

**Testimony Of  
Gen. William E. “Kip” Ward, USA, Retired  
U.S. Global Leadership Coalition  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
“U.S. Interests in Africa”  
Thursday, May 18, 2017**

Thank you, Chairman Ed Royce and Ranking Member Eliot Engel, for inviting me to testify before the Committee today on U.S. engagement in Africa.

As the first commander for United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), I have seen and understand the importance of sustained and meaningful U.S. engagement in Africa. Africa remains and must continue to be a priority for the United States. From inception, and under my leadership, AFRICOM focused on a synchronized approach to development, diplomacy, and defense activities on the Continent and its island nations.

These central themes helped define our interagency cooperation with the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), other U.S. government agencies, NGOs, and private organizations. Under my guidance, the basis of AFRICOM’s humanitarian and civic assistance activities were rooted in the notion that such activities should complement, not duplicate, other U.S. government activities, and should bolster our security sector relationships. Development, we believed, is, and always will be, the long-term guarantor of peace and stability in unsettled, fragile, and volatile regions of the world.

As this committee examines U.S. engagement in Africa, it is important to ask what will happen if the United States fails to engage on the continent. Anything less than a well-developed strategy, coupled with ample resources and vision, will signal that America has no interest in African affairs or the actions of other countries throughout the continent.

Already, we are seeing China, Turkey, other Asian nations and even nations in South America fill the void. Africa has a growing middle class and emerging markets, and a growth in population that is surpassing all other regions of the globe. Members of the international community are taking advantage of the changing demographics, to their advantage but sometimes to the detriment of Africa’s best interests and those of the U.S. as well. These developments will have lasting implications if left unaddressed. As members of the public policy and lawmaking communities, we must ask ourselves, if the United States fails to come to the table now, when dynamics are quickly changing, will Africa even want the United States as a viable partner in the future?

While at AFRICOM, we focused on “sustained security engagement,” which fostered enduring relationships with our African military partners. However, we should likewise look at our development assistance to the continent through the same lens. It is in our best interests to focus on “sustained development engagement” just as we focused on sustained security engagement. Long-term investments in development goes a long way to ensure stability, peace and security across the continent. Increased peace and stability in Africa will help stem the plight of terrorism on the continent, which has global implications. In the fight against violent extremism, our nation’s development officials play an important, yet often unrecognized role, in countering the rise of terrorist ideologies.

As AFRICOM Commander, I witnessed the rising tide of violent extremism on the continent. Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab with their ties to Al-Qaida represent critical threats to African regional security and our national security interests at home. However, they won't be defeated through military force alone. Our support to sustained development activities and diplomacy initiative that lead to positive governance are critical in establishing the strong economic and governmental foundations needed to thwart violent extremism from fomenting in fragile states.

That is why funding for the State Department and USAID is so important. Secretary of Defense James Mattis was correct in saying, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition." And with all due respect to the Secretary, I add a postscript to his words in that: We can never buy enough bullets to create sustained peace. Sustained stability comes from providing and helping to create a "Horizon of Hope" through our sustained development (economic) and diplomatic (governance) engagement, as had been demonstrated in other parts of the world.

While leading AFRICOM as its inaugural commander, I worked closely with our partners at the Department of State, USAID, and other Departments like Commerce, Treasury and Agriculture to create lasting, enduring relationships with local and regional officials on the ground throughout the continent. At AFRICOM, demonstrating the U.S. military's support for the activities of other U.S. agencies' efforts was important. A guiding principle was to reinforce and add value to the total U.S. Government approach. Synchronized engagement and harmonious coordination between the military, diplomatic corps, and development workers helped transform the U.S. presence on the continent.

