ANALYZING SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT IN THE SAHEL

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Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb (AQIM) and other extremist organizations are using wide and multiple areas of Africa, particularly from northern Mali to southern Libya, as safe havens in order to train and funnel troops and funding and launch attacks against various targets throughout Africa. They then return to those safe havens to rest, refit, and re-equip. This thesis will analyze whether special operations are uniquely qualified to capitalize on Title 10 authorities such as counterterrorism, direct action, and foreign internal defense to control, manage, and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries.

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ABSTRACT

ANALYZING SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT IN THE SAHEL, by MAJ Mark B. Atkinson, 95 pages.

Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb (AQIM) and other extremist organizations are using wide and multiple areas of Africa, particularly from northern Mali to southern Libya, as safe havens in order to train and funnel troops and funding and launch attacks against various targets throughout Africa. They then return to those safe havens to rest, refit, and re-equip. This thesis will analyze whether special operations are uniquely qualified to capitalize on Title 10 authorities such as counterterrorism, direct action, and foreign internal defense to control, manage, and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACRONYMS

ACOTA   African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance

AFRICOM   Africa Command

AQIM   Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

CT   Counterterrorism

DA   Direct Action

DoD   Department of Defense

DoS   Department of State

FID   Foreign Internal Defense

IMET   International Military Education and Training

JP   Joint Publication

RAF   Regionally Aligned Forces

SFA   Security Force Assistance

SOCAF   Special Operations Command Africa

SOCOM   Special Operations Command

SOF   Special Operations Forces

TSCTP   Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

USSOCOM   United States Special Operations Command

VEO   Violent Extremist Organization

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> The successful answer to the terrorist threat lies not in repeated analyses of the motives and goals of individual contemporary terrorist movements, nor in reactionary policies and actions that punish civilian populations as much as the terrorists who operate from among them. Rather, it lies in the formulation of a comprehensive, progressive strategy that can address *all* terrorist threats with the only coercive measures that have ever affected or moderated such behavior: preemptive military offensives aimed at making not only terrorists but the states that harbor, supply, and otherwise assist them experience the same perpetual insecurity that they attempt to make their victims feel.
> — Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror*

The purpose of writing this thesis is twofold: first, to determine whether Special Operations Forces (SOF) are uniquely qualified to manage and-or control extremist sanctuaries in the Sahel; and second, to generate increased dialogue and broader support for the fight against terrorist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. I am qualified to write about this topic, having spent the last five years supporting Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF) in the fight against terrorism. Much of this has been dedicated to understanding the operational environment and developing and implementing programs in Counter-Violent Extremism. Though this study will concentrate on the role of SOF, the thesis findings will contribute to the overall Counter-Violent Extremism and Counterterrorism (CT) effort. It is intended for all members of the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational community.

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, significance of the study, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and provides a theoretical framework to establish perspective on the research question. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology used to collect, analyze,

and interpret evidence. Chapter 4 analyzes the key evidence. Finally, Chapter 5 outlines the findings and recommendations.

Background

Africa is home to the world's 10 most rapidly growing economies. Its population is projected to be 2 billion by 2050; already, it has the biggest regional voting bloc in multilateral organizations. It is of growing interest to the United States and our allies (United States Africa Command 2014b, 3).

Despite progress in West Africa, an uncertain security environment persists. The favorable developments in political, economic, and social integration also contribute to growing transnational threat networks: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, Ansaru, Ansar Dine, Ansar Al-Sharia, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, al-Mourabitoun, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, Al-Shabaab, militant recruits from the Polisario-run refugee camps and other displaced persons, and drug cartels from Europe and the Americas (Alexander 2014, 6).

Also, the aftermath of the Arab Spring revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt has led to uncertain political transitions in the region, spillover effects, and the exploitation of ungoverned areas and porous borders by Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs).

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) conducts a wide range of activities in Africa in support of U.S. national interests, including humanitarian relief, peacekeeping, CT, sanctions enforcement, non-combatant evacuations, and maritime interdiction operations (Ploch 2011,19). U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) concentrates on military-to-military engagements to help strengthen and increase relations with states that

have the greatest ability to increase regional security. Countering the growing danger of

VEOs and fostering regional instability are the primary challenges for AFRICOM

(United States Africa Command 2014b, 4). To meet these challenges, SOCAF conducts

CT, direct action (DA), and foreign internal defense (FID) missions.

<u>Significance of the Study</u>

Since 2001, an alarming trend of security challenges with worldwide effects has

been developing in the Sahel. VEOs are increasingly using sanctuaries in the Sahel to

launch terrorist attacks. Their cooperation in an "arc of instability" across the Sahel is of

grave concern to the region and the rest of the world (see figure 1).
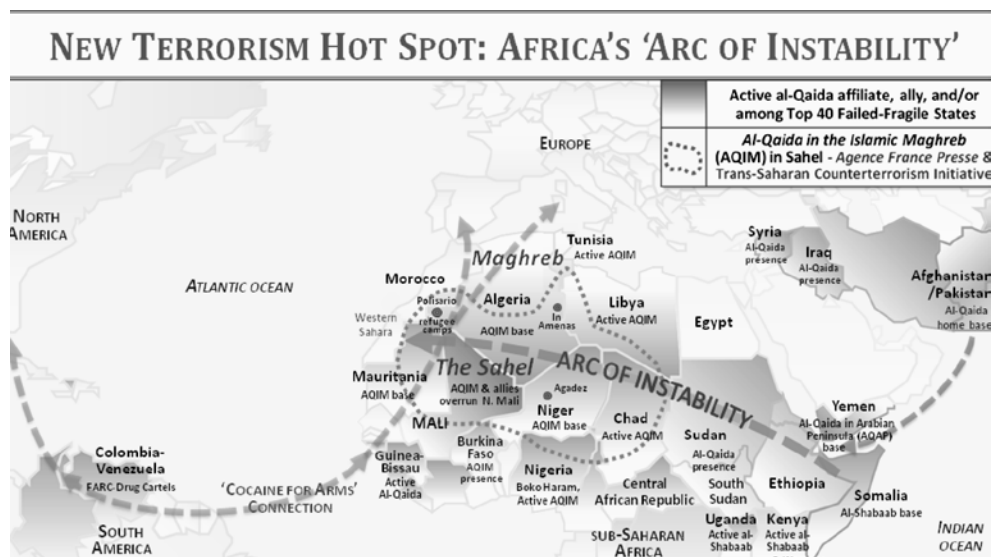
Figure 1.   Map: Africa's Arc of Instability

Source: Yonah Alexander, *Terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel in 2013* (Washington, DC: International Center for Terrorism Studies, January 2014), 1.

To dismantle extremist organizations that use sanctuaries in the Sahel, United States strategic planners must make a comprehensive regional plan. Given current force allocations, AFRICOM is better suited for military engagements, security cooperation, and deterrence operations, the ongoing routine activities that establish, maintain, and refine relations with other nations, than extended combat operations (Quartararo and White 2012, 141). AFRICOM was created in 2008, and its 2011 military intervention in Libya, named Operation Odyssey Dawn, was its first major combat operation. Operation Odyssey Dawn showed that AFRICOM was not organized to conduct full-scale combat operations; it should study this episode to prepare for future crises (Quartararo and White 2012, 141).

The spillover effects from the revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, and the increasing influence of transnational threat networks, are increasing instability in the Sahel. The U.S. has a strategic priority to combat worldwide terrorism. Planners must carefully consider limited resources to do so, and counter VEOs. This paper will show the role of SOF in the dismantling of terrorist sanctuaries, thereby reducing violent extremism and increasing regional stability. Countering violent extremist sentiments help undermine terrorist activity by reducing the number of passive and active supporters for VEOs.

The findings of this research will identify whether SOFs are uniquely qualified to control, manage and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries, or a conventional military force should be deployed. It is also my intent that this study will inform our interagency partners on how SOF attempts to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries, and stimulate dialogue on increased interagency collaboration.

<u>Assumptions</u>

To frame the topic, and allow for analysis of the SOF effort in dismantling terrorist sanctuaries, I have made a few assumptions.

The first assumption is that north and west African states will continue to request American help to counter extremist sanctuaries. The U.S. cannot deploy forces without the consent of a host nation's government, but it already has treaties and military agreements with many countries in the Sahel. These make it easier to provide military assistance as threats and needs occur.

The second assumption is that the U.S. government and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) will continue to support deploying special operations forces in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2014 USSOCOM posture statement to Congress states, "Active, forward engagement is the foundation of the global special operations approach, and represents the comprehensive, layered defense required to isolate violent extremist networks and prevent adversaries from conducting successful operations against the homeland, U.S. interests, and our allies" (USSOCOM 2014b, 3).

<u>Definition of Terms</u>

<u>Control</u>. Control is a tactical mission task that requires the commander to maintain physical influence over a specified area, either to prevent its use by an enemy, or create conditions necessary for successful friendly operations. That influence can result from occupying the specified area, or dominating it by use of weapon systems. Control of an area can be accomplished without the complete clearance of all enemy soldiers (Department of the Army 2001b, B-6).

Counterterrorism (CT). Counterterrorism is activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their networks, to render them incapable of using unlawful violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals (Department of Defense 2011b, XI). The three broad types of CT activities are advise-and-assist activities, overseas activities, and support to civil authorities. Advise-and-assist activities are all U.S. military efforts to improve other nations' ability to provide security for its citizens, govern, provide services, prevent terrorists from using the nation's territory as a safe haven, and promote long-term regional stability.

Overseas activities include offense, defense, and stability operations; counterinsurgency operations; peace operations; and counterdrug operations (Department of Defense 2014b, viii).

Direct Action (DA). Direct action entails short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions, conducted with specialized military capabilities, to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets in hostile, denied, or diplomatically and-or politically sensitive environments. A "denied environment" is a case in which forces are barred from entering, either for reasons of geography, diplomacy, or military threats. DA differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives (Department of Defense 2011b, X).

Foreign Internal Defense (FID). Foreign internal defense refers to U.S. activities that support a host nation's internal defense and development strategy, and programs designed to protect against subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to internal security and stability (Department of Defense 2011b, XI). Foreign

internal defense involves the deployment of military specialists in counterinsurgency. Preferably, these specialists themselves do not fight the insurgents, but instead, work closely with the host nation's government and military (Department of Defense 2010b, V-6).

Irregular Warfare (IW). Much confusion exists between irregular warfare and counterinsurgency; the two terms are often used interchangeably. IW is defined as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will" (Department of Defense 2013, X). Counterinsurgency, on the other hand, is a specific subset of IW involving civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and address core grievances.

Irregular Warfare is a much wider-ranging concept that covers multiple areas of non-traditional warfare. Besides counterinsurgency, it includes unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, FID, psychological operations, information operations, civil-military operations, and intelligence and counterintelligence activities.

Military Engagement. The routine contact and interaction between individuals or elements of the Armed Forces of the United States and those of another nation's armed forces, or foreign and domestic civilian authorities or agencies to build trust and confidence, share information, coordinate mutual activities, and maintain influence (Department of Defense 2011a, V-10).

Operational Environment. The operational environment is the composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and

bear on the decisions of the commander (Department of Defense 2011a, 1-1). The operational environment is everything, everybody and every event in an area. It also involves interconnected outside influences (for example, politics and economics) that affect conditions and operations.

