ounce of prevention for America. Funds to support contracted ISR capabilities as well as personnel and recovery and casualty evacuation dramatically improve our ability to help our troops accomplish their missions and protect them with less impact on high demand military capabilities. Similarly, modest but sustained funding levels for

exercises, professional education and Section 333 and 332 activities are critical to our ability to build partner capacity to do more for themselves and to compete effectively with competitors.

Gain and Maintain Strategic Access and Influence

Strategic access to exert influence and project power enables a broad range of U.S. government activities. USAFRICOM competes and acts to maintain or expand U.S. influence and access. Our influence in Africa provides an advantage over competitors, deters conflict, assures partners of our commitment, and postures the U.S. to transition effectively to crisis or conflict if necessary. In cooperation with our allies, USAFRICOM builds trust and strengthens military relationships to allow for the rapid flow of forces and enable warplans when needed. As competition is increasingly global, Africa is rich with opportunities to counter, disrupt, tax, and win against strategic competitors.

USAFRICOM prioritizes access in key geostrategic locations to disrupt competitor efforts that threaten U.S. freedom of action and to check malign activities which exploit our African partners. While we focus our military activities in key locations, we stay engaged across the continent to maintain situational awareness, support partners and allies, and respond to emerging crises.

Disrupt VEO Threats to U.S. Interests

Persistent state fragility in Africa drives instability and violent extremism, but also invites competitor exploitation. VEOs remain a significant threat to the shared interests of the U.S., our allies, and our African partners. Many of these VEOs explicitly aspire to kill Americans.

USAFRICOM, working with African and European partners, monitors these VEOs for indicators and warnings of attacks against the Homeland, our embassies, and our citizens.

Monitoring VEO capabilities and intentions can be resource intensive but is a vital first step in preventing successful terrorist attacks.

Regional VEOs are the number one security concern for many of our partners. Access and influence stem from helping our partners with the problems they face. Shared efforts against VEOs

provide the best opportunity to strengthen partnerships and to ensure the U.S. is the security partner of choice in priority countries. In Africa, counter VEO efforts are strategic competition.

USAFRICOM contributes to multi-national efforts to disrupt VEOs while also conducting direct actions to degrade VEOs who threaten the Homeland. In the East, USAFRICOM capabilities support and enable the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the multi-national effort to defeat Al Shabaab, an arm of Al Qaeda, and build sustainable security in Somalia as outlined in the 2017 London Security Pact. In the West, USAFRICOM supports the French-led multi-national coalition, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the African-led G5 Sahel forces against Al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates. This sustainable, partner-centric approach protects the homeland, builds relationships, creates access, and thwarts competitor advances.

Respond to Crises to Protect U.S. Interests

The DoD often helps set the conditions necessary for subsequent whole-of-government efforts across Africa. The tremendous work of the Department of State (DoS), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other organizations has dramatically reduced the impact of diseases like HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and COVID-19, strengthened educational systems, supported democratic elections, and encouraged economic growth. Whole-of-American government efforts are contingent upon the ability of USAFRICOM and the DoD to protect our embassies, our investments, and our people working in Africa to advance U.S. interests.

The DoS has designated 30 diplomatic facilities worldwide as High Threat, High Risk posts, 15 of them are in Africa. USAFRICOM shares many of our crisis response forces with USEUCOM to maximize savings and readiness to the department. In the last year, the attack on Manda Bay in Kenya, diplomatic engagements in Libya, the coup in Mali, recovery of an American Citizen, the order to reposition from Somalia and ongoing violence in Ethiopia have all tested our response capabilities across the spectrum of operations and across tens of thousands of miles.

As our service members operate in small groups in remote locations throughout the continent, USAFRICOM is continuously adjusting our limited collection, medical, transportation, and response assets to protect our troops. I would like to thank Congress for authorizing and appropriating funds to dramatically improve force protection, personnel recovery, and casualty evacuation efforts to provide our troops the medical care where and when they need it.

Coordinate Action with Allies and Partners to Achieve Shared Security Objectives

USAFRICOM maintains a well-developed constellation of allies, multi-national organizations (European Union, African Union, NATO, and the United Nations), and African partners.⁷ These relationships enable USAFRICOM to coordinate action, enhance interoperability, and share costs and risks to achieve mutual security goals.

USAFRICOM's active participation in multi-national efforts reinforces cooperation for mutual benefit, assures partners of U.S. commitment, and denies competitors opportunities to erode U.S. influence. Enhanced relationships and military activities enable USAFRICOM to help create time and space for our African partners to build the governance and economic growth necessary to gain the capacity to repel malign actors and VEO influences. Building partner capability is also an important tool in strategic competition, reinforcing the U.S. role as Africa's security partner of choice while furthering American values and influence. A great example of building relationships and trust is Exercise African Lion. Since 2002, African Lion has brought together partners and allies to enhance interoperability, build readiness and strengthen relationships. Trust is built over time – the relationships made while we develop partner capabilities provide America with long-term strategic alliances needed to address future challenges and ensure regional security and prosperity.

