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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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**Proper Role of Special Operations Forces in the Pan Sahel  
Region of Africa**

**by**

**Anthony P. Baker  
LCDR, USN**

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

## Abstract

### *Proper Role of Special Operations Forces in the Pan Sahel Region of Africa*

Although the center of gravity on the U.S.-led Global War on Terror (GWOT) and radical Islam is Iraq, Africa has emerged into the spotlight of global counter-terror operations because of repeated appearances of Africans among the foreign fighters in Iraq and mounting evidence that this continent will become the next al Qaeda hotbed. After dismantling Taliban leadership in Afghanistan, Special Operations Forces (SOF) have proven their effectiveness in fighting this non-traditional enemy, particularly with the help of partner-nation militaries. As the designated lead on synchronizing the GWOT efforts for DOD, US SOF remain focused on the Middle East, while continuing to operate in other regions where terrorists may seek sanctuary. The main U.S. efforts to combat terrorism in Africa have been focused on Somalia and the Horn of Africa. This threat now has expanded to the Trans-Sahara region, also known as Pan Sahel, where traditional caravan routes can provide hideouts and staging areas for international and regional terrorists and criminals. This paper analyzes the proper role of SOF Operations in the Pan Sahel region of Africa during phase zero operations.

## Table of Contents

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| Introduction               | 1  |
| Background                 | 3  |
| Discussion/Analysis        | 8  |
| Conclusion/Recommendations | 15 |
| Bibliography               | 19 |

## INTRODUCTION

The center of gravity for the United States Global War on Terror (GWOT) and radical Islam is in Iraq, with nearly 170,000 U.S forces committed to the Middle East. However, Africa has emerged into the spotlight of global counter-terror operations because of repeated appearances of Africans among the foreign fighters in Iraq and mounting evidence that this continent will become the next al Qaeda hotbed.<sup>1</sup> The main U.S. efforts to combat terrorism in Africa have been focused on Somalia and the Horn of Africa. This threat now has expanded to the Trans-Sahara region, also known as Pan Sahel, where traditional caravan routes can provide hideouts and staging areas for international and regional terrorists and criminals.<sup>2</sup> Special Operations Forces (SOF) possess unique, but less visible, skills that can be used to establish the conditions to counter and defeat terrorism. However, they are in such high demand as part of the main effort in the Middle East, which leaves fewer resources to focus on Africa. If done properly, the U.S. Special Operations Forces can be used to effectively train select African partner nations in the Pan Sahel to empower these African nations to combat terrorism and Islamic extremism during phase zero operations.

After successfully leading the fight in Afghanistan and dismantling the Taliban regime, U.S. Special Operations Forces have proven their worth in fighting a non-traditional enemy in the GWOT. The President and the Secretary of Defense designated U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the lead in the GWOT and further expanded USSOCOM's responsibilities in the 2004 Unified Command Plan to: "serve as the lead

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<sup>1</sup> News24.com "Africa 'Next al-Qaeda Hotbed'" 31 August 2006. [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com) Accessed 18 September 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Donna Miles. "New Counterterrorism Initiative to Focus on Saharan Africa" American forces Information Service News Article. 16 May 2005.

combatant commander for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks in coordination with other combatant commanders.”<sup>3</sup> SOF have continued to focus on targeting, tracking down, and disrupting terrorist cells in every region throughout the world, but are stretched thin after five straight years of rotating in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq. SOCOM has had to pull Army and Navy SOF units from other Combatant Commanders to support these efforts in Central Command (CENTCOM), and now is using the remaining units to operate in the European Command (EUCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM) Areas of Operation. This focus on CENTCOM “drains people and resources from work elsewhere on which ultimate success or failure in the war on terrorism depends,” as stated by the Deputy Commander of USSOCOM.<sup>4</sup> How can the U.S. military effectively fight terrorism in other regions of the world while maintaining its shwerpunk in the Middle East? Just as U.S. SOF are spread so thin, so are conventional Army, Marine, and National Guard infantry units who are also rotating in and of Iraq. The goal in Africa must be to do more with less, as Army SOF demonstrated in El Salvador in the 1980s, where the whole U.S. force structure was limited to 55 Special Forces operatives who achieved, as some would say, more than 550,000 troops did in Vietnam.<sup>5</sup> With this unique capability of small Special Forces “A” Teams and Navy SEAL platoons, are there enough teams to train African-partner nation security forces? Or, with the known corruption in Africa and risk of compromise, should the U.S. SOF go in heavy and conduct uni-lateral surgical strikes to send a message to terrorist in the region? Africa is designated in the 2006