Security Cooperation. Security cooperation is all DoD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to host nation (Department of Defense 2010a, 223).

Security Force Assistance (SFA). SFA consists of coordinated actions to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority (Department of Defense 2010b, 1-16). SFA, like FID, is intended to prepare friendly security forces to combat lawlessness, subversion, insurgency, and terrorism from internal threats; however, SFA also prepares friendly security forces to defend against external threats, and perform as part of an international coalition (Department of Defense 2010b, VI-31).

Special Operations (SO). SO are conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or informational objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted across the full range of military operations, independently or in coordination with conventional, non-special operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low-visibility techniques and oversight at the national

level. SO differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets (Department of the Army 2011a, 1-173).

Special Operations Forces (SOF). SOF are active-duty and reserve military forces, designated by the Secretary of Defense, are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support Special Operations (Department of the Army 2011a, 1-174). U.S. Army SOF units consist of Special Forces, Rangers, Special Operations Aviators, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations (USSOCOM 2014a, 18).

Terrorist Sanctuary. A terrorist sanctuary is an area used by terrorist organizations to carry out terrorist activities, including training, fundraising, financing, and recruitment; or as a transit point, the government of which expressly consents to, or with knowledge, allows, tolerates, or disregards such use of its territory (Management of Foreign Affairs Act of 2004).

United States Code Title 10. Title 10 governs the form, function, duties, and responsibilities of all U.S. Armed Forces: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Reserves. Title 10 consists of five subtitles and 1,805 chapters. Each subtitle includes provisions on force structure, personnel, training and education, and service, supply, and procurements (Title 10, 101). The Nunn-Cohen amendment to the 1987 Department of Defense Act established USSOCOM as a new unified command, with a separate funding stream for SOF (Armed Forces Act of 2011).

<u>Thesis Overview</u>

The primary thesis research question is: Are SOF uniquely qualified to rely on Title 10 authorization to conduct CT, DA, and FID to control, manage and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries? To answer this, one must first define the scope of the problem: What is the extent of terrorist groups that exploit sanctuaries in the Sahel? Instability there has generated opportunities for extremist networks to take advantage of uncontrolled territory to destabilize weak governments. The consequences may require a response from the U.S. or the broader international community.

My research will identify how the U.S. integrates information about the operational environment into strategic planning. I will analyze strategic guidance and documents to determine America's foreign policy toward West Africa. These findings will answer the secondary research question: "What is United States foreign policy toward West Africa?"

To answer the next secondary question, "What U.S. doctrine relates to dismantling terrorist sanctuaries?" this paper will examine U.S. military doctrine. I will attempt to determine what doctrine either directs SOF or suggests a SOF capability that would enable an American effort to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. I will also identify what is required to control, manage, and-or dismantle these extremist groups. Doctrine tells the military the best ways to conduct military affairs, including various forms of warfare. Examples of SOF core tasks that directly lead to SOF involvement in dismantling extremist sanctuaries are CT, DA, and FID.

The Army references SOF tasks in Field Manual 3-05. Joint doctrine includes SOF tasks in Joint Publication (JP) 3-05. The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special

Warfare Center and School is the proponent of Army special operations doctrine, and USSOCOM is the proponent of joint special operations doctrine.

The last question I will address is, "How has SOF historically been used in the Sahel to combat extremist sanctuaries?" Recent examples of SOF CT, DA, and FID missions include operations in Nigeria, Niger, and Mali. This paper will examine several case studies. Though other states in the Sahel may impose unique challenges, SOF will encounter many of the same issues there.

Limitations and Delimitations

My research was limited by the inability to conduct in-person interviews at and visits to U.S. AFRICOM or West Africa, because of the distance and expense, as well as travel restrictions resulting from the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. (I am based at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.) Also, this research is limited by the fact that the U.S. military has only recently begun to combat extremist organizations in the Sahel. Additionally, in order to keep this thesis unclassified, no classified materials are referenced or used.

The research was limited to Nigeria, Niger, and Mali, because they are where some of the most recent CT, DA, and FID operations have been conducted. The research specifically concentrated on these types of activities.

In the next chapter, a literature review will provide current knowledge on the subject of sanctuary management in the Sahel and offer a theoretical framework to establish perspective on the research question.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Analysis of Literature

The purpose of this study is to explore whether SOF is uniquely qualified to control and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. This chapter is arranged by the components of the primary and secondary questions to facilitate a discussion of the relevant literature. To answer the primary research question, "Are SOF uniquely qualified to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries?" one must first define the scope of the problem.

The first section covers literature that provides a background on the operational environment and the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel.

The second section assesses literature that describes how the U.S. and its partners are likely to face the challenges of terrorist organizations and instability in the region.

The third section of this chapter addresses the doctrinal role the U.S. military, specifically SOF, will have on the effort to control terrorist sanctuaries, based on Army and joint doctrine.

National strategic documents provide the goals, or ends, concerned in these questions. These documents are the *2010 National Security Strategy*, *2008 National Defense Strategy*, *2011 National Military Strategy*, *2014 Quadrennial Defense Review*, National Security Presidential Directive 44, and the U.S. Africa Command Posture Statement.

<u>Background on the Operational</u>
<u>Environment of West Africa</u>

This section covers literature that provides a background on the operational

environment and the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel. Many sources are

available, providing information on the conditions, circumstances, and influences

concerned.

A starting point is *The Top Five Reasons Why Africa Should be a Priority for the*

United States, by John P. Banks. This study gives an introduction to Africa's importance

for U.S. national security, the increasing role of China in Africa, the relevance of Africa's

energy needs to U.S. foreign policy, the importance of Africa for U.S. trade and

investment, and how U.S. developmental assistance forms a major part of U.S.–Africa

relations.

In *Insurgency, Instability, Intervention: A snapshot of Mali and the Sahel region*

threat landscape, Ian Lye and Monica Roszkowska describe the many Islamist militant

strongholds in northern Mali and the overall security situation of the Sahel. Kidnapping

and trafficking in illegal and illicit goods remains the primary source of revenue for

VEOs operating in the Sahel, it explains. "With targets in the region becoming scarcer

and harder to attack, these groups will likely have to extend their range of operations for

new kidnapping victims" (Lye and Roszkowska 2013, 2). Because of political instability,

and the weakness of national armed forces in the region, the authors predict that the

Islamist militant threat will persist for the foreseeable future, with a simmering

insurgency probable. Further, French and African intervention forces have forced

insurgent groups to use safe havens in Mali's neighboring countries, spreading instability.

The Sahel Crisis by Daniel Fiott discusses how the 2012 crisis in Mali has brought international attention to the Sahel. Fiott describes how trouble has been brewing in the Sahel region for a long time. From the decades-long crisis in northern Mali involving the Tuareg and the internal governance problem in that country, to the 2010 coup in Niger and the 2011 downfall of Qaddafi in Libya, the warning signs for increased conflict were abundant.

In *North Africa's Menace: AQIM's Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response*, Christopher Chivvis and Andrew Liepman analyze the change in U.S. policy toward the Sahel caused by the growing threat of VEOs. AQIM has remained resilient and adaptive, despite CT operations. Such terrorist organizations exploit the Sahel's security vacuum and availability of safe havens to increase relationships with other extremist groups in the region.

A Congressional Research Service report, *Crisis in Mali* by Alexis Arieff, also provides in-depth analysis, including an assessment of AQIM and its growing association with other extremist groups. Additionally, the report gives an overview of the French military intervention and current humanitarian conditions caused by regional instability. Last, Arieff provides considerations for U.S. support to regional military operations, humanitarian assistance, and regional policy efforts, the goal of U.S. diplomatic engagement.

Terrorist are able to maintain sanctuaries partly because of state complicity. In *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region,* Wolfram Lacher discusses the alliance between state leadership, influential members of VEOs, and South American drug cartels, who pay these groups to convey narcotics to Europe. Arrangements between

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political leaders in the Sahel and terrorist organizations explain why government security apparatus often stops short of confronting terrorist safe havens. Lacher also discusses the rise of organized crime and its growing impact on state corruption in the Sahel.

On February 15 and 16, 2013, the International Peace Institute convened an international seminar on security and development in the Sahel to discuss the crisis in the Sahel-Sahara region. The participants included high-level representatives from countries in the Sahel, the United Nations, the African Union, and various donor countries. A summary of the event was published in *Security and Development in the Sahel-Sahara.* The report outlined crisis factors in the Sahel and proposed international, regional and national response strategies, as well as ways to create sustainable security and development in the Sahel.

<u>U.S. Foreign Policy toward West Africa</u>

Research on the operational environment of West Africa suggests the extent of extremist sanctuaries in the Sahel and the effects of extremist sanctuaries on regional stability. The knowledge of this operational environment is used by strategic planners to formulate foreign policy and helps make sense of U.S. policy towards West Africa.

The *2010 National Security Strategy* describes how the U.S. will support national interests through investing in the capacity of strong, capable partners. It states that the U.S. must strengthen the security of states at risk of conflict and violence.

Following the *National Security Strategy*, the *2008 National Defense Strategy* outlined five strategic objectives: (1) Defend the Homeland, (2) Win the Long War, (3) Promote Security, (4) Deter Conflict, and (5) Win our Nation's Wars. The activities of CT, DA, and FID found in the primary research question are highlighted under

objectives two, three, four, and five. FID pertains to both objectives two and three. To win the long war, "We will help prepare our partners to defend themselves" (Department of Defense 2008, 8). To promote and achieve security, Gates argues, the best way is to "prevent war when possible and to encourage peaceful change within the international system. Our strategy emphasizes building the capacities of a broad spectrum of partners as the basis for long-term security" (Department of Defense 2008, 9).

To achieve objective four, Gates argues that, by use of DA and CT, America's potential adversaries should be dissuaded from taking actions against U.S. interests.

Finally, to achieve objective five, Gates emphasizes the need to eliminate safe havens for terrorists using all three methods: FID, CT, and DA. Gates argued that the best way to eliminate safe havens for terrorists is irregular warfare: "improving the U.S. Armed Forces' proficiency in irregular warfare is the Defense Department's top priority" (Department of Defense 2008, 13).

In-depth information on the U.S. strategy to remove terrorist sanctuaries from the Sahel appears in the Congressional Research Report *Removing Terrorist Sanctuaries: The 9/11 Commission Recommendations and U.S. Policy,* by Francis Miko. The report details the drastic change in policy following 9/11, from pressing states to control their territory and terrorist sanctuaries, to a policy of keeping terrorists "insecure and on the run, using all elements of national power." The Sahel is one of the six regions in the world the commission identified that provides terrorists with abundant sanctuary.

Following the 9/11 Commission recommendations, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) was created. It is an interagency effort among the Department of State (DoS), DoD, and United States Agency for International

Development (USAID) to eliminate terrorist safe havens in the Sahel by strengthening

countries' CT capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology (Government

Accountability Office 2008, I). The Government Accountability Office Report,

Combating Terrorism, discusses the objectives and scope of the U.S. effort to combat

terrorism in the Sahel, and recommendations for how future funds should be obligated.

