Marine operations officer mentors students from Uganda and Kenya at International Peace Support Training Centre, Nairobi

Going Farther by Going Together
Building Partner Capacity in Africa

By C H A R L E S W. H O O P E R

If you want to go quickly, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.

—African proverb

Building partner capacity is an essential military mission and an important component of the U.S. Government's approach to preventing and responding to crisis, conflict, and instability. Demanding fiscal realities, the end of the Iraq War, the unfolding transition in Afghanistan, and a renewed focus on enduring interests in Asia and the Middle East are increasing the importance of burden-sharing. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's January 2012 strategic guidance, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, was clear on this point. Recognizing that building partnership capacity "remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership" with states that value "freedom, stability and

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prosperity," Secretary Panetta directed that "whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities."[1]

Some may argue that changes in the strategic environment diminish the value of building partner capacity as a component of our nation's overall defense strategy. It makes more sense, they say, to dedicate those scarce resources toward improving our own capabilities than to improve those of other partners. We disagree. Building the capacity of our willing and important partners is not a strategic indulgence but rather an enduring strategic imperative. We believe that a small investment now that enables our partners to address an emerging challenge is a bargain. This is exactly U.S. Africa Command's (USAFRICOM's) approach to the complex security challenges in its area of responsibility (AOR).

Threats, Challenges, and Opportunities

USAFRICOM's AOR is huge, diverse, and complex—and so are the security challenges we and our partners face. The command's AOR includes 53 African states, more than 800 ethnic groups, over 1,000 languages, and a diverse geography 3½ times the size of the continental United States, not to mention a diverse mix of political, economic, social, and security challenges. Djibouti, on the Horn of Africa, is a mere 20 miles across the Bab el-Mandeb waterway from Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. Similarly, the eastern coastline of Africa is also the western shore of the Indian Ocean, sitting astride the sea lines of communication that link the continent and Europe to the rising powers of the Asia-Pacific region. In the north, Tunisia is less than 70 miles from Sicily, and only the Strait of Gibraltar separates Spain from Morocco. The point is that Africa is inextricably linked by geography, history, and commerce to not only the twin pillars of our new strategic guidance, but also to our enduring interests in Europe.

Africa's security challenges are daunting: terrorism and growing violent extremist organizations, piracy, and the illicit trafficking of arms, narcotics, and people. Poverty and corruption in many regions contribute

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to an insidious cycle of instability, conflict, environmental degradation, and disease that erodes Africans' confidence in national institutions and governing capacity. This, in turn, creates the conditions for a wide range of transnational security threats that can threaten America's homeland and its regional interests.

That said, the flawed, one-dimensional stereotype of Africa as a place where bad people rule and good people suffer the consequences is inaccurate. Once labeled by *The Economist* as "the hopeless continent," Africa now abounds with possibilities.[2] It is a continent of progress and potential.

The U.S. Agency for International Development's Chief Economist Steven Radelet identified 17 African countries with over a decade of sustained economic growth and falling poverty rates and further identified another half-dozen African states showing signs of similar progress.[3] Radelet tracked five fundamental changes common to these emerging states: the rise of accountable democratic governments, governments implementing sensible economic policies, the end of the African debt crisis, the spread of new technologies, and the emergence of a new generation of policymakers, activists, and business leaders.[4] These new leaders have a clear-eyed view of the stubborn economic and security challenges they face, what needs to be done, and how to do it. The United States is increasingly connected to these rising states and regional organizations through shared economic, political, and security interests, including commit-

ments to consolidating the democratic and economic progress achieved in recent years. USAFRICOM's capacity-building efforts are an integral part of a unified U.S. Government approach to Africa and are fully in line with Secretary Panetta's January 2012 strategic guidance.

The foundation of USAFRICOM's theater strategy is building the security capacity of our African partners. The strategy is guided by two principles:

■ A safe, secure, and stable Africa is in the U.S. national interest.

■ Over the long run, it will be Africans who will best be able to address African security challenges, and USAFRICOM most effectively advances U.S. security interests through focused security engagement with African partners.

Building the capacity of willing partners is central to achieving our goals and objectives. To realize success in our mission we must prepare, in cooperation with our partners and allies, to respond to future crises and contingencies; prevent future conflicts by continuing to strengthen our partners' defense capabilities; and prevail in current and future operations.