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Brown, GEN, USA. “2006 SOCOM Posture Statement”, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> David Wood, “Special Forces Stretched Thin by Two Wars.” The Baltimore Sun, 24 March 2006.

<sup>5</sup> David Morgan, “Africa Key to Pentagon Counterterrorism Plan.” Reuters, 18 September 2006.

National Security Strategy as a region which holds growing geo-strategic importance and is a high priority of the Bush administration.<sup>6</sup>

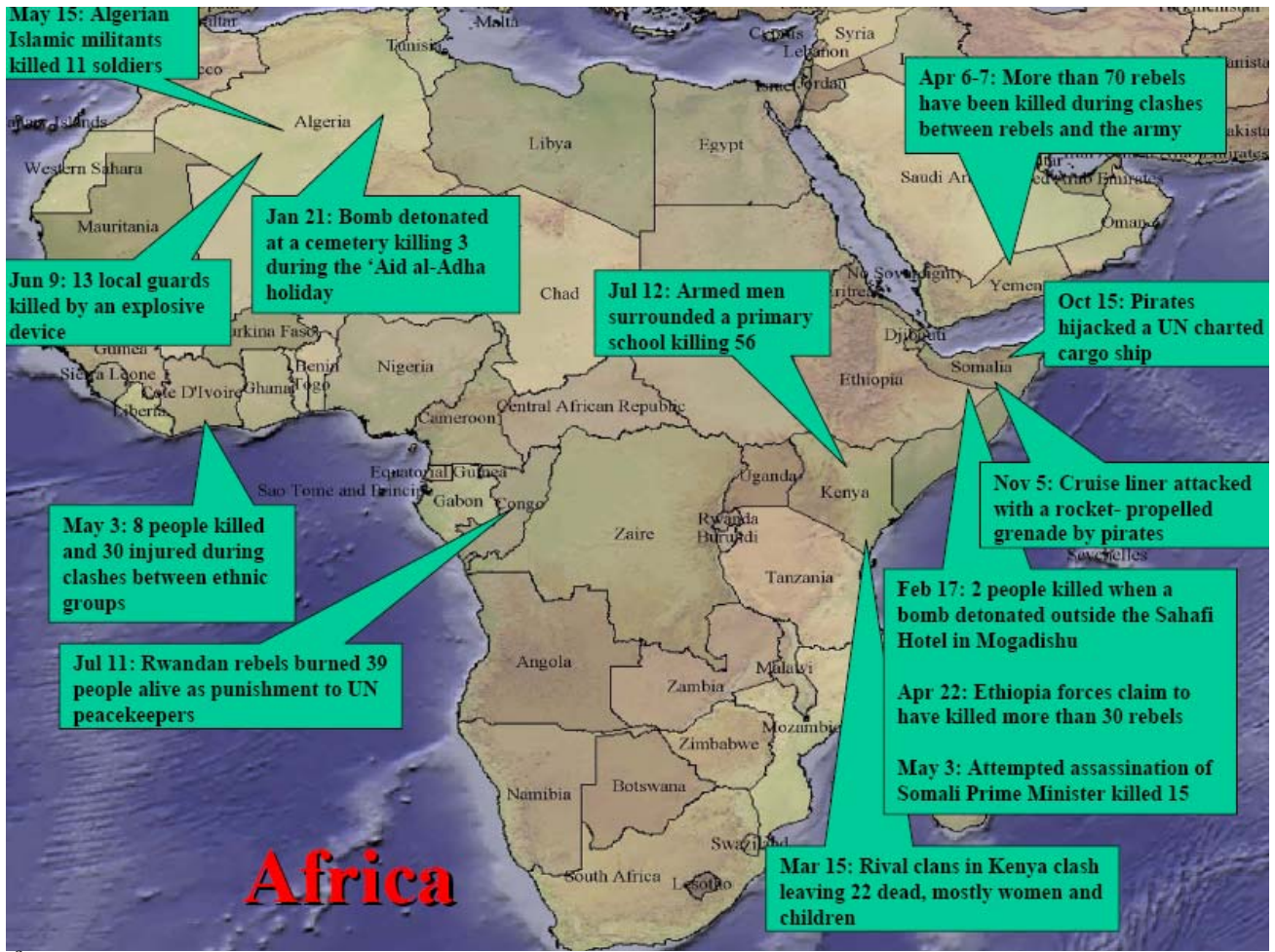
## **BACKGROUND**

There has been plenty of evidence of terrorism and al Qaeda in Africa, dating back to 1991 when Osama Bin Laden used Sudan as his operating base until U.S. and international pressure forced him out in 1996. In 1998, al Qaeda bombed the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 224 and injuring 5,000. In 2003, four suicide bombers attacked Jewish, Spanish, and Belgian sites in Morocco and 23 Europeans were kidnapped by a terrorist group in Algeria. In March 2004, the Madrid train bombings were carried out by African jihadists. In July 2005, London bombers who killed 51 people and injured more than 700 were assisted by collaborators from Africa.<sup>7</sup> These direct and indirect connections to Africa further amplify the need to focus legitimate counter-terrorism resources to this region. Below is a snapshot of major terrorist acts in 2005 produced by analysts at the Federal Bureau of Investigation:

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<sup>6</sup> U.S President, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Pat Paterson, "Into Africa: A New Frontier in the War on Terror." US Naval Institute. Proceedings. Annapolis. May 2006. Vol 132, Iss. 5; pg. 32.



8

This map highlights a myriad of attacks which are spread out, but not necessarily focused on the Pan Sahel region. It is the future threat and potential terrorist safe havens that need to be eliminated.