The DoD *2014 Quadrennial Defense Review* (*QDR*) analyzes strategic objectives

and potential military threats. The opening paragraph mentions the Sahel as a fertile

environment for violent extremism and sectarian conflict. The *QDR* emphasizes a

repositioning of efforts on environments such as the Sahel that provide terrorists with

sanctuary. The *QDR* argues that operations and activities in the Maghreb, Sahel, and the

Horn of Africa counter terrorist safe havens and achieve national security objectives, and

should be conducted without a large commitment of U.S. forces (Department of Defense

2014c, 37).

Department of Defense Concept Plan 7500 provides a framework for direct and

indirect approaches to denying safe havens to terrorists (Olsen 2011, 3). The direct

approach encompasses DA and CT. The indirect approach is shaping and influencing the

environment, as well as FID. The plan specifies actions to implement the strategy and

allocates forces. DoD Concept Plan 7500 is the foundation of SOCAF's regional war on

terrorism strategy.

Following the guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense, USSOCOM

Commander Adm. William McRaven emphasizes the Sahel in the *2014 Posture

Statement for United States Special Operations Command*. McRaven highlights the

ungoverned spaces from which VEOs operate and stage attacks to promote their violent

ideology. VEOs in the Sahel are fighting to expand their influence, destabilize communities, and discredit weak governments. USSOCOM is increasing counterterrorism capabilities in Africa with the goal of eliminating VEO safe havens.

McRaven also notes the effectiveness of Section 1208 authority, which provides funds for SOF to train and equip indigenous forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. McRaven, however, does stress that USSOCOM alone cannot fight VEOs in Africa, and needs to work with conventional forces, U.S. government agencies, allies, and partner nations.

Following the guidance of the Secretary of Defense, AFRICOM Commander Gen. David Rodriguez published his theater posture statement and testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 6, 2014. The statement and testimony declare that countering violent extremism and enhancing stability in the Sahel is an immediate priority of AFRICOM (United States Africa Command 2014b, 8). The means to achieve this goal is a theater security cooperation mission to conduct SFA to build partner nation defense capabilities, increase military-to-military partnerships, and decrease regional instability and the growth of AQIM. Rodriguez stresses the need for persistent engagement, in line with the *2011 National Military Strategy*, which states, "Military-to-military relationships must be reliable to be effective, and persevere through political upheavals or even disruption" (Department of Defense 2011d, 6).

The United States Army Africa, like all Army commands, requires assigned forces to conduct SFA in their theater of operations. United States Army Africa, however, lacks assigned forces and the normal theater enablers to conduct SFA (Quartararo and White 2012, 141). These enablers include logistics, communications, or intelligence

units. United States Army Africa must work closely with other combatant commands, especially European Command, Central Command, and Special Operations Command (SOCOM), to complete its mission.

In "Security Force Assistance in Africa," LTC Michael Hartmayer explains how persistent military engagements in the Sahel are executed through defense attaché offices, offices of security cooperation, and SOCOM. Episodic engagements typically occur through the deployment of Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) to conduct United States Army Africa exercises under the theater security cooperation plan. Additionally, the National Guard State Partnership Program links U.S. states with partner countries for the purpose of supporting security cooperation objectives (Hartmayer 2011, 48).

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United States Army and Joint Doctrine
to Dismantle Extremist Groups that Exploit Sanctuaries

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To answer the secondary question, "What United States doctrine relates to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries?" this paper examines United States military doctrine. Multiple doctrinal sources specify capabilities or ways that support a United States response to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. National strategic guidance discussed earlier provides references to dismantling terrorist safe havens, and why that is vital to American interests. National strategic guidance also outlines how the U.S. will integrate diplomatic, information, military, and economic means to eliminate terrorist safe havens.

An emphasis on eliminating safe havens is reflected in the DoD Directive on Irregular Warfare (DoDD 3000.07). This directive recognizes that irregular warfare is as strategically important as traditional warfare, and orders the armed services to maintain

an irregular warfare capability. The directive stresses that irregular warfare enhances the conduct of stability operations and assigns responsibility for the training and execution of irregular warfare. Further, it appoints SOCOM as the lead organization for the development of irregular warfare doctrine, training, education and capability. Operations and activities that comprise irregular warfare are counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, CT, FID, psychological operations, information operations, civil-military operations, and intelligence and counterintelligence activities.

Last, the directive explains how the responsibility to conduct CT will also require DA against adversaries (Department of Defense 2014a, 7).

The primary research question suggests that CT, DA, and FID are the primary ways to defeat extremist sanctuaries. These tasks are discussed in JP 3-05, *Special Operations*. JP 3-05 outlines the core activities of special operations, including CT, DA, and FID. SOCOM is specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct these activities. JP 3-05 recognizes that conventional forces also conduct some SOF core activities (e.g., FID, FID, and counterinsurgency).

Operations and activities to eliminate terrorist safe havens are also discussed in other Joint and Army publications. Foreign internal defense is discussed in JP 3-22 and Army Field Manual 3-05. Both discuss how foreign internal defense is conducted by the military and other government agencies to provide assistance to another government, to "free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency" (Department of Defense 2010b, I-2).

Another way to combat terrorist safe havens is DA. DA is defined and discussed in JP 3-05, *Special Operations*. SOF can be used in a single engagement against a critical

target to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries, or through support to a host nation force while conducting FID.

Counterterrorism activities are discussed in JP 3-26, *Counterterrorism*. CT differs from FID; CT activities are predominately taken directly against terrorist networks. CT activities can, however, also be conducted indirectly to render an environment inhospitable to terrorist networks (Department of Defense 2014b, I-5).

Case Studies

The last goal of this research is to determine how SOF, as well as conventional forces, have been used in the Sahel historically to combat extremist sanctuaries. The final secondary question raises the role of SOF in past CT, DA, and FID operations. This paper will analyze the use of special operations in the Sahel since 2012: the year of the Malian coup and the Benghazi attack. More recent examples include operations in Nigeria, Niger and Mali. This paper will examine case studies to analyze the use of Special Operations in combating terrorist sanctuaries.

Seth Jones assesses the overall CT effort in the Sahel, including Nigeria, Niger, and Mali, in *Counterterrorism and the Role of Special Operations Forces*. Jones discusses how terrorist organizations in the Sahel have developed advanced capabilities to strike targets outside their safe havens and undertake "sophisticated intelligence collection, surveillance, and reconnaissance of targets" (Jones 2014, 4).

The U.S. CT strategy in Nigeria, Niger, and Mali involves a variety of military, diplomatic, intelligence, financial, and law enforcement tools applied by various agencies of the U.S. government (Jones 2014, 5). According to Jones, SOF, because of their specialized training, are ideally suited to conduct partner nation capacity building, FID,

and SFA. Jones emphasizes the effectiveness of SOF to prevent terrorist attacks against the U.S. homeland by confining them to their safe havens.

Thomas Livingston's topics include FID and SFA in *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance.* Livingston's report provides an overview of the SFA mission in the Sahel and the SFA components of FID, antiterrorism, foreign military sales, and International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. He specifically addresses the use of both SOF and conventional force training teams to build partner nation capacity to defeat AQIM sanctuaries.

An article by Hartmayer entitled "Security Force Assistance in Africa: The Case for Regionally Aligned Forces" argues for the use of RAF to conduct SFA. United States Army Africa has no forces available to conduct regular engagements with partner nation. Hartmayer suggests that regionally aligned forces can fill gaps. He argues that regionally aligned conventional forces should build and train conventional army forces. Hartmayer highlights the RAF successful training of five African Standby Force brigades in 2011 (Hartmayer 2011, 48).

Alexis Arieff provides an overview of U.S. policy toward Mali in *Crisis in Mali.* First, Arieff offers an overview of recent developments in Mali, and how Congress plays a key role in shaping U.S. policy toward the country. Arieff specifically addresses the concern of policy makers about an expanded safe haven for AQIM and other extremist and criminal actors (Arieff 2013, 13). Next, Arieff provides an assessment of AQIM and associated extremist groups in the region. He discusses how insecurity caused by extremist organizations in the country has aggravated regional food insecurity, causing civil conditions to decline. The U.S. military is working with Mali and regional

counterparts to improve logistics, intelligence, targeting, border control, and regional coordination. DoS, DoD, and USAID annually spend more than $98 million in security assistance through the TSCTP.

This funding does not include the DoD global train-and-equip (Section 1206) funds that are conducted through Operation Juniper Shield, led by Special Operation Command Forward–West Africa (Arieff 2013, 16). Operation Juniper Shield is the military contribution to the TSCTP mission. It provides training, equipment, assistance, and advice to partner state militaries like Mali, Nigeria, and Niger, to increase their ability to deny safe havens to terrorists.

<u>Gaps in the Record</u>

Current literature on SOF controlling and-or dismantling extremist sanctuaries is limited. Much of what is available is from the perspective of the DoS or USAID. Foreign literature mostly concerns the role of the French military in the Sahel.

A great deal it addresses the 2012 crisis in Mali. These studies report on the military coup and the involvement of France, Mali's formal colonial power. The crisis in Mali was a surprise to many analysts, as Mali was seen at the time as a pillar of democracy in West Africa (Tshabalala 2013, 1). Since the coup, a combination of armed groups have taken over vast areas of the Sahel, increasing regional instability. Though many studies assess the causes of instability and terrorism in Mali, few deal with other countries in the Sahel.

<u>Significance of Thesis in Relation</u>
<u>to Existing Literature</u>

The analysis and the proposals of this study may assist military staffs in neutralizing terrorist sanctuaries, particularly for planners, especially Special Operations planners. Furthermore, this paper will help describe the function of SOF in other regions to fight against the safe havens of terrorist and criminal organizations. An understanding of the issues SOF face in the fight against terrorist sanctuaries will help special operations teams develop pre-mission training plans better tailored for the environments in which they may operate.

The next chapter discusses how evidence was collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To answer the primary and secondary research questions, this study will use a qualitative method to analyze the information collected. The primary research question asks; Are SOF uniquely qualified to dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries? The secondary research questions ask: What is the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel? What is United States foreign policy toward West Africa? What United States doctrine relates to dismantling terrorist sanctuaries? How has SOF historically been used in the Sahel to combat extremist sanctuaries?

The doctrinal use of the military to conduct CT, DA, and FID operations derives from case studies on their use, as well as U.S. Army and joint doctrine. The historical case for the use of the U.S. military, specifically SOF, in conducting CT, DA, and FID operations comes from military articles and government reports on the TSCTP.

This thesis will analyze data, evaluate trends, and make recommendations for the use of the U.S. military to control and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries.

First, the operational environment will be analyzed, to determine the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel. To answer the first secondary question, this study will use qualitative and quantitative data from government documents and academic research that discusses the growing threat of AQIM and other jihadist organizations. A multitude of sources discusses the threat of terrorism in the region and provides both qualitative and quantitative data on the increase of violence in the Sahel.

Second, U.S. foreign policy toward West Africa will be assessed to determine the national and military ends, ways, and means to address threats to America in the Sahel and how much effort the U.S. will make to combat those threats. To answer the secondary questions, this paper will use a qualitative analysis of national security strategy, national defense strategy, and theater strategy.