⁷ USAFRICOM maintains Foreign Liaison Officers representing 19 countries and multinational organizations.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS: *A large, complex, and dynamic theater*

East Africa

The strategic geography of East Africa remains vital to U.S. National Security. Despite a determined Chinese effort to assert influence in Djibouti and the region, our relationship with the Djiboutian government remains strong. The strength of the relationship built between the U.S. and Djibouti was evident in the opening months of the COVID-19 pandemic. As global travel became more difficult, senior Djiboutian leaders approved every one of our flight requests into and out of our three facilities that comprise the Djibouti Base Cluster. This vitally important base houses approximately half of the U.S. military personnel in the USAFRICOM AOR and enables the U.S. to protect the SLOC through the Red Sea and project power across East, Central, and Southern Africa as well as into the USCENTCOM and USINDOPACOM AORs. The base cluster supports global force flow, sustains forward staged response forces, supports strategic competition, and enables C-VEO activities in both USAFRICOM and USCENTCOM's AORs.

The recent Operation Octave Quartz demonstrated the agility and flexibility of the Joint Force. In just over 60 days, USAFRICOM received the order to reposition from Somalia, planned the operation, assembled a Joint Task Force of 13,400 service members from around the globe, and executed this high-risk mission ahead of schedule and without major incident. Once again, our strong partnerships with Djibouti and Kenya played a vital role in our successful repositioning. Our mission in Somalia has not changed, but our posture has. Ultimately, achieving our shared objectives in Somalia is tied to reconciliation between the Federal Government in Mogadishu and the Federal Member States, building institutional capacity across various sectors, and enhancing support to the troop contributing countries of AMISOM.

The collective efforts of the U.S. Government, international community, and regional partners, has created tangible progress in Somalia, albeit far slower, far smaller, and far more fragile than we would like.

AMISOM and the Somali National Army (SNA) have made slow gains in Al-Shabaab strongholds in the south, holding territory and establishing outposts. However, pre-election political friction between the Federal Government of Somalia and Somali Federal Member States has distracted Mogadishu from our common fight against Al-Shabaab. U.S.-trained and supported “Danab” SNA units, a result of the USG’s commitment at the 2017 London Security Pact, most often spearhead security operations but it is critical that AMISOM remain in the fight until the SNA is able to counter Al-Shabaab themselves. As this is written, USAFRICOM is working with the Joint Staff and OSD to review our mission, resources and authorities in East Africa as part of the Global Posture Review.

West Africa

USAFRICOM employs a small footprint in West Africa as part of our African-led, allied-assisted, and U.S.-enabled framework to counter the expansion of VEOs in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin and to monitor increased strategic competitor activities. We coordinate our efforts with the larger multi-national security activities in West Africa (G5-Sahel and Multi-National Joint Task Force) and provide bilateral support to partner nations. However, progress is slow because in much of West Africa governance remains weak and populations disenfranchised. VEOs remain a significant threat and their violence continues to grow and spread.

Extreme poverty, more frequent and intense weather events, vulnerable and marginalized populations, separatist movements, and illicit transnational networks overlap in the Sahel, creating opportunities for VEOs to establish safe haven, increasingly control the local populace and grow in strength. JNIM and ISIS associates have expanded in the region and now threaten the littoral states from the north—a development of increasing concern. ISIS-Core promotes ISIS-West Africa as a flagship network, while Al Qaeda supports their global network using revenue generated in the Sahel, mostly through kidnapping for ransom. Faced with these growing VEO threats, African countries seek U.S. support, making C-VEO efforts one of our most effective tools to counter competitor influence.

The People's Republic of China's "Belt and Road Initiative" is one competitor initiative that seeks to increase Chinese access and influence along the Atlantic Coast of Africa. Today, the People's Republic of China has invested heavily in large-scale industrial fishing infrastructure in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), making the People's Republic of China the primary contributor to a growing food crisis that will further drive instability in West Africa. This exploitation—much of it illegal, unregulated, or under-reported illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU)—is not only counter-productive to our shared security objectives with West African countries, but also provides the economic pretense the People's Republic of China has previously used to justify increased military access. The way forward requires continued efforts with African partners and allies to build capacity to enforce their own maritime sovereignty. For example, Exercise Obangame Express is one way we seek to improve regional maritime domain awareness, capacity and cooperation. But, this annual event is insufficient by itself. A multinational maritime task force is a good option to address the plague of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Additionally, piratical attacks in Gulf of Guinea have become more frequent and violent, causing risk to international commerce and threatening maritime security.