I will now provide some background demonstrating why Africa as a continent is a national interest and a growing terrorist threat, then focus on the Pan Sahel region. Nigeria is the fifth largest supplier of oil to the world, and West Africa now supplies 16 percent of all U.S. hydrocarbons – liquid natural gas and petroleum –and by 2015, it estimated that this

<sup>8</sup> Paul Topalian and Jenifer Lopez, “2005 Major Terrorist Incidences” Analyst, Office of the U.S. Attorney Hawaii and Analyst, Federal Bureau of Investigation Honolulu. 02 May 2006.



supply will reach more than 25 percent. These resources tempt exploitation by outside nations who seek to take advantage of Africa's impoverished situation with lucrative offers regardless of the impact on the environment. In addition to these resources, Africa also has failed and failing states which can be used as safe havens for terrorists. Corrupt governments and lawlessness limits the ability of the international community to intervene and prevent starvation and genocide.

The dire conditions of border disputes, ethnic conflicts, corruption and mismanagement, famine, and HIV make Africa a fertile breeding ground for Muslim extremism and terrorist recruitment. Over 50 percent of the 800 million people in Africa are under 15 years old, and this population is expected to grow to 2 billion by 2050.<sup>9</sup> This vast pool of angry, unskilled youth is a generation without any future prospects, and vulnerable to jihadist sentiment. In addition to better-known Somalia and the HOA, the Trans Sahara (Pan Sahel) region highlighted below is now considered the next terrorist front in Africa.<sup>10</sup>



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<sup>9</sup> Paterson, "Into Africa: A New Frontier in the War on Terror." pg. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Nick Tattersall, "Sahara seen as potential terrorist breeding ground." Reuters 14 Sept, 2006. [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org), accessed 18 September 2006.