Third, U.S. Army and joint doctrines will be analyzed to determine how the military might dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. To answer this secondary research question, relating to the U.S. doctrine that directs the execution of CT, DA, and FIT operations, this paper will use a qualitative analysis of both U.S. Army and joint doctrine. United States doctrine dictates what forces are the best able to conduct CT, DA, and FID operations, as well as the required capabilities to conduct them.

Finally, case studies on the use of the military in the Sahel to combat extremist sanctuaries will be analyzed to identify which elements of the military are best qualified to manage or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. The final secondary question raises the role of SOF in past CT, DA, and FID operations. This paper will analyze the use of SOF in the Sahel since the Malian coup and the Benghazi attack. Recent examples of special operations conducting CT, DA, and FID missions include operations in Nigeria, Niger, and Mali. This paper will examine case studies to analyze the use of SOF in combating terrorist sanctuaries.

Research instruments for this case study include:

1. Journals, newspaper articles and government reports that discuss the operational environment;

2. National defense strategy, national military strategy, defense reviews, and

military posture statements that express foreign policy towards West Africa;

3. Case studies on the effectiveness of SOF operating in the Sahel;

4. Current doctrine, theories, and best practices that relate to the case studies; and

5. Records of military operations, such as orders, trip reports, and after-action reports, that provide insight into the effectiveness of CT, DA, and FID activities.

First, U.S. and international journals, newspaper articles, and government reports will be used to assist in the understanding of the operational environment, identify the extent of the problem, and provide insight to the research questions.

Second, national defense strategy, national military strategy, defense reviews, and military posture statements will be used to understand how and why strategic planners formulate policy. Understanding American foreign policy will help answer the research questions.

Third, U.S. Army and joint doctrine, theories, and best practices that relate to the case studies will be examined, to increase understanding of how the military is used to control and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries, and what resources are available. A few strategies that doctrine discusses in detail are DA and irregular warfare: counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, CT, FID, psychological operations, information operations, civil-military operations, and intelligence and counterintelligence activities. Furthermore, illustrations from applicable doctrine and theories will be provided. Understanding doctrine, theory and best practices will help solve the research questions.

Fourth, case studies on the effectiveness of SOF operating in the Sahel will be used to determine whether they are uniquely qualified to control, manage, and-or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. Case studies will also address the use of conventional forces and their effectiveness at combating terrorist sanctuaries. The U.S. government has limited resources to address overseas threats, so a comparison is important to optimal allocation of resources.

Last, this research will analyze records from military operations such as orders, trip reports, and after-action reports that provide insight into the effectiveness of military units conducting CT, DA, and FID activities. These products will enhance the information gained from the case studies to answer the research questions.

The essential aspect of this research methodology is to answer the research questions without violating the operational security of the forces currently deployed to counter the expansion of terrorist safe havens in the Sahel. This research methodology leads from the operational problem to a proposed solution, and identifies its strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, it suggests additional methods to combat other terrorist safe havens around the world.

In the next chapter, a presentation and analysis of the key evidence will be produced, using the discussed methodology.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to determine whether SOF are uniquely qualified to control, manage, or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. To that end, this chapter will be organized into four parts.

The first provides background on the operational environment and the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel. The second discusses United States foreign policy toward West Africa and describes how the United States and its partners are facing the challenges of terrorist organizations and instability in the region. The third examines the doctrinal role the United States military, specifically Special Operations, will have on the effort to control terrorist sanctuaries. The last aims to determine how SOF and conventional forces have historically been used in the Sahel to combat extremist sanctuaries.

For the purposes of this study, Nigeria, the regional power, and Niger and Mali will be discussed in the greatest depth. Additional countries of interest include the other countries of the Sahel and Sahara: Senegal, Tunisia, Chad, Morocco, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Western Sahara, Algeria, and Libya. Each of these countries has distinctive characteristics, which affect the operational environment of the region and how the countries interact.

<u>Operational Environment of West Africa</u>

The Sahel is a semiarid region between the Sahara Desert to the north and the savannahs to the south. The Sahel extends from Senegal in the west, though Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria (see figure 2). West Africa and the Sahel are increasingly more important to the United States for "hard" security, such as the war on terrorism, but also for other security concerns, such as energy and resources. This section provides, first, a brief background on the operational environment of West Africa. Then, it will discuss and evaluate the region's potential for terrorist activities, including the extent to which terrorists find sanctuary.
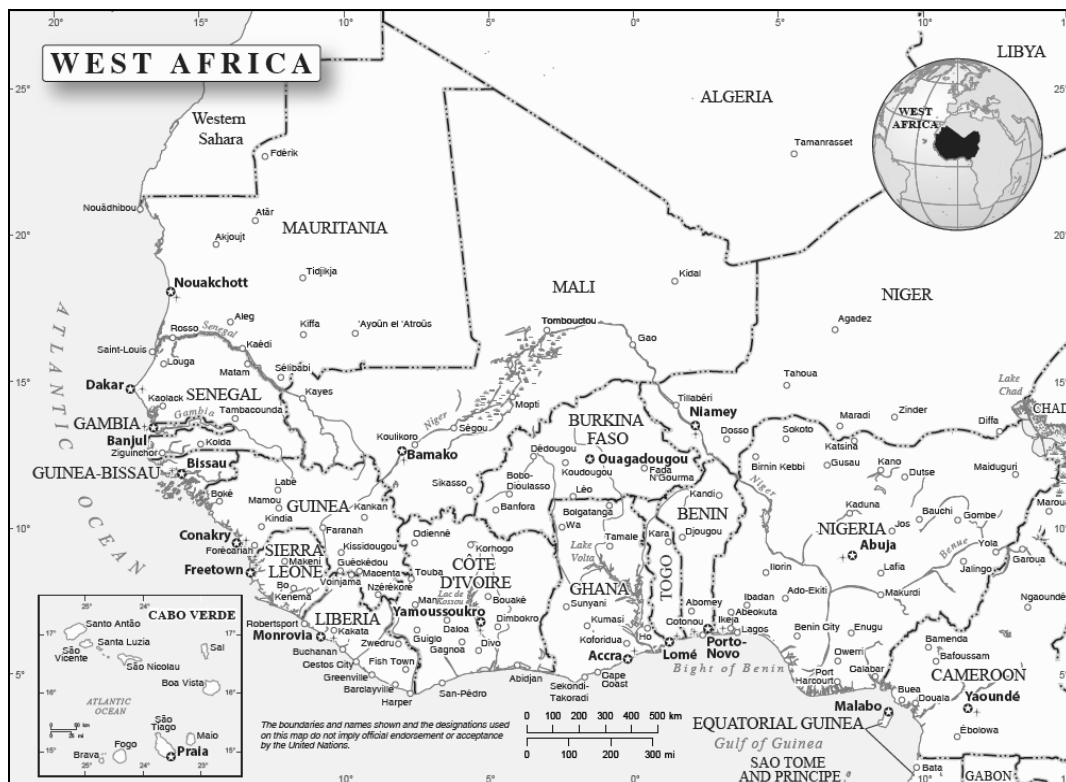
Figure 2.   West Africa Political Map

Source: United Nations, Cartographic Section, Map No. 4533, October 2014, accessed October 7, 2014, http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/westafrica.pdf.

West Africa is vast, covering more than 5 million square kilometers, roughly the size of the contiguous United States, on the world's poorest and most unstable continent (O'Brien and Karasik 2007, 174). It consists of the desolate Sahara Desert and the arid Sahel, some of the least densely populated areas in the world (see figure 3). The vast largely uninhabited areas make it difficult for countries to confine or conduct surveillance on VEOs. It also makes logistic support for security forces very difficult.
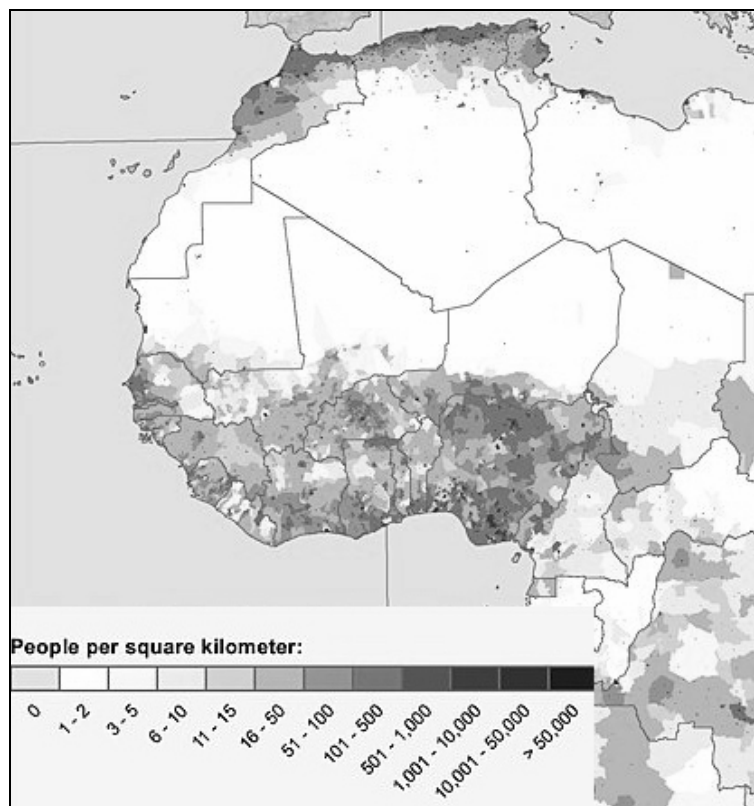
Figure 3.   West Africa Population Density 2010

Source: Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) Columbia University, National Aggregates of Geospatial Data Collection: Population, Landscape, And Climate Estimates, Version 3 (PLACE III) (Palisades, NY: NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC), 2012), accessed December 5, 2014, http://dx.doi.org/10.7927/H4F769GP.

Very few West African countries have fully established political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, or information systems (O'Brien and Karasik 2007, 176). African national borders were determined by European colonial powers, "drawn without consideration for those actually living there" (Fisher 2012). Following the collapse of European colonialism, "new rulers in Africa made the decision to keep the borders drawn by former colonizers, to avoid disruptive conflict among themselves" (Fisher 2012). Even so, location populations still respected traditional boundaries, tribal settlements, and migration patterns. Because of this, the region has some of the least-guarded borders in the world. Trade and population groups (see figure 4) disregard them (O'Brien and Karasik 2007, 176), so that the entire region may be affected by instability anywhere within it.

