

**Written Statement of Jonathan Pratt, Principal Deputy
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs,
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Before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and the
Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights and
International Organizations
*The Future of Peacekeeping and the Increasing Role of Private Military
Companies in Africa*
January 31, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chairmen James and Smith, Ranking Members Jacobs and Wild, and members of the Subcommittees. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the future of peacekeeping and the increasing role of private military companies in Africa.

The United States has played a role in supporting peace efforts in Africa for decades, through our bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and by supporting humanitarian access and protection of vulnerable populations through peacekeeping.

Those of us who have served in Africa are invested in peace efforts. Early in my career I was involved in diplomatic efforts to end the war in DRC. Later in my career, in Sudan, I supported the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and efforts to secure humanitarian access in Darfur.

I have seen how the United States has made significant financial contributions to the United Nations, which has undertaken a number of complicated peacekeeping missions in Africa to provide help in tremendously challenging situations. These missions have helped safeguard civilian populations from armed groups and warring parties, despite

shortcomings and specific instances of unacceptable conduct by some peacekeepers.

As the security threats changed over time, peacekeeping missions have struggled to keep up. Today we are seeing a desire from African leaders and the African Union to take the lead on peacekeeping efforts. It is in our strategic interests to support them.

Assistant Secretary Sison outlined the significance of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 and how it responds to African leadership and advances momentum for African partners – with financial support through the UN -- to assume more responsibility for sustainable, effective, and accountable peacekeeping missions. We will continue to engage with Congress on how the United States supports and promotes this new tool.

An essential element of UN, AU, and subregional missions is that they include safeguards designed to promote respect for human rights, protection of civilians, and humanitarian access. AU and subregional missions have demonstrated a capacity to mobilize quickly, especially when provided with adequately financed and reliable logistical support mechanisms. Over time we are seeing a trend toward subregional and bilateral missions because of their ability to respond quickly, as well as address countries' national interest in combating instability in their neighborhood. It is important that that all missions adhere to their mandates and international law.

The United States has made long-term investments in developing the capacity of African partners to deploy peace support operations, initially through the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) and then through the Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance (ACOTA) programs.

Private contractors have played and continue to play an important role by providing logistical support, training, equipment, and other capacity building.

With appropriate resources and oversight, private contractors provide an efficient and effective means to enable troop and police contributing countries to deliver on the mandates asked of them. We have developed best practices for oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure that private contractors adhere to policy direction and comply with legal standards.

In contrast, this is not what Russia's Wagner Group is or does.

In the countries where Wagner is present, we have seen the number of terrorist attacks and attacks on civilians increase, accompanied by a decrease in humanitarian access, as well as an increase in reports of human rights abuses.

Before closing, I want to take the opportunity to emphasize the vital importance of passing the Administration's national security supplemental appropriations request as soon as possible.

Let me also reiterate my appreciation to the sub-committees. We greatly value your support in upholding our shared commitment to help advance democracy, peace, and security as cornerstones for a successful U.S.-Africa partnership. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you, and for convening this important hearing.