<sup>11</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahel>

The Sahel is the boundary zone in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the more fertile region to the south, which makes it suitable for caravan routes. Running from the Atlantic Ocean to the Horn of Africa, it includes Senegal, Cape Verde, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad, and Sudan. Traditionally, most of the people in the Sahel have been semi-nomads, farming and raising cattle, viewed as the most sustainable way of utilizing the Sahel. No longer isolated from the rest of the world, the traditional caravan routes in this region now serve as conduits for illegal immigration and drugs and arms trafficking, as well as a hideout and staging areas for international and regional terrorists and criminals.<sup>12</sup>

I will now focus on three countries in this region: Nigeria, Chad, and Sudan, discussing their current government and military, as well as feasibility for training their security forces. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with approximately 137 million people, and is run as a Federal republic led by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The active duty military in the three Nigerian armed services totals approximately 66,000. The Nigerian Army, the largest branch, has demonstrated its capability to mobilize, deploy, and sustain battalions in support of peacekeeping operations within Africa as well as Yugoslavia. Their Navy is equipped with frigates, fast attack corvettes, and coastal patrol boats, while their Air Force flies transport, trainer, helicopter, and fighter aircraft, but most are currently not operational.<sup>13</sup> The Nigerian Special Forces include an air defense battalion, a paratroop brigade, and a commando battalion.<sup>14</sup> This commando battalion should clearly be the focus of the SOF ground training, and ideally have a core of strong leaders from which to build. As

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<sup>12</sup> <http://Globalsecurityorg/military/ops/pan-sahel>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2836.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Ewen Southby-Taylor, ed., *Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces*, Issue 16- August 2006. p. 489.

the most modernized and functional military in the region, Nigeria should be the focus and take the lead on a future Coalition SOF Unit.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, and is a Republic led by President, Prime Minister, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces--Lt. Gen. Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir. The Sudan People's Armed Forces is a 100,000-member army supported by a small air force and navy. Irregular tribal and former rebel militias and Popular Defense Forces supplement the army's strength in the field. Their military forces have historically been hampered by limited and outdated equipment which has greatly limited their capability to develop.<sup>15</sup> Sudan's special operations forces are comprised of an Airborne Division with an anti-terrorism Special Forces company, as well as a Sudanese police, overseen by a secretive, specialized committee of the National Islamic Front.<sup>16</sup> With the strained relations with the United States over the Darfur crisis and the government control of a corrupt Sudanese military, there is sadly no hope for engagement with Sudan at this time.

Chad is a Republic led by President-Idriss Deby. Its military totals approximately 25,000 soldiers with leadership positions dominated by the Zaghawa tribe, but there are no designated special forces units. Since the 2003 outbreak of the Darfur crisis in Sudan, armed militias have occasionally crossed into Chad, resulting in small-scale skirmishes.<sup>17</sup> In response to such ongoing threats, Chad joined in the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) in 2002, a U.S. Government military-to-military assistance program which focused on four of the Sahel states (also included Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), and completing the training in July 2004. It is encouraging that the Chadian armed forces engaged members of the Algerian terrorist

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5424.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Ewen Southby-Taylor, ed., *Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces*, Issue 16- August 2006, p. 657.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/37992.htm>

organization Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), who strayed into Chadian territory in April 2004, and eventually captured the GSPC leader.

Each of these three countries in the Sahel region possesses some form of military, but only two have hope of U.S. engagement. With an initial group of Chad forces trained under the PSI, and Nigerian forces scheduled to be trained in the follow-on program (Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative), this region is off to a good start.<sup>18</sup> Despite a common history of corruption and limited funding to Africa, these two countries show promise in the first step necessary in providing security and stability in the region.