Historically, the Sahel has been one of the most "chaotic regions of the world, in terms of the plight of its population, the instability caused by intra-and interstate conflict, the crime and corruption that appear to grip its populations and governments, and the sheer lack of development found in most of the countries of the region" (O'Brien and Karasik 2007, 177). Instability has led to several external military interventions in West Africa.
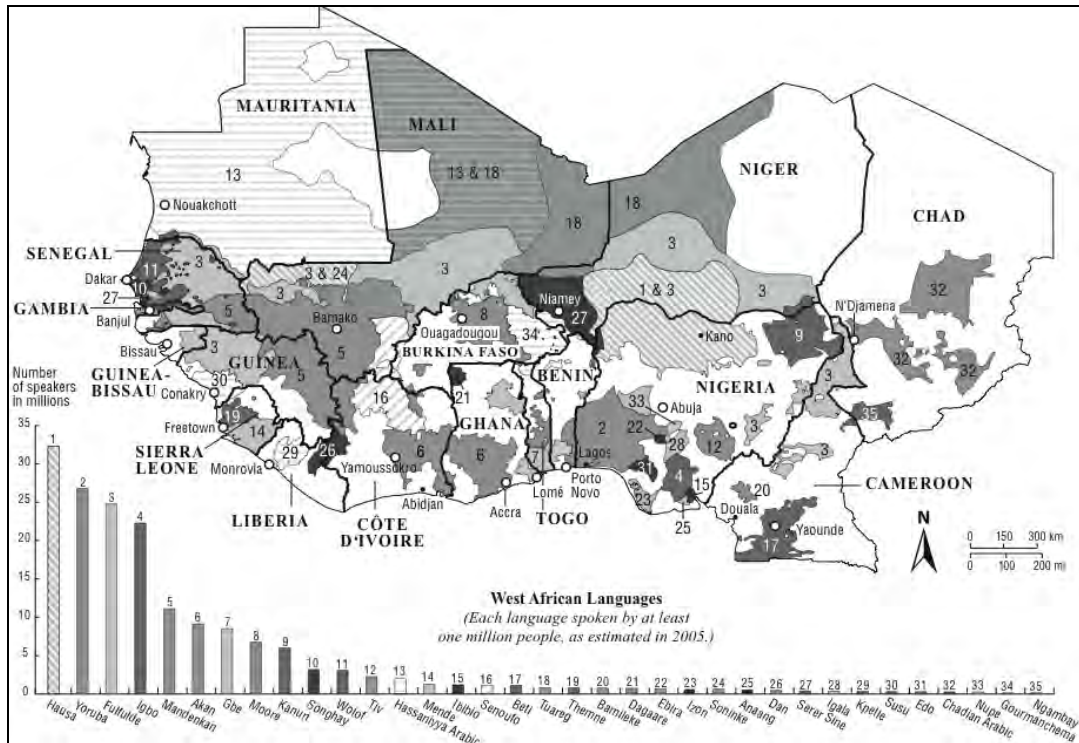
Figure 4.   West Africa Ethnic and Linguistic Map

Source: Seth Kaplan, "West Africa: Ethnic Divisions, State Fragility, and Regional Solutions," Fragile States Forum West Africa Ethnic Divisions State Fragility and Regional Solutions Comments, accessed December 6, 2014, http://www.fragilestates.org/ 2012/05/02/west-africa-ethnic-divisions-state-fragility-and-regional-solutions/.

Nigeria is an exception, however. With Africa's largest population, it is a regional power deriving the bulk of its wealth from oil and gas revenues. Nigeria's active military of 80,000 personnel is unrivaled in the region, even able to project and sustain military operations outside of its borders (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2014, 451).

It is also one of the top 10 contributors to United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide, costing it more than 2,000 soldiers, and has expended more than $10 billion in foreign operations (Omonobi 2010). Nigerian peacekeeping missions include

operations in Lebanon, Somalia, Croatia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Sudan, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, and most recently, Somalia and Mali.

Although the Nigerian military is robust, its Army is "plagued by allegations that officials are routinely bribed by Boko Haram and have even colluded to coordinate attacks, not only for direct private gain but also to justify the 20 percent of the national budget that Nigeria allocates to the armed forces to fight terrorism" (Uwimana and Wawro 2014). Also, the human rights organization Amnesty International has reported Nigerian human rights abuses on numerous occasions, highlighting extrajudicial killings conducted by Nigerian security forces while fighting Boko Haram insurgents, as well as the killing of hundreds of prisoners in detention facilities (Uwimana and Wawro 2014).

To gain support, Amnesty International argues that insurgent groups such as Boko Haram exploit government corruption, unnecessary violence perpetrated by government security forces, and high levels of youth unemployment.

Jihadist groups in West Africa continue to work more closely together (see figure 5). Beginning in 2010, the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, began to increase ties with AQIM and Somalia's al-Shabaab to obtain funding, weapons, and training (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2014, 414). With increased exposure to AQIM's broader jihadist ideology, achieving greater geographical and operational overlap with AQIM, increase in trained recruits, and improved offensive weapon capabilities, Boko Haram has been able to make more audacious attacks.

Efforts by the Nigerian government and military to combat Boko Haram reveal the lack of an effective counter-insurgency strategy and intelligence-gathering capability.
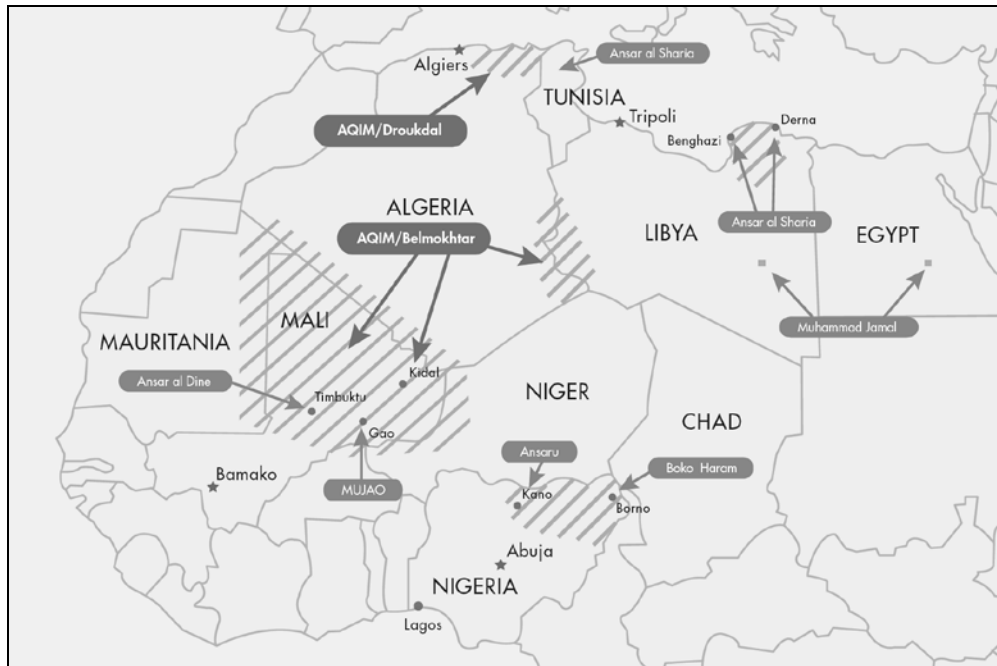
Figure 5.   Relationships of Jihadist Groups in West Africa

Source: Christopher Chivvis and Andrew Liepman, *North Africa's Menace: AQIM's Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 7.

The 2012 coup in Mali was conducted by a group of military officers who were dissatisfied by the government's lack of support for the failing military effort against Tuareg rebels in the north. When advanced weapons entered Mali, following the 2011 Libyan Civil War, members of the Tuareg tribe's National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad rebelled against the Malian government (Stewart 2012).

After the coup, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad was able to gain control of the north of the country and declared the independence of Azawad in April 2012 (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2014, 446). In June 2012, the Jihadist off-shoot of AQIM, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, and the

Islamist group Ansar Dine challenged National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad authority over Azawad and began to impose Sharia Law (Stewart 2012).

Over the next several months, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Ansar Dine, with support of AQIM, forced the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad from power in nearly the entire north.

In response, Nigeria, as a member of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali, deployed its forces there in January 2013, to help rebuild Malian defense and security forces. That same month, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Ansar Dine captured towns in central Mali, and were moving towards the regional capitals of Mopti and Ségou, on their way to seize the capital, Bamako (see figure 6).

Resistance by the Malian Army gave time for the acting President, Dioncounda Traoré, to request military assistance from Mali's formal colonial power, France. Under Opération Serval, French forces intervened within days. With support from Malian ground forces, French air power from bases in Burkina Faso and ground forces from Côte d'Ivoire succeeded in forcing the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Ansar Dine into hiding in the northeastern mountains, where both have significant weaponry caches, which had come from Libya following the fall of the Ghadafi regime (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2014, 411).

The intervention stabilized the Malian government, but attacks continue in the north against government forces. The International Support Mission in Mali, originally deployed to build the capacity of the Malian defense and security forces, was transformed into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali,

tasked to continue defense and security force training, as well as conducting

peacekeeping operations.

Figure 6.   Northern Mali Conflict Map: Fullest Extent of Rebel Territory

Source: Political Geography Now, "Northern Mali Conflict Map," accessed December 22, 2014, http://www.polgeonow.com/2012/09/azawad-islamists-mali-map.html.

For a long time, the Malian government has had no effective control over the

north. Creating the conditions to establish effective governance in Mali will be difficult.

Still, the government and United Nations forces are incapable of monitoring large

ungoverned spaces.

The conflict in Mali, like the Libyan Civil War and most other conflicts in the

Sahel, spilled over to neighboring countries, including Niger (see figure 7). Mokhtar

Belmokhtar, leader of the AQIM splinter group Mua'qi'oon Biddam ("Those who sign

with blood brigade"), recruited Islamist fighters fleeing Mali to aid in attacks on a French

uranium mine in Arlit, Niger, and a military base near Agadez (International Institute for

Strategic Studies 2014, 413).
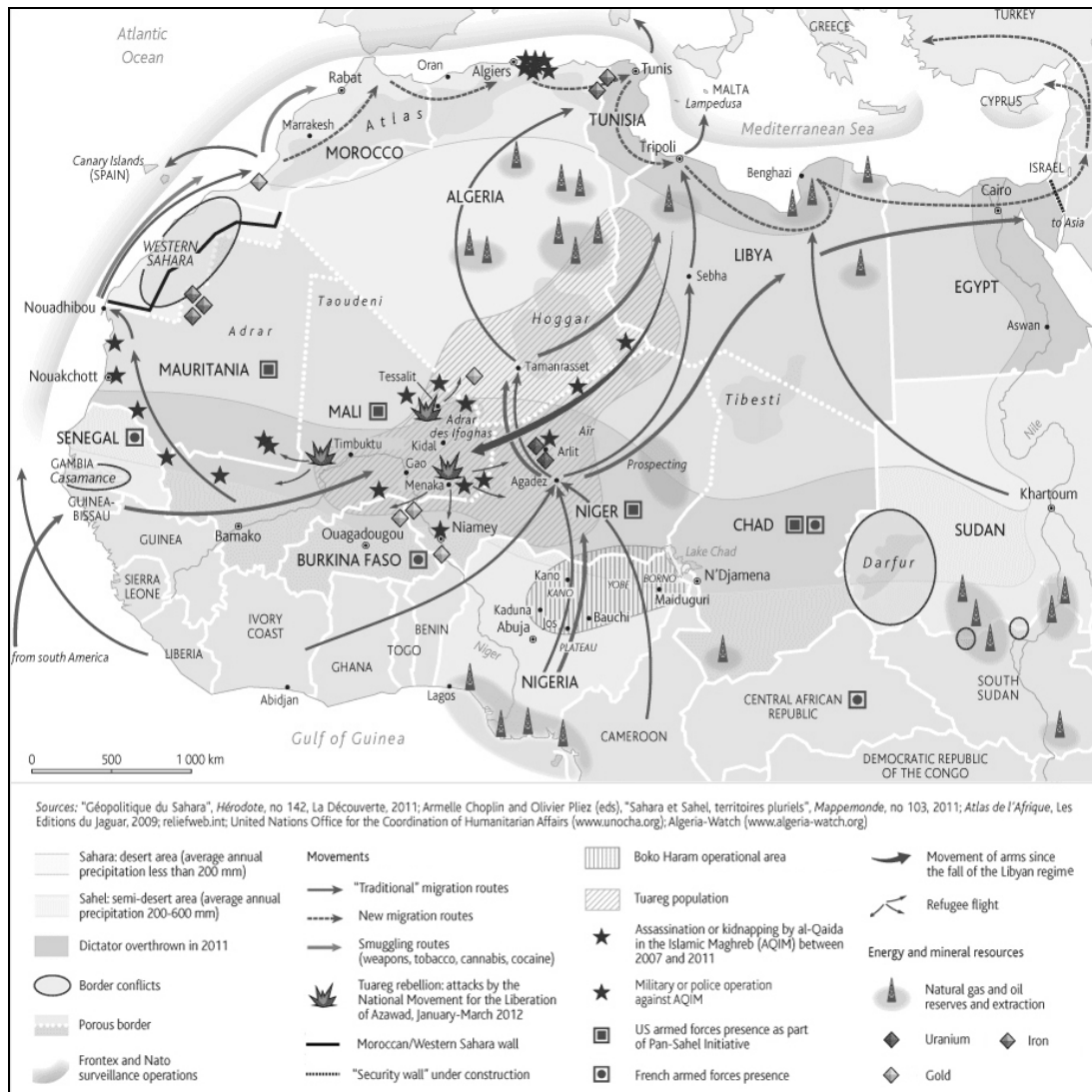
Figure 7.   Libya Spillover: Mapping Northern Africa's Growing Chaos