Enabling our partners to meet common security challenges promotes the sharing of costs and responsibilities, supports our national interests, and—this is key—often provides a high return on modest investments. These capacity-building efforts are an integral part of a unified U.S. Government

Marine landing support specialist directs Navy air cushion landing craft during exercise near Camp Lemonier, Djibouti

U.S. Air Force (Joseph L. Swafford, Jr.)

approach that promotes America's overarching priorities in Africa: strengthening democratic institutions, spurring economic growth and investment, advancing peace and security, and promoting opportunity and development.[5]

The USAFRICOM Approach

The African proverb at the beginning of this article captures USAFRICOM's approach to building partner capacity: "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." We at USAFRICOM choose to go together, with our African partners as well as our interagency partners, to better meet their security needs and to advance the interests of the United States.

Consistent with Secretary Panetta's 2012 strategic guidance, USAFRICOM operates, and out of necessity has always operated, with a light footprint. With no permanently assigned forces, the majority of our security cooperation activities are conducted by small teams led by our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, and special operations components focusing on building the capacity of our partners to address their own security challenges. African militaries are receptive to this approach, which allows us to cultivate the personal relationships that are so important to our efforts to deepen institutional partnerships and build self-sustaining security capacity.

These military engagements comprise a small but critical element of U.S. Government activities in Africa. To illustrate this, compare the Department of State and USAFRICOM spending in Africa. In fiscal year 2012 (FY12), the Department of State spent approximately $7 billion on the 53 countries in our AOR on a wide array of health, development, and security programs under its Title 22 authorities.[6] Approximately $3.3 billion of this $7 billion funded security-related programs such as peacekeeping, nonproliferation, antiterrorism, narcotics control and law enforcement, military education, and equipment financing.[7]

By contrast, USAFRICOM in FY12 controlled, influenced, and administered a modest $515 million in Title 22 and Title 10 security cooperation program dollars. The command directly controlled Department of Defense Title 10 programs such as the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program, Military to Military Engagement, Air and Maritime Sector Development, and the Partner Military HIV/AIDS Program. USAFRICOM

Commander, Joint Special Operations Task Force–Trans Sahara, addresses Burkinabe soldiers prior to deployment to Mali during exercise Flintlock

U.S. Air Force (Jeremiah Erickson)

then supported and administered $130 million in traditional Department of State Title 22–funded programs such as Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, African Contingency Training and Assistance (ACOTA), Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT), Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCP), and Africa Maritime Security Initiative.[8]

These numbers suggest three important points. First, they illustrate that USAFRICOM often plays a supporting role to broader U.S. Government efforts across Africa. Next, they demonstrate the requirement for our close collaboration with the State Department as well as other agencies. Finally, spending modest security cooperation dollars effectively across a complex AOR requires an analysis of the threats, prioritization of efforts, and an understanding of the willingness and capability of our partners.

Hard-nosed prioritization is an important aspect of our approach. The fact of the matter is that some regions and countries are more important than others. Current fiscal realities dictate that we prioritize regions in Africa to better focus our exercises, operations, and security cooperation activities. Our highest priority is the East Africa region, which is the nexus of terrorism and violent extremism that directly threatens our nation's security. In prioritizing engagement with individual states, USAFRICOM considers our common concerns, compelling U.S. national security interests, and each nation's role and capability in addressing these threats.

We conduct partnership capacity building along three interwoven lines of activity: fostering relationships, building operational

capability, and developing institutional capacity.

Establishing and fostering security relationships built on mutual trust and respect is the foundation of our capacity-building efforts. The importance of the human dimension cannot be overstated. Senior leader engagements, conferences, exercises, workshops, education, the interactions of our junior leaders with their African counterparts, and the day-to-day work of Offices of Security Cooperation (OSC) all contribute to fostering lasting relationships. We build enduring and mutually beneficial relationships by acting as reliable partners. In short, we need to do what we promise and do it in a timely manner. Listening and learning skills are essential at every level of engagement. Impatience and a "we know best" attitude can stifle progress and trust.

Building operational capacity is about more than the number of troops and pieces of equipment. It is about aligning the right military capabilities—ground, maritime, and air—against a partner's unique mission requirements. Not all solutions are material. The doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities model that we use in the U.S. Armed Forces to think through our own force development issues is useful when assessing operational capacity requirements with our partners.