## **DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS**

Special Operations Forces are most known for their battlefield successes during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, targeting, capturing, and killing key terrorist leaders and their fighters. In Afghanistan, many of the initial strikes were fought by Army Special Forces along side the Northern Alliance in a classic model of unconventional warfare. In Iraq, Army and Navy SOF teams conducted unilateral direct action raids against key Iraqi leadership during the initial phases of the war. Following the end of major combat operations, select Army Special Forces ODA Teams established an Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) battalion by recruiting, screening, and training hundreds of Iraqi soldiers to form the ISOF Battalion, who gradually took the lead on missions in Baghdad and throughout the country. This process of Foreign Internal Defense

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<sup>18</sup> James L. Jones GEN, USMC. EUCOM Commander Statement to Senate Armed Services Committee, March 2006.

with newly trained forces followed by real-world combat missions (combat advising) is being replicated in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these more advertised offensive capabilities, SOF also have specialized low-visibility skills to help establish the conditions to counter and defeat terrorism through Unconventional Warfare, Psychological Operations, Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, and Civil Affairs.<sup>20</sup> I will focus on Foreign Internal Defense (FID) as the primary means to build the capacity of African nations – teaching our partner nation SOF the basic and necessary skills for them to operate independently in the future.

Led by the United States Army Special Forces “A” Teams normally focused on European Theater, SOF have started to train battalion-sized African militaries along the Pan Sahel region. This training includes military tactics critical to regional security and stability, with a desired end state of empowered African nations able to take control of their terrorist problems and prevent future attacks.<sup>21</sup> As a result of the first inter-Agency initiative (Pan Sahel Initiative), U.S. troops have trained and equipped at least one rapid-reaction company in four of the Sahel states: Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.<sup>22</sup>

In light of the current strain on SOF and conventional forces, along with no intelligence to support hard terrorist training camps in the region, I believe we are on the right track by training African special forces units in the spectrum of foreign internal defense. From the basic soldiering skills to more advanced tactics on targeting, tracking, and interdicting terrorists in the region, African forces are in need of a structured program and

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<sup>19</sup> Anthony Baker, (self) Deployment to Iraq April – October 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Brown. 2006 SOCOM Posture Statement, p.1.

<sup>21</sup> Tattersall. “Sahara seen as potential terrorist breeding ground.”

<sup>22</sup> Jones. EUCOM Commander Statement to Senate Armed Services Committee.

proper equipment to be effective. In addition, US Air Force SOF can teach specialized flight operations, communications, and logistics to designated African military units.<sup>23</sup> These FID missions, along with psychological operations and civil affairs, are key to the total package designed to building African counterterrorism capability and target radical Islamism.

It is true that the existing Africa militaries may never reach an elite level of proficiency of the U.S. military. However, capacity building is the best we can do given the situation. Fortunately for SOF, the United States Marine Corps has added a contingent to USSOCOM which will share this commitment with their Foreign Military Training Units.<sup>24</sup>

There will be challenges when training the African SOF, from discipline to conflicting tribal allegiances to historical corrupt government leadership. The skills required to become capable and effective soldiers will take years of practice. And even more important is the need for a strong officer and non-commissioned officer corps from which to draw as mentors and follow on instructors. This ‘train the trainer’ concept will allow expanded operations and make it easier for new student soldiers to be by one of their own. Another challenge is the opposition to U.S foreign policy may become common among many West Africans, largely due to the war in Iraq and U.S. support of Israel, but it is rarely fervent. The strongest resentment is normally against European colonial powers.<sup>25</sup>

The second role of SOF within FID is teaching tactical intelligence, and to place a significant emphasis on collection, analysis, and dissemination. This operations-intelligence (Ops-Intel) fusion is critical to tracking and following through with suspected terrorist

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<sup>23</sup> Brown. 2006 SOCOM Posture Statement, p.13.