Source: Seth Kaplan, "West Africa: Ethnic Divisions, State Fragility, Regionalism," Fragile States Forum West Africa Ethnic Divisions State Fragility and Regional Solutions Comments, accessed December 6, 2014, http://www.fragilestates.org/2012/05/02/west-africa-ethnic-divisions-state-fragility-and-regional-solutions/.

As in Mali, Niger's Tuareg population seeks autonomy for the northern region of the country, and has a history of conflict with the central government. The Tuaregs revolted in 2007 (BBC 2014); in 2009, the Niger Movement for Justice, representing the

Tuareg nomads, reaffirmed a peace deal with the Niger government. The Tuaregs,

however, still demand greater autonomy, increased access to state services and political

representation, and a larger share of Niger's largest source of revenue, uranium.

In addition to AQIM, other extremist organizations, mainly Boko Haram, are also

increasing activities in Niger. AQIM and Boko Haram are adept at crossing the Mali-

Niger border and other Sahel national borders unnoticed, to rest, rearm, and refit.

Recently, these organizations used their sanctuaries to launch attacks in Niger. Boko

Haram killed more than 400 civilians there during the first five weeks of 2014 (Schmitt

2014). Increasing clashes between security forces and Boko Haram suggest that the

boundaries along the Niger-Nigerian border are gradually slipping into the hands of

radical Islamist sects, particularly with increasing collaboration between Boko Haram

and AQIM.

The Niger military and other government institutions are considerably smaller and

less well-equipped than the rest of the countries in the Sahel (see table 1). The military

relies largely on light reconnaissance vehicles to provide mobility and project their

influence throughout the country.

Table 1.   Comparisons of Defense Expenditure and Military Personnel

2014	Defense Spending U.S.$ millions	Defense Spending % of GDP	Armed Forces	Paramilitary
Mali	301	2.64	3,000	5,000
Niger	70	1.07	5,000	5,000
Nigeria	2,143	0.76	80,000	82,000

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance: The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defense Economics* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 2014).

The government and institutions of Niger have historically been unstable or too weak to govern the entire territory, as evidenced by several military coups since independence, the most recent in 2010. The government of Niger struggles to provide security, and increasingly, food. Political instability, a five-year drought, fluctuations in the prices for agricultural products, and the encroaching Sahara desert have led to extreme food shortages and malnourishment (BBC 2014). The state's failure to control and manage the northern regions has allowed widespread circulation of weapons, increased banditry, and the use of ungoverned spaces as terrorist safe havens (Bertelsman 2014, 6). Extremists' capacity to provide food for populations in ungoverned spaces of Niger is a powerful recruitment tool for them. It also deters the population from reporting illegal or illicit activity to the government.

Several factors increase the risk that terrorists find safe haven in the Sahel. First, the majority in Nigeria, Mali, and Niger are Muslim, providing radical Islamic groups a base for support or recruitment. Muslims account for 95 percent of the population of Mali and Niger and half of Nigeria (Department of State 2013). These countries' efforts to prevent and minimize the spread of radical Islam, particularly the cultivation of support, empathy, and the recruitment of fighters for terrorist organizations, are critical.

The fragility of West African states aggravates the threat (see figure 8). Weak or failing states are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist organizations. Specialized knowledge of the strength or fragility of a state helps provide early warning for potential conflict. The Fragile States Index is a tool that can be used by U.S. policy makers to generate effective policy. The index is based on the 12 primary social, economic, and political indicators developed by The Fund for Peace.
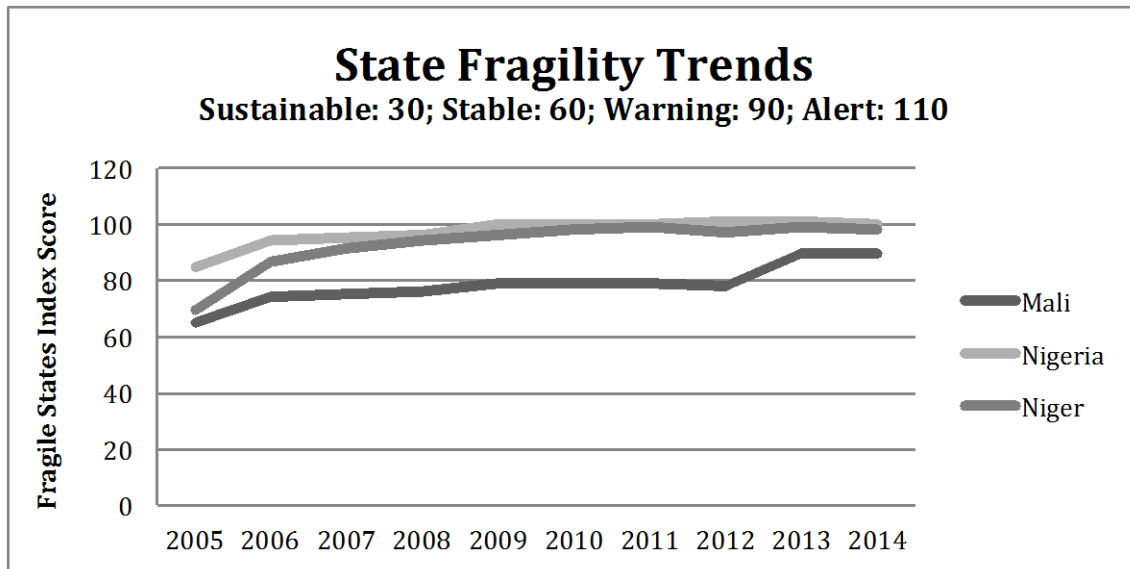
Figure 8.   State Fragility Trends

Source: Created by author, data obtained from The Fund for Peace, "Fragile States Index, 2014," accessed December 22, 2014, http://ffp.statesindex.org.

The chart shows that all three states are experiencing declining stability. If governments continue to weaken, the potential for terrorist save havens in the Sahel to flourish will only increase. In fact, data from the Global Terrorism Database, an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2013, shows the dramatic increase of terrorist incidents in the region as state fragility increased (see figure 9).
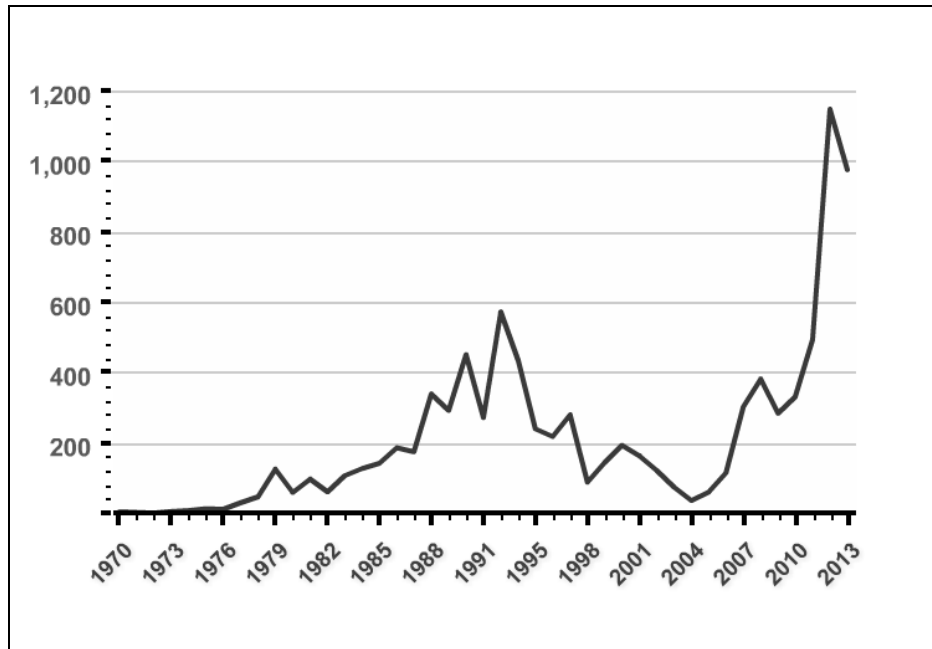
Figure 9.   Sub-Saharan Africa Incidents of Terrorism, 1970 to 2013

Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism, 2013 Global Terrorism Database, accessed December 22, 2014, http://www.start. umd.edu/gtd.

The data show that the ability for terrorist organizations to operate in the Sahel is increasing, with specific growth of incidents found in Nigeria, Niger, and Mali over the past decade (see figure 10).

Group | Incidents, 2003–2012

- GSPC
- AQIM
- MUJAO
- Ansar Dine
- Al-Qaida
- Boko Haram
- Other

231
44
30
20
15
6
1

Terrorist zone of operation, Pan Sahel Initiative

Broad terrorist zone of operation, Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative

MOROCCO, TUNISIA, ALGERIA, LIBYA, WESTERN SAHARA, MAURITANIA, MALI, NIGER, CHAD, SENEGAL, GAMBIA, GUINEA-BISSAU, GUINEA, BURKINA FASO, SIERRA LEONE, LIBERIA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, TOGO, BENIN, NIGERIA, CAMEROON

Figure 10. Locations of Terrorist Incidents 2003 to 2012

Source: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), *An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012), 72.