Over time we have developed, along with our African partners, a deeper appreciation of the importance of focusing on institutional capacity. To support the building of institutional capacity, we focus on resource allocation, command and control, expanding combat multipliers such as intelligence and

engineers, and developing recruiting, training, and sustainment programs and policies. These functions help to ensure the readiness and independent sustainability of our partners' forces. An underlying premise of our institutional capacity-building efforts is that military forces must be subordinate to civil authority and accepted as legitimate members of a civil society based on the rule of law.

Building partnership capacity is not without hazards and challenges. First, trying to do too much too fast can undermine relationships. Strategic patience is not an American strength. However, building capable partner forces that willingly embrace democratic values takes time and patience. Each willing African state must ultimately find its own way to security, freedom, and prosperity. Therefore, the return on our efforts and investments will often not be immediately evident. That said, there are near-term intangible benefits—improved soldier/leader confidence, better discipline, increased unit esprit de corps and cohesion, reduced suspicion, and strengthened individual and collective national will—that, while difficult to measure, are, to quote the popular credit card commercial, "priceless."

Second, we must be prepared for setbacks. Many African governments remain fragile. The recent coup in Mali, despite significant multinational contributions to their armed forces and economic development, cannot be categorized in any other way than a huge setback. Finally, our outdated and often arcane partner-building capacity processes and policies create the risk that others, perhaps not those we would chose, may become the preferred security partners of African states.

Building Partner Capacity in Action

A prominent example of how building the security capacity of our African partners promotes the sharing of costs and responsibilities, supports our national interests, and provides a high return on modest investments is our sustained support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Our direct and indirect efforts in USAFRICOM's highest priority region contribute to an African Union organization increasingly capable of securing ungoverned space, defeating al-Shabaab, and creating the conditions for a functioning state of Somalia.

AMISOM was initially authorized under a United Nations Security Council Chapter VII mandate in February 2007 to fill the security vacuum created by withdrawing Ethiopian troops.[9] The mandate was ambitious and wide-ranging and included ensuring the free movement and protection of those involved in the reconciliation process, protecting the institutions of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), reestablishment and training of Somali security forces, and creating the conditions necessary for the provision of humanitarian assistance. The principal obstacle to success was al-Shabaab. In the chaotic aftermath of the Ethiopian invasion and overthrow of the Islamic Courts Union, al-Shabaab rapidly emerged as a dangerous al Qaeda affiliate that recruited foreign fighters, to include Americans. In 2007, Uganda and Burundi were the only two countries to contribute troops to AMISOM.[10] For the Ugandans, this marked their first deployment of a military force beyond their borders. Undermanned and inappropriately equipped and trained, AMISOM was not fully equal to the task.

Al-Shabaab employed improvised explosive devices (IED), suicide bombings, and ambushes against AMISOM and TFG forces within Somalia and demonstrated the capability to strike beyond Somalia's porous borders when it carried out twin suicide bombings in Kampala, Uganda, during the August 2010 World Cup.[11] This was a pivotal moment. The attack was intended to undermine the resolve of the primary AMISOM troop contributor, but it had the opposite result. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni stood by his commitment to AMISOM and declared, "It would be a historic mistake to expect the war-weary Somali people to tame this global menace on their own."[12]

Al-Shabaab poses a direct threat to Americans and American interests. The scenario that keeps us up at night is an American with a U.S. passport receiving indoctrination, training, and support in East Africa and returning to an American city to conduct a terrorist attack. That would be mission failure. Therefore, one of our primary focuses is support to African nations that are willing and able to provide forces to AMISOM. We work extensively with Uganda and Burundi since they provide the majority of forces to AMISOM. If our efforts are successful, and we believe the trend line is improving, this will be an area where the United States would not have to commit sizable forces to address the security situation.

Our efforts are collaborative at every level. This collaboration starts with fostering productive relationships by listening and learning from deployed AMISOM forces about the threats they face and their assessments of training and equipment requirements. USAFRICOM works closely with the Department of State, Embassy Country Teams, and our OSCs to improve and adapt the Title 22 ACOTA programs to prepare AMISOM forces for the operating environment in Mogadishu. Over time, often applying hard-earned training and operational insights from Iraq and Afghanistan, and most importantly input from AMISOM forces, ACOTA training has expanded to include force protection, patrolling, convoy operations, cordon and search, base security, and counter-IED training. Finally, our USAFRICOM military mentors participate directly in ACOTA training alongside State Department–contracted trainers and continue to shape collective and individual training efforts at locations in Uganda and Burundi.