<sup>24</sup> Sharon Fox, “Foreign Military Training Unit Activates”, Marine Corps News, 7 October 2005. <http://www.usmc.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/main5/>

<sup>25</sup> Ann Scott Tyson. “U.S. Pushes Anti-Terrorism in Africa.” Washington Post. 26 July 2005.

networks. This includes surveillance as well as human intelligence collection, followed by partner nation execution. US SOF know the limitations of operating in this environment, which is similar to those experienced by U.S. Navy SEALs training Philippines SEALs to target terrorist networks in their region.<sup>26</sup> The Ops-Intel fusion teams helped the PI SEALs plan and carry out missions where U.S. forces were not allowed to operate. The two fields of intelligence and operations must be tied together to successfully execute counter-terrorist missions. As much as Special Forces have the capability to interdict potential terrorists in this region through unilateral missions and dedicated Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR) support, it will never increase the capacity of the partner nation forces, who need to carry out these missions well after U.S. forces have redeployed.

There are challenges for US SOF as well. Although DOD plans to significantly increase the number of special operations forces personnel, USSOCOM has yet to determine all of the personnel requirements needed to meet its expanded mission. And in keeping with the SOF truths, SOF can not be mass produced. Despite approval to grow as a community, and significant efforts to recruit more from current active duty as well as civilian personnel, it will take years to train them. Combined with the current deployment schedule of SOF, and shortage of personnel, it is even more critical to prioritize where SOF can be deployed and for how long. In August of 2005, SOCOM began requiring active duty personnel to remain at least an equal amount of time at home as deployed. This is not always able to be tracked or realistic given the requirements.<sup>27</sup>

Another challenge to this plan is the susceptibility of Africa to outside influence. Vast, relatively unpopulated areas and a lack of strong central government controls make

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<sup>26</sup> Patterson. "Into Africa: A New Frontier in the War on Terror." pg. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Government Accounting Office: N&MCEODA FY-06 GAO Report on SPECOPS.

many parts of Africa attractive to terrorists. Traditional caravan routes in the Pan Sahel area can provide hideouts and staging areas for international and regional terrorists and criminals who move goods and money to support their operations without detection or interference. Other factors include: war, poverty, disease, corruption, and lack of education – creating an atmosphere of hopelessness where extremist’s messages can resonate.<sup>28</sup>

One of the greatest threats in Africa and Pan Sahel in particular is the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (SGPC), an Algerian rebel movement which has pledged allegiance to al Qaeda and publishes Osama bin Laden’s messages on its website. In 2002, they were accused of kidnapping 32 European tourists. French and Italian police arrested suspected SGPC members in 2006 thought to be planning attacks, some of them in Algeria and in Iraq. Regional diplomats, security forces, and U.S. officials believe GSPC and its allies have been running mobile camps in the Sahel, teaching recruits guerrilla tactics before sending them home as “sleeper” terrorists, to await further instruction. After training they are dormant, and they become sworn members who know they are going to die.<sup>29</sup>

Looking at the formative period of Al-Qaeda, many of its military operatives came from various regions of the continent, including Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Mauritania. The Mujahidin have had a prominent role in North Africa, where Osama Bin Laden has declared a war against the West and their plan to open a front in Darfur/West Sudan. The Jihadi doctrines are spread in many African countries – Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Chad. These countries have produced many Mujahidin fighters who have died for the sake of Allah. Africa is nearest to Palestine, and sympathizers could reach there through caravan routes support the ongoing battle against Israel. Due to the general

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<sup>28</sup> Miles “New Counterterrorism Initiative to Focus on Saharan Africa”

<sup>29</sup> Tattersall. “Sahara seen as potential terrorist breeding ground.”



condition of poverty and social needs in these countries, the Mujahidin have provided some finance and welfare and influenced future followers. Africa is also proximal to Europe, another potential destination for future al Qaeda attacks. Most African societies are divided and lack unity, and many follow tribal loyalties, yet more reasons for vulnerability.<sup>30</sup>

Another factor which helps al Qaeda and global Jihad in infiltrating Africa is the Islamic influence of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States. Many African Muslims went to study in Islamic studies in al-Azhar University, then onto a pilgrimage to Mecca. When they returned to their places of origin, they preached the radical Islamist's agenda.<sup>31</sup>