Establishing commercial and financial networks that are not easily disrupted by any government is important for terrorist organizations to operate in the region. Illicit and

dark networks are necessary for terrorist groups to operate. Conversely, light networks can expand the central government's reach to degrade vulnerabilities. Terrorist organizations such as AQIM and Boko Haram have amassed vast amounts of cash from kidnapping for ransom and smuggling operations, particularly cigarette smuggling (Chivvis and Liepman 2013, 5). Further, to protect their funds from financial sanctions, these organizations are known to be involved in the trade of rough diamonds. Diamonds are easy to launder and much easier to hide and move than cash (Kieh and Kalu 2013, 10).

In 2007, the RAND Corporation conducted a study that identified and analyzed the attributes of ungoverned territories and the liability that they will host a terrorist presence in the Sahel (O'Brien and Karasik 2007, 193). To determine how well these countries can be governed, the study evaluated indicators such as the absence of state institutions, lack of physical infrastructure, social and cultural resistance to government, illegal armed groups, criminal networks, population with access to weapons, lack o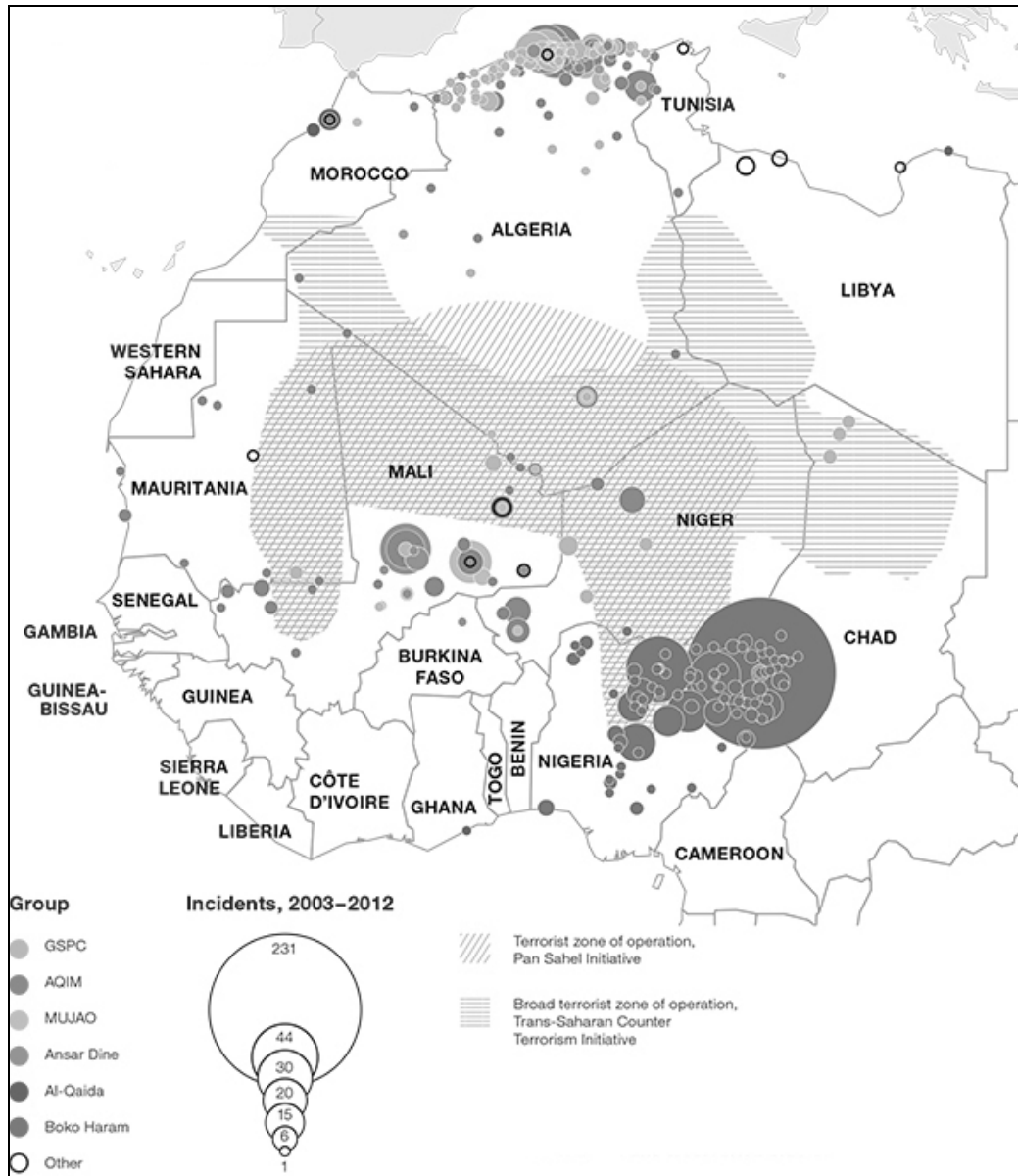f border controls, and external interference. Also, the study evaluated financial infrastructure, transportation and communications access, sources of income, demographics, and invisibility.

The countries contain large numbers of potential recruits to radical groups. Members of these groups can become "invisible" by blending in with civilians, receiving support from them, and the availability of black and grey markets enable them to conduct financial transactions covertly. Nigeria, Mali, and Niger all got the lowest possible overall score in the study, indicating that they are at high risk.

According to European researchers with the Monitoring Center for Organized Crime, the growing threat of extremist organizations in the Sahel is coming to endanger European security more than Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal regions (Idoumou 2012, 1). The study asserts that 8,000 to 14,000 members of AQIM or affiliated groups use the Sahel as a safe haven.

The vast territory of the Sahel, and the lack of capable regional military forces, will require such countries as Nigeria, Mali, and Niger to ask for Western help for military training, equipment, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Otherwise, these states remain at a high risk of collapse. The next section will review United States foreign policy toward West Africa, to determine how the United States will provide support to countries in the Sahel to prevent this.

<div align="center">United States Foreign Policy Toward West Africa</div>

West Africa is of growing strategic importance to the United States, not only because of the security threat, but also because of the U.S. demand for natural resources, specifically energy resources. Also, the U.S. has continuing concerns for West Africa's numerous humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, and the Ebola and HIV/AIDS epidemics.

This is a recent development. Formerly, U.S. policymakers did not recognize African issues as strategic priorities, and American military engagement in the region has been intermittent. Throughout the 20th century, policymakers considered the role of the U.S. in West Africa to be minimal; national security documents contained very little discussion of it. For example, in 1995, the U.S. Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa stated, "ultimately we see very little traditional strategic interest in Africa" (Department of Defense 1995).

But three years later, in 1998, terrorists attacked two U.S. embassies in East

Africa. In retaliation, the U.S. bombed factories in Khartoum, Sudan, that were believed

to be producing chemical weapons for Al Qaeda. Many analysts consider this sequence of

events to have been a turning point in U.S. strategic policy toward Africa (Ploch 2011,

14).

Even so, it was not until 2002 that National Security Strategy dictated a more

specific strategic approach. This was driven by Al Qaeda's attacks on the United States

on September 11, 2001. The 2002 National Security Strategy directed effort to build

indigenous security and intelligence capabilities through bilateral agreements. The *2006*

National Security Strategy went further, classifying Africa as a "high priority." It said

U.S. national security "depends upon partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile and

failing states and bring ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies"

(U.S. President 2006a).

President Obama has upheld the Bush Administration's view that Africa has high

strategic importance. The Obama Administration's 2010 National Security Strategy

stresses conflict prevention, peacekeeping, CT, and access to markets. The 2011 National

Military Strategy explains that the objectives stated in the National Security Strategy will

be achieved through embracing effective partnerships:

> The United Nations and African Union play a critical role in humanitarian,
> peacekeeping and capacity-building efforts, which help preserve stability,
> facilitate resolutions to political tensions that underlie conflicts, and foster broader
> development. To support this, the Joint Force will continue to build partner
> capacity in Africa, focusing on critical states where the threat of terrorism could
> pose a threat to our homeland and interests. We will continue to counter violent
> extremism in the Trans-Sahel. We will work in other areas to help reduce the
> security threat to innocent civilians. We must identify and encourage states and
> regional organizations that have demonstrated a leadership role to continue to

contribute to Africa's security. We will help facilitate the African Union's and the Regional Economic Communities' development of their military capacity, including the African Standby Force, to address the continent's many security challenges.

(The African Standby Force is troops maintained by the African Union. They are comprised of military, police, and civilian components trained to conduct peacekeeping operations in crisis. The United States plays a significant role in the training of the African Standby Force.)

The DoD *2014 Quadrennial Defense Review*, using the guidance provided in the *National Military Strategy*, also stresses the importance of partnerships, and directs the military to partner with African states to conduct capacity-building and peacekeeping operations, prevent extremism, and address humanitarian crises.

The *Quadrennial Review* also stresses the need to maximize the effect of a relatively small U.S. presence in West Africa by emphasizing high-return training and exercise events; negotiating flexible agreements; co-operating interagency partners; and investing in small-footprint locations (Department of Defense 2014c, 36).

In 2007, the United States created a new military command for Africa, consolidating military operations and activities under one commander. The new command, AFRICOM, is tasked to promote U.S. national security objectives in Africa. AFRICOM promotes national security objectives predominantly by working with African states and regional organizations to strengthen defensive capabilities, so that African states are better able to contribute to regional stability and security (Ploch 2011, 2). Before AFRICOM, U.S. military interests on the continent were split between U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Pacific Command (see figure 11).
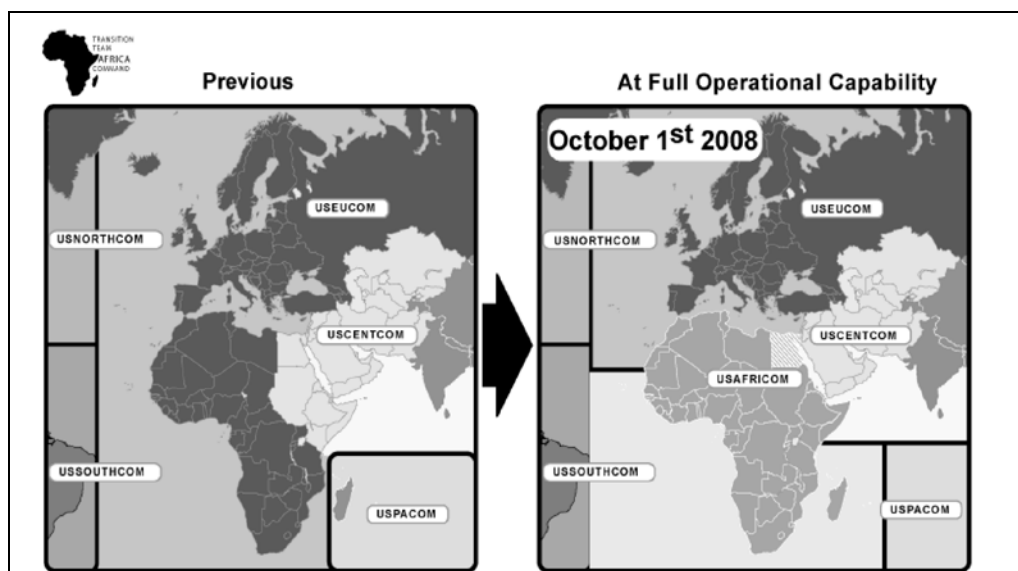
Figure 11. Geographic Combatant Command Areas of Responsibility before and after the Establishment of AFRICOM

Source: Lauren Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 30.

