

Hearing of the House Armed Services Committee
On the posture of the
U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command

March 15, 2013

I'd like to welcome everyone to today's hearing on the posture of the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command. And thank you to our two witnesses for agreeing to testify before the committee this morning. We have Admiral James Stavridis, Commander of EUCOM and Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, and General Carter Ham, Commander of AFRICOM.

Admiral Stavridis, you are currently the longest serving combatant commander. I understand that you'll be retiring after more than 36 years of service in the coming months, once your successor is nominated and confirmed. On behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for your service and dedication to this country and our men and women in uniform.

General Ham, you also have said that you intend to retire this year. You have served as an enlisted infantryman and as a senior leader in our nation's military. The nation owes you a great debt of gratitude for your selfless years of service and dedication to this nation and the men and women in uniform.

Admiral Stavridis, many believe Europe is now one of the most secure regions in the world. Even the President's Defense Strategic Guidance says "most European countries are now producers of security rather than consumers. In keeping with [the] evolving strategic landscape, our posture in Europe must also evolve." I think it's important to recognize that many of our European allies are also NATO allies, and they have been an integral part of the ISAF effort in Afghanistan. However, Russia still remains a serious concern – to U.S. national security interests and to our regional allies and partners. Some may also forget that Europe is strategically located in the vicinity of the Middle East and North Africa.

So, I'd like you to fully explain why Europe is still relevant, why the U.S. should remain engaged with and forward deployed in Europe, and how the ongoing instability in the Middle East and North Africa affect Europe and NATO. Especially given the events of the last 6 months, I firmly believe the U.S. cannot further reduce its presence or engagement in Europe. Our forward presence helps facilitate a more rapid response, not only to emerging regional threats but to the defense of Israel. I'd also like to hear your thoughts on the impact of the current fiscal environment on your ability to execute your missions and respond to crises.

General Ham, the AFRICOM area of responsibility remains a critical focal point for U.S. vital national security interests – particularly over the last year. The attack in Benghazi, Libya on September 11th, 2012; the resurgence of al-Qaeda in the north; the ascending threat in Central Africa; and the lingering terrorist threat in the Horn of Africa reminds us that al-Qaeda, its

affiliates, and associated forces continue to pose a threat to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests in the region.

To that end, AFRICOM must be sufficiently postured – both strategically and operationally – as well as capable to execute combat operations if called upon to do so. Yet even after the events of September 11th, AFRICOM still lacks an organic special operations force that can effectively deploy into non-permissive environments on the continent. In addition to deployable forces, I would like to gain a greater understanding of: 1) the assumptions underpinning the decision to maintain the totality of the AFRICOM headquarters in Europe and 2) the approach of disaggregating the AFRICOM intelligence analytical capacity from the headquarters. It is not clear to me whether these are the right approaches. We must continue to evaluate both the assumptions and analysis shaping our view of the threat picture as well as our posture in the region – in order to ensure that we can effectively respond to the next Benghazi attack or other operational requirements on the continent.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to observe that these questions of strategy, missions, and US force posture are not unique to Europe and Africa. Last year, the Department issued its new strategic guidance. We have been told that with further cuts to the military, that strategy is no longer supportable. But this year the Department will conduct a Quadrennial Defense Review and has the opportunity to re-examine these issues. While I gather that the QDR may be getting off to slow start given the budget issues DoD is dealing with, I want to encourage DoD to proceed with the independent National Defense Panel, now that all Congressional panelists have been appointed. There is significant expertise in this group and there should be no delay in allowing them to start their work.

With that, I want to thank you both again for being with us today.