The Pan Sahel region's poverty and weak governance leaves it prone to influence from movement like the Salafis, a purist group among Sunni Muslims whose extreme followers fought armed struggles in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya, and Algeria with the GSPC. Over the past five, there has been an influx of Saudi and Pakistani money, which has been used to build mosques and as well as "preaching across the whole belt of the Sahel." US Counter Terrorism official said. "They bring a new kind of Islam to the region that is inconsistent with the historic brotherhoods and the Sufi tradition that has been dominant."<sup>32</sup>

The State Department and DOD have recently started the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), following up on a previous program, the Pan Sahel Initiative. The participating nations expanded to include: Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, and Tunisia, who all now join in the struggle against Islamic extremism in the Sahel region. This cooperation is designed to:

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<sup>30</sup> Reuven Paz and Moshe Terdman, "Africa: The Gold Mine of Al Qaeda and Global Jihad." Global Research in International Affairs. Occasional Papers. Vol. 4 (2006), Number 2 (June 2006) p.4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p.6

- a) strengthen regional counterterrorism capabilities
- b) enhance and institutionalize cooperation among the region's security forces
- c) promotes democratic governance
- d) fosters development and education
- e) emphasizes the military's proper role in supporting democratic ideals
- f) ultimately strengthens our bilateral relationships in the region.<sup>33</sup>

It also assists participating nations in halting the illegal flow of arms, goods, and people through the region, helps nations better protect their vast borders and contributes to common security.

This is a bold plan which recognizes the need to expand our efforts in the region. With proper funding and measures of effectiveness, TSCTI should have a significant impact on terrorism in the region over its five year span. This program brings to bear the multiple resources of the DOD, State, and Treasury, along with US Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>34</sup> U.S. European Command is lead and currently working with US Government Agencies to execute this initiative, projected to receive \$100M per year for the next five years.<sup>35</sup>

What is Africa doing about terrorism? The US DOD, through its European Command, helped establish the African Union's (AU) Algiers-based African Center for Study and Research on Terrorism. Countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, and Nigeria have contributed most and worked extensively with the U.S. in the GWOT. Although challenges remain in the coordinated effort by Africa, their cooperation on anti-terrorism is encouraging.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Jones. EUCOM Commander Statement to Senate Armed Services Committee.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Gaffney. *War Footing*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), p.177

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.2

<sup>36</sup> Jim Fischer, "African Cooperation Growing on Anti-Terrorism, U.S. Report Says" 28 April 2006, <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Apr/28-959919.html>

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The most alarming statistic which clearly highlights the need to focus on Africa is the fact that 25 percent of the foreign fighters in Iraq – estimated to be 5,000 to 8,000 - are Africans, according to Pentagon officials.<sup>37</sup> Reports also indicate that a stream of veteran jihadist from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are returning to Africa to recruit and train new soldiers, using insurgent attacks against their native countries. This expected return of battle-hardened African Islamists from Iraq over the next five years is of grave concern for the future. U.S officials say al Qaeda operatives are currently in Somalia and Sudan, while fund-raising and recruiting have become a serious worry in South Africa, Nigeria, and the Trans-Sahara region.<sup>38</sup>

Porous borders and lax government controls on the Sahel have allowed easy movement for militant groups such as GSPC. There is an obvious need for a unified effort in this continent, and it is encouraging that DOD leadership is seriously considering a new Africa Command that would give its undivided attention to a continent now shared by three separate Geographic Commanders – CENTCOM, EUCOM, and PACOM. The terrorist network spans from Liberia on the West Coast of Africa to Somalia on the east coast, covered by two combatant commands. In addition, the State Department divides up Africa into two regions: African Affairs to the south which covers the Pan Sahel and the Near East which covers North Africa.<sup>39</sup> Interagency and inter-service coordination is paramount with such disparate command oversight of this continent.