Section 1206 "Global Train and Equip" authorities allow USAFRICOM to complement and expeditiously reinforce ACOTA training and meet the operational requirements of AMISOM forces. For example, we use 1206 authority to fund 10-week combat engineer (sapper) training courses for deploying Ugandan engineer companies conducted by U.S. Marine Forces Africa's Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF). Operating out of Sigonella, Italy, on a rotational basis, SPMAGTF is tailored to conduct small-footprint theater security cooperation engagements and consists of just fewer than 200 Marines organized in 5- to 14-man teams, with two KC-130 aircraft. This dual key funding authority has also allowed us to put small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in the hands of deployed Ugandan forces. These UAS have a direct positive impact on AMISOM's capacity to conduct operations in Somalia by targeting enemy locations, clearing routes, and identifying IEDs.

The new 1207(n) Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) Transitional Authorities provided in the fiscal year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act will allow us to reinforce AMISOM's success and focus on readiness and independent sustainability by enhancing intelligence, engineer, and sustainment functions.[13] We are collaborating closely with the Department of State and Embassy Country Teams to plan our activities and

Navy member of Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa demonstrates knots to Tanzanian sailor

U.S. Air Force (Elizabeth Rissmiller)

programs to support not only AMISOM, but also the program goals and objectives for PREACT, which aims to defeat terrorist organizations by strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities and enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security forces.

AMISOM forces have driven al-Shabaab out of Mogadishu, creating space for Somalia's TFG to gain legitimacy and effectiveness. All this said, it is important not to overstate our contributions. Neither USAFRICOM nor the U.S. Government writ large is solely responsible for AMISOM's success. Nevertheless, USAFRICOM has been a supportive partner to willing and increasingly capable African countries meeting regional security challenges that have direct national security implications for the United States. Moreover, we are fostering enduring security relationships with willing partners in a dangerous and volatile corner of the world. This will serve us well in an uncertain future.

Building Capacity in the Sahel and in the Maritime and Air Domains

We follow a similar collaborative, regionally focused capacity-building model in combating other threats. For example, in North and West Africa, we focus our efforts against the terrorist organization al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM exploits the undergoverned spaces of the Sahel to plan and execute terrorist attacks. We work within the Department of State–led regional framework for combating AQIM, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. Despite political uncertainty within some of our TSCTP partners, we have maintained a steady focus over time on building the regional counterterrorism capacity of our partners with small training teams, regional exercises, and our 1206 authorities. The results of these sustained efforts are states increasingly committed to and capable of combating extremism in the Sahel. That said, we all recognize that there is still much to be done.

In the maritime domain, we encourage regional approaches to transnational maritime security challenges such as piracy and illicit trafficking. Our partners have articulated their maritime needs, and USAFRICOM cooperates to help them meet their operational requirements. Our flagship maritime security engagement program is Africa Partnership Station, which provides sustained engagement with mobile training teams, interagency, and international trainers working from U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and international partner nations' vessels. Participants include not only U.S. and African naval forces but also vessels from Europe and Brazil. This program improves tactical planning skills, maritime domain awareness, response capabilities, and multinational interoperability.

To enhance regional cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea, we have sponsored and supported, in conjunction with the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, two regional maritime security conferences between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The outcome of these ministerial-level conferences is a draft agreement that provides a firm basis for sustained and effective intra-African maritime cooperation in a region important not only to Africa but increasingly to the United States as well. We already see the beginnings of effective regional cooperation with Nigeria and Benin's joint maritime patrols and Cameroon, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon's participation in ECCAS-led patrols.

We approach air domain security challenges in a similar fashion with a new security cooperation program: Africa Partnership Flight, which features a light footprint, short duration, high impact, sustainability, and predictable engagement with our African partners. It will become the primary Air Force program for building partnership capacity

and will enable committed African states to enhance their aviation capabilities, foster greater regional cooperation, and increase air domain safety and security in Africa.

The Way Forward

Two new programs, the GSCF and the Army's Regionally Aligned Force (RAF), and the potential expansion of the existing National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) will help USAFRICOM expand, focus, and sustain its efforts.

As already noted, the new GSCF provisions are promising innovations that we expect will facilitate interagency collaboration and unified action and provide a flexible and responsive capacity-building funding source. However, the GSCF is a prototype; it expires in 2015. So while we experiment with GSCF and potentially move toward its full implementation, the effective and well-understood 1206 authorities will expire in 2013. Therefore, it is important that we manage this transition in a manner that maintains continuity and allows us to meet our commitments to willing partners who are on the frontlines helping combat threats to our national security. As soon as practicable, it is essential that we move from temporary authorities and codify best practices and lessons learned into enduring statutes.