This is not a partisan issue. We know that successful implementation of U.S. foreign policy objectives is only possible with close interagency coordination. When AFRICOM was created, the State Department and USAID were firmly established on the continent, leading diplomatic initiatives and delivering life-saving aid on the frontlines and in many fragile locations. One of my main priorities was to leverage their institutional knowledge by integrating senior State Department and USAID personnel into AFRICOM's organizational structure. Previously, the U.S. military had three regional commands responsible for defense activities in Africa. This command distribution neither facilitated a comprehensive strategy nor complimented U.S. soft power. But the creation of AFRICOM allowed for the U.S. military to provide sustained security engagement through a single focused geographic command with our African partners to promote a safe and secure environment across Africa in support of U.S. National policy goals.

Coordination and cooperation with our interagency partners provided AFRICOM the opportunity to address defense-related concerns in an unprecedented fashion. For example, our efforts to streamline communication and integrate a whole-of-government approach to U.S. posture in Africa allowed us to effectively deliver International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs, sponsored by the Department of State, to our African partners. Near the end of my command in 2010, approximately 900 military and civilian students from 44 African countries received education and training through the IMET program in the United States; many of these graduates filled key positions in their respective militaries and governments. The enduring relationships fostered through IMET deepen U.S. partnership with these nations and fosters the promotion of an active civil society in developing nations.

AFRICOM works closely with USAID as well. Like the U.S. military, USAID is action oriented through its programs, delivering aid and developmental enhancements in African nations for various crises such as Ebola and drought relief, and implementing life-saving programs like PEPFAR. Given its structure and the long-term development goals it works toward, USAID is well situated to continue delivering such health,

educational and societal assistance as an autonomous agency, rather than as an entity directly folded into the State Department.

USAID's frontline work in Africa is essential to ensuring successful implementation of U.S. foreign policy throughout the continent. This past April, USAID announced it provided humanitarian assistance to over two million Zimbabweans following wide spread crop failure brought about by recent droughts. In November 2016, USAID deployed a disaster assistance response team to Nigeria to help support Nigeria's efforts in reducing food insecurity caused by Boko Haram. These are only a few initiatives USAID is leading in Africa; the Department of State simply does not have the capacity to carry out these programs and if USAID was not present in Africa, it would fall to the military to fulfill these initiatives.

U.S. Air Forces Africa (AFAFRICA), along with the component commands of AFRICOM, achieved full operational capability during my tenure as AFRICOM Commander and played an instrumental role in supporting humanitarian operations. However, to be responsible for administering all USAID-like programs would be far outside the scope and function of the U.S. military. As I said during my confirmation hearing to be commander of AFRICOM, "The U.S. military is not an instrument of first resort in providing humanitarian assistance but supports civilian relief agencies." In my estimation, the roles and responsibilities of the Department of State, USAID, and AFRICOM, as currently constructed, serve our interests in Africa very well, when adequately resourced. Altering these arrangements would lead to confusion among our partners, would have a negative impact on regional security affairs and undermine efforts to advance U.S. national security interests.

I have seen firsthand the importance of how development assistance can transform communities. While conducting military exercises with African partners in Senegal, exercise related construction was required through a local community to transport our forces to the location of a joint exercise. Instead of building a road only to serve the military forces, we spoke with local community leaders to identify where the road could also best meet the needs of the community, post exercise. Because of our collaboration, the road connected neighboring towns, providing avenues for greater economic development and government access.

Likewise, on the island of Comoros, USAID was working to support the health and educational needs of a community, but needed a durable facility and clean water to help implement the program. USAID does not have the capacity to build their own facilities. But with our construction engineers needing to maintain mission related expeditionary skills, we put the Seabees to work for them to build the facility and Army engineers to drill the important well. The facility, which accommodates about 250 students who attend the U.S. equivalent of high school and junior college on the island of Grande Comore, was the third such project the U.S. military built there since 2007 when they were deployed in the region. I had the opportunity to tour the site and told them with pride, "You're here to help in an area that makes the greatest difference for the children."

These are just a few examples of how creating strong foundations for our African partners helps to achieve sustained development. These investments must be continued; the cost of the investment is small when compared to the positive economic returns and investments in stability enjoyed by host nations. The more comprehensive engagement there is from the United States, the more stable these partner countries become. And that has a clear strategic benefit to the United States.

Thank you for inviting me to testify before the Committee today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.