Despite our good intentions, there are questions as to whether or not U.S. efforts are enough. A recognized African Specialist with the International Crisis Group claims the

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<sup>37</sup> Paterson “Into Africa: A New Frontier in the War on Terror.” pg. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Morgan, “Africa Key to Pentagon Counterterrorism Plan.”

<sup>39</sup> [www.state.gov/misc/64898.htm/](http://www.state.gov/misc/64898.htm/) Regional Bureaus

Pentagon strategy so far has amounted to a little more than a public relations campaign for the military, claiming the locals see right through it.<sup>40</sup> With the start of the TSCTI, more of an impact is likely. Of course, more resources would help and another consideration is additional funding for the TSCTI, by redirecting funds from Official Developmental Assistance programs in Africa which have produced limited results.<sup>41</sup> These efforts followed by the creation of African Command would be best way to have the most impact in the region before it is too late.

There are also risks which must be considered by using U.S. military in this region. Despite the good intentions of the United States in the Sahel to rid the present and future terrorist threats, these efforts could potentially do more damage to the locals. This initiative could potentially render Muslim populations servile, cutting off smuggling networks that have become the economic lifeblood of Saharan peoples whose livestock was devastated by the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, without offering economic alternatives.<sup>42</sup> To avoid creating the kinds of problems PSI was intended to solve, the TSCTI must be integrated into a core balanced approach to the region, one also in which Europeans and Americans work together.

As we have learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States' efforts in Africa will require a broad interagency approach. The TSCTI encompasses this, using a full range of political, economic, and security tools. The Commander of EUCOM has recognized this, and proclaimed the need to work to improve interagency coordination across the spectrum of

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<sup>40</sup> Morgan, "Africa Key to Pentagon Counterterrorism Plan."

<sup>41</sup> Gaffney. *War Footing*, p.177

<sup>42</sup> "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction? International Crisis Group Africa report No 92. 31 march 2005. [www.crisisgroup.org/home/index](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index)

governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to achieve optimal national results.<sup>43</sup>

The United States has finally started to take the continent of Africa more seriously and is addressing terrorist threats outside of Somalia. While using all means of national power, the military has proven to be the best way to gain access to training partner-nation African security forces in the Trans-Sahara. Despite the strain on Special Operations Forces, a well-managed and balanced approach, along with measures of effectiveness of the training, can make the most effective use of SOF in this region. Only by holding our partner nations accountable for the maintenance and accountability of equipment, along with emphasizing professionalism training for African military leaders, can we make a lasting difference.

The U.S. and African Union leadership must identify which areas in the Pan Sahel region are most vulnerable and susceptible to terrorist influence, in order to prioritize training for those countries, and monitor progress of each unit. This will keep the focus on the right countries at the right time, particularly considering the minimal force available and size of the region to cover. SOF needs to remain focused on its core capabilities of Foreign Internal Defense, and continue to build on the intelligence collection aspect. As former USSOCOM Commander GEN Wayne Downing said, “We’ve got to get after developing friends and allies and proxies, because when you fight (terrorists), the best people to do this are the host countries, not American forces.”<sup>44</sup> In order to shape the battlefield and set conditions that are inhospitable to future terrorists, the US military can lead the way in this region through effectively working with partner nation SOF and extensive coordination with the State Department. The ultimate objective must be to use a combination of humanitarian aid

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<sup>43</sup> Jones. EUCOM Commander Statement to Senate Armed Services Committee.

<sup>44</sup> Sean Naylor, “Don’t sacrifice strategy for the kill, expert says”, Army Times, 10 July 2006, p.10.

(Civil Affairs) and SOF-led Foreign Internal Defense to work with local forces and undermine insurgencies long before they can threaten local governments allied with the U.S. war on terrorism. Although the U.S. military is only one instrument of national power, and Special Forces are spread thin, SOF are a key force to train our partner nation African forces and set conditions to counter and defeat terrorism in the Pan Sahel before it is too late..

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