Army Chief of Staff Raymond T. Odierno, in his recent *Foreign Affairs* article, explained the concept of aligning Army brigades with regional combatant commands.[14] The RAF concept is an innovative approach consistent with USAFRICOM's emphasis on operating with small teams and maintaining a light footprint. Security cooperation engagements will be conducted primarily by small tailored units from within an aligned brigade. This alignment over time will allow staff and subordinate units to foster enduring security relationships and develop expanded regional knowledge as well as an understanding of our partners' unique security requirements. A RAF from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, will begin working with USAFRICOM in FY13, and along with SPMAGTF will provide flexibility and continuity in our security partnerships.

In our efforts to strengthen the defense capabilities of African partners, the SPP assists USAFRICOM in establishing consistent, predictable long-term security partnerships. Currently, there are eight state partnerships in Africa (Botswana and North Carolina, Ghana and North Dakota, Liberia and Michigan, Morocco and Utah, Nigeria and California, Senegal and Vermont, South Africa and New York, and Tunisia and Wyoming). General Craig McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, is actively considering adding two state partnerships as well as long-term possibilities for future growth.

The Security Partner of Choice

USAFRICOM's capacity-building efforts are an integral part of a U.S. Government approach to the threats, challenges, and emerging opportunities across Africa. Moreover, cultivating and nurturing effective security partners is a sound investment and hedge against an uncertain future. In Africa, we look forward to being the security partner of choice for rising nations by building lasting, beneficial partnerships. Our success depends on close collaboration with our interagency partners, Embassy Country Teams, African regional organizations, and African nations.

We believe that over the long run, it is Africans who should address African security challenges and that we most effectively advance U.S. security interests through focused and sustained engagement. In strengthening African defense capabilities and capacities, we enable states to take ownership of their challenges and strengthen their leadership roles. In the famous car maintenance commercial, the mechanic tell his customer, "You can pay me now"—pay a little to have a small but important repair done now—or "pay me later"—pay a lot to have the entire engine replaced later. If African states cannot meet their own security challenges, then the United States and the international community will continue to find themselves responding to crises and contingencies ranging from armed conflict to humanitarian disasters. We believe that for a relatively low cost, our programs are making a positive difference in a rising Africa and demonstrate the enduring value of building partner capacity to the security of the United States. While there are indeed many risks ahead, there is also great opportunity if we are willing to act now to work with our partners. **JFQ**

Richard Tracey and Caterina Dutto Fox, U.S. Africa Command, J5-9, contributed to the development of this article.

NOTES

[1] U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: DOD, January 2012), 3.

[2] "Africa's Hopeful Economies: The Sun Shines Bright," *The Economist*, December 3, 2011, available at <www.economist.com/node/21541008?frsc=dg%7Ca>.

[3] Steven Radelet, *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way* (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2010), 9–25. The 17 countries are Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The six threshold countries are Benin, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

[4] Ibid.

[5] *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: The White House, June 2012).

[6] *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations*—Annex A: Regional Perspectives, Fiscal Year 2013 (Washington DC: Department of State, 2012), 1–10, 56, 514, 559, and 575.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Security Council Authorizes African Union Somalia Mission for Further Six Months, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1772 (2007)," United Nations Security Council, Department of Public Information Web site, available at <www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9101.doc.htm>.

[10] "Statement by The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, at the 21st meeting of the International Contact Group for Somalia (ICG-S)," African Union Mission to Somalia Web site, September 20, 2011, available at <http://amisom-au.org/2012/02/statement-by-the-special-representative-of-the-chairperson-of-the-african-union-commission-for-somalia-ambassador-boubacar-gaoussou-diarra-at-the-21st-meeting-of-the-international-contact-group-for/>.

[11] Lauren Ploch, *Countering Terrorism in East Africa: The U.S. Response* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 3, 2010), 8, 12.

[12] Ibid, 29.

[13] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, Public Law 112-81-December 31, 2011, 125 STAT. 1625–1627, available at <www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-112publ81/pdf/PLAW-112publ81.pdf>.

[14] Raymond T. Odierno, "The U.S. Army in a Time of Transition: Building a Flexible Force," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 3 (May/June 2012), 10–11.