USAFRICOM will continue to work with Gulf of Guinea nations and other international partners to help strengthen regional cooperation and responses to piracy. Our European allies play critical roles in C-VEO operations in West Africa. France, who leads C-VEO multilateral efforts in the Sahel, is committed to security in the region with approximately 5,500 troops conducting security force assistance and direct action with support from a number of European allies. We mourn the loss, in recent months, of five French Soldiers killed fighting to secure our mutual security interests in West Africa. Our mutual support and cooperation with the French has had the effect of multiplying the resources available to advance our shared interests. The European Union and United Nations maintain multinational missions in West Africa and the continued effort of the U.S. Government help keep these international partners engaged in this fight and sustain France's leadership of this effort.

North Africa

The Kingdom of Morocco, first to recognize our nation in 1777, remains our strongest partner

through exercises, training programs, foreign military sales, and counterterrorism cooperation. The Tunisians are also strong partners in the fight against ISIS-Libya and reinforce our security assistance with national funds. Our military relationship with Algeria significantly improved in the last year.

Once looking almost exclusively to Russia, senior officials in the Algerian Government have recently expressed their desire to continue improving relations with the U.S.

In Libya, the election of a new Prime Minister and an Interim Unity Government mark continued progress. In the last 12 months, USAFRICOM supported our State Department in formally establishing a diplomatic link and we appreciate our excellent cooperation with AMB Norland and his team. Libya has provided Russia access and influence along NATO's southern flank. The Kremlin has publically denied direct involvement in the Libyan conflict, while thinly masking their governmental activities under the banner of the Wagner Group PMC. Continued progress on the political front is the best chance for long-term stability in Libya.

Central and Southern Africa

The potential exists for stronger partnerships and opportunities in central and southern Africa. Botswana is a bright spot with its enduring democracy, continued stability, professional military, and good relations with the U.S.. South Africa, the second-largest economy and our largest trading partner on the continent, has been the hardest hit by the global pandemic. USAFRICOM provided COVID-19 aid with the help of the OSD, DoS, and USAID. In northern Mozambique, where U.S. and European energy partners have planned an approximately \$50B investment in liquid natural gas, we have seen a rapid increase in sophistication and violence from local groups that have evolved into the newest African affiliate of corporate ISIS.⁸

Despite emerging opportunities, the People's Republic of China and Russia currently have the inside track in much of central and southern Africa. Russia is testing its playbook for malign activity in the Central African Republic, where they are employing PMCs, extracting minerals, and buying influence. Likewise, the People's Republic of China provided welcome COVID-19 aid diplomacy in South Africa. Without significant forces in Central and Southern Africa outside of our embassies,

USAFRICOM maintains a limited supporting role to our U.S. diplomatic and development efforts in this region.

CONCLUSION: *A secure and stable Africa is an enduring American interest.*

Economy of Force

A small investment in Africa goes a long, long way. What USAFRICOM accomplishes with a few troops and a few dollars, on a continent 3.5 times the size of the continental United States, is a bargain for the American taxpayer. Honest assessments and prudent investments ensure the U.S. maximizes the impact of every taxpayer dollar spent to secure American interests and support allies and partners. The locations where USAFRICOM resources and activities are concentrated represent the overlapping points where small teams of dedicated Americans can have outsized impacts on geo-strategic competition, protecting our personnel and homeland, and reassuring our partners and allies. Providing our service members with the support we expect and they deserve, while operating across a vast continent with limited infrastructure, requires that power projection platforms, force protection, ISR, response forces, communications equipment, and medical care be forward deployed and ready to respond. Our partners and allies already bear much of this burden through reciprocal support and the relationships developed in exercises, intelligence sharing, coordination, and engagements. We could not complete our mission and advance our national interests in Africa without operating by, with, and through our allies and partners.

An Ounce of Prevention

USAFRICOM remains ready to protect U.S. citizens, advance our interests and strategic access, and to respond to crises in Africa. The men and women of USAFRICOM, our partners on the continent, and our broad collection of stakeholders understand how important Africa is to the global economy and security environment. Strategic access to Africa and its surrounding waters will be even more vital to U.S. national security in the future than it has been in the past.

Africa is key terrain for strategic competition with the People's Republic of China and Russia and our support to C-VEO operations is necessary to protect the Homeland as well as America's citizens

and interests abroad. Today, we are reviewing our very modest resources to maximize our ability to protect and advance our national security interests. Persistent engagement by the U.S. military, in areas where our objectives are shared with our African and European partners, allows the United States to remain the security partner of choice across much of the continent. Furthermore, the United States has the opportunity to apply our asymmetric advantages in C-VEO experience, intelligence collection, and military professionalism in furthering international norms, good governance, economic development, and security cooperation against the challenges facing our African partners. Our investments to improve the security environment in Africa will pay ever-larger dividends in the future as African states are increasingly able to harness opportunities of the African continent.

It remains my honor to lead the service members, civilians, and families of United States Africa Command. Our efforts have made the U.S. safer, secured U.S. interests, and preserved America's strategic options in the region, while helping Africans do more for themselves. I hope you are as convinced as I am that USAFRICOM is a good investment in the future—for America, for Africa, and for the world. Thank you.