In 2004, Congress requested that an advisory panel of Africa experts recommend new policy initiatives. Over the past decade, U.S. policymakers have used American military strength to address several concerns that the panel identified: protecting America's access to energy resources, CT, and preventing armed conflicts (Kansteiner 2004, 5).

To protect America's access to energy sources, the United States has made an effort to reduce U.S. reliance on Middle East oil. In 2006, President Bush vowed to replace more than 75 percent of oil imports from the Middle East by 2025 (U.S. President 2006b). Over the past five years, Africa has provided the United States with almost as much crude oil as the Middle East; in fact, the United States imported more oil from Africa than anywhere else in the world from 2009 to 2011 (Department of Energy). The

trend likely would have continued, but for regional armed conflicts such as Libya's Civil War and Boko Haram's attacks on Nigerian oil infrastructure.

According to the United States Department of Energy, Nigeria is Africa's largest supplier of oil, and is regularly one of the top five suppliers of oil to the United States. After instability in Nigeria reduced oil output by more than 25 percent, a senior official in the Department of Defense stated, "a key mission for U.S. forces in Africa would be to ensure that Nigeria's oil fields are secure" (Ploch 2011, 16).

United States policymakers have also focused efforts at preventing armed conflicts. Africa is home to the majority of United Nations' peacekeeping missions, with nine ongoing: Western Sahara, Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and three separate missions in Sudan. Also, the African Union and regional organizations such as ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) contribute forces to the United Nations missions.

The African Union, with heavy participation by West African militaries, also conducts peacekeeping operations in Somalia and Burundi, and has the African Standby Force ready to deploy in times of crisis (United Nations 2014b). The U.S. efforts at preventing armed conflict concentrate on enhancing the capabilities of African states to conduct these operations.

More recently, national security strategy in Africa has turned toward CT efforts. U.S. CT policy aims to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda and its affiliates" (U.S. President 2010). This includes protection of America's homeland, securing weapons of mass destruction, the denial of terrorist safe havens, and the building of partnerships with Muslim communities around the world.

As discussed earlier, extremist organizations such as AQIM and Boko Haram are becoming increasingly active in the Sahel. According to the State Department, AQIM "continues to demonstrate its intent and ability to conduct attacks against U.S. citizens or other foreign nations" (Department of State 2009). Further, the Director of National Intelligence testified before Congress that, while these groups emphasize regional short-term objectives, they also aspire to attack the U.S. (Rollins 2011, 2).

The AFRICOM is working with partner nations to combat these threats. In the 2011 National Military Strategy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized the importance of regional threats, asserting, "Terrorists' abilities to remotely plan and coordinate attacks is growing, sometimes facilitated by global illicit trafficking routes, extending their operational reach while rendering targeting of their sanctuaries more difficult. . . . We must continue to support and facilitate whole-of-nation approaches to countering extremism that seek and sustain regional partnerships with responsible states to erode terrorists' support and sources of legitimacy. Military power complements economic development, governance, and rule of law–the true bedrocks of counterterrorism efforts" (Department of Defense 2011d, 6). Parts of DoD, such as SOCOM and AFRICOM, play supporting roles in facilitating other U.S. government agency efforts to advance the nation's interests.

The AFRICOM, in coordination with other U.S. government agencies, builds regional partnerships and augments the defense capacities of partner nations through security assistance. This means that AFRICOM devotes less effort to preparing U.S. forces for combat. According to the senior leadership at the Pentagon, AFRICOM's

"principal mission will be in the area of security cooperation and building partnership capability. It will not be in war fighting" (Department of Defense 2007).

The Pentagon also stresses the importance of persistent engagements over episodic engagements. "Military-to-military relationships must be reliable to be effective, and persevere through political upheavals or even disruption" (Department of Defense 2011d, 6). The U.S. government security assistance to African militaries is primarily conducted through the IMET Program, the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) Program, and the TSCTP.

Through a grant funded by the DoS, IMET provides an opportunity for foreign nation military personnel to attend U.S. military schools or training. A subset of IMET, known as Expanded IMET, provides civilian leadership with training on the proper management of defense resources, improving military justice, improving civil-military relations, human rights, and law enforcement cooperation (Ploch 2011, 23).

African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance is a fund financed and managed by the Department of State. According to AFRICOM's fact sheet:

> The initiative is designed to improve African militaries' capabilities by providing selected training and equipment necessary for multinational peace support operations. U.S. Africa Command supports the ACOTA program by providing military mentors, trainers, and advisors at the request of the State Department. ACOTA provides a full range of peacekeeping training and instruction tailored to match a country's needs and capabilities. The program focuses on sub-Saharan African soldiers from partner nations who are scheduled to participate in peace support operation or who are designated to be a standby mode to do so.

> The ACOTA program has five main objectives: (1) Train and equip African militaries to respond to peace support and complex humanitarian requirements; (2) Build and enhance sustainable African peace support training capacity; (3) Build effective command and control; (4) Promote commonality and interoperability; and (5) Enhance international, regional and sub-regional peace support capacity in Africa.

The AFRICOM provides training through the ACOTA program to African peacekeepers participating in all nine UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, as well as the African Union standby forces (United States Africa Command 2012).

The AFRICOM also plays a significant supporting role in the TSCTP. The TSCTP was initiated in 2004, and, according to AFRICOM's *TSCTP Fact Sheet*:

> The overall goals are to enhance the indigenous capacities of governments in the Pan-Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as Nigeria and Senegal) to confront the challenge posed by terrorist organizations in the region. Additionally, TSCTP will facilitate cooperation between the Pan-Sahel countries and Maghreb partners (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) in combating terrorism.

The TSCTP replaced the DoS 2002 Pan-Sahel Initiative. It had very similar goals, but did not engage with so many countries, nor emphasize the sharing of information and operational planning (United States Africa Command 2014a).

Both programs formerly were the responsibility of European Command, run by SOCOM Europe. With the establishment of AFRICOM, the TSCTP program is now operated under its authority, and executed by SOCAF.

Special Operations Forces work with counterparts in countries such as Nigeria, Mali, and Niger. African partner forces are trained in border security, small-unit tactics, drug interdiction, and other elements of FID.

Developed in coordination with members of the DoD, DoS, USAID, the FBI, the Department of Justice, and the Department of the Treasury, the TSCTP is the U.S. government's whole-of-government approach to defeating terrorist organizations. According to AFRICOM, the main efforts the TSCTP undertakes are:

> Counterterrorism (CT) programs to create a new regional focus for trans-Saharan cooperation, including use of established regional organizations like the African Union and its new Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism in Algiers.

These programs include training to improve border and aviation security and overall CT readiness;

Continued specialized Counterterrorism Assistance Training and Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP) activities in the Trans-Sahara region;

Public diplomacy programs that expand outreach efforts in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, Nigeria, and Senegal, and seek to develop regional programs that empower youth, increase moderate voices, increase civil society capacity to address community issues, and strengthen local government. Emphasis is on preserving the traditional tolerance and moderation displayed in most African Muslim communities and countering the development of extremism, particularly in youth and rural populations;

Governance programs that strive, in particular, to provide adequate levels of U.S. Government support for democratic institutions and economic development in the Sahel, strengthening those states' ability to withstand internal threats;

Military programs intended to expand military-to-military cooperation, to ensure adequate resources are available to train, advise, and assist regional forces, and to establish institutions promoting better regional cooperation, communication, and information sharing.

The U.S. understands that conditions in the Sahel may permit extremist groups to expand. Through programs such as IMET, ACOTA, and the TSCTP, the U.S. chooses to stress building security cooperation and partnership capabilities of African states.

In the next section, a presentation of U.S. Army and Joint Doctrine will be provided, to determine which elements of the military are best suited to execute AFRICOM's mission to counter extremism and deny the ability for terrorist organizations to operate.

United States Army and Joint Doctrine
to Dismantle Extremist Groups that Exploit Sanctuaries

The AFRICOM is responsible for planning, coordinating, executing, and monitoring military operations within its area of responsibility. To accomplish this,

AFRICOM develops a theater campaign plan, which translates national and strategic strategy into operational concepts.

In accordance with the guidance for the employment of the force, the theater campaign plan includes stability operations planning, as well as engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities. The President and Secretary of Defense provide guidance to AFRICOM for the employment of the force, forming the basis for strategic policy guidance and campaign plans. The operations and activities executed in the Sahel are vital to the long-range strategic plans and objectives of AFRICOM and reflect national security priorities and guidance.

The SOCOM, working with AFRICOM, also plays a significant role in Africa. SOCOM, in addition to its Title 10 authority and responsibilities as a unified combatant command, has been given increasingly greater responsibilities in recent unified command plans. Each Unified Command Plan establishes areas of responsibility for combatant commands.

In 2004, SOCOM was tasked with the responsibility for coordinating DoD planning against multinational terrorist networks and, as directed, conduct worldwide operations against those networks. SOCOM "receives, reviews, coordinates, and prioritizes all DoD plans that support the global campaign against terror, and . . . makes recommendations to the Joint Staff regarding force and resource allocation to meet global requirements" (USSOCOM 2014a, 6).

In 2008, SOCOM was given an additional role as the DoD proponent for SFA. This means it is responsible for synchronizing the training and assisting of partner nation

forces. Further, SOCOM is now the DoD lead organizations for counter-threat financing, to identify means to disrupt terrorist financing (Feickert 2011, 2).

Special Operations Command Africa is SOCOM's Africa branch. Although AFRICOM has operational control over SOCAF, SOCOM retains combatant command authority.

Terrorist organizations and ethnic violence continue to stunt the prosperity of the Sahel, creating conditions of state fragility, instability, and terrorist safe havens that present a serious threat to U.S. national security. Nigeria, Mali, and Niger share many of the same drivers of conflict and instability, including religious fanaticism, ideology, ethnic tensions, territorial claims, and desire for power.

Recognizing that the greatest threats to U.S. national security may be not major conflict against another sovereign state, but states unable or unwilling to meet the needs of their people, AFRICOM executes stability operations. Joint doctrine says:

> Stability operations encompass various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief. (Department of Defense 2011a, GL-16)

Stability operations occur across the spectrum of conflict, ranging from peacekeeping missions to all-out war, and in support of other instruments of national power. They are a comprehensive approach to combating such threats as terrorist safe havens. Their importance became increasingly clear after combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Understanding this shift in emphasis, the DoD published Directive 3000.05 in November 2005 (Department of Defense 2005, 2). The directive states that stability operations are equal to those of the offense and defense:

> Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DOD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.

The directive assigns responsibility for stability operations to Special Operations. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict is tasked to review and assist DoD branches in developing and executing stability operations planning and strategy.

Additionally, stability operational planning is integrated with other U.S. government agencies. Coordinating DoD efforts with other government agencies, specifically the DoS, provides a comprehensive approach to combat the threats inherent in fragile states.

The DoD identifies five essential stability tasks to be conducted during stability operations. The DoS identifies five post-conflict reconstruction essential tasks, known also as stability sectors. Figure 12 shows how the DoD essential stability tasks and the DoS post-conflict reconstruction stability sectors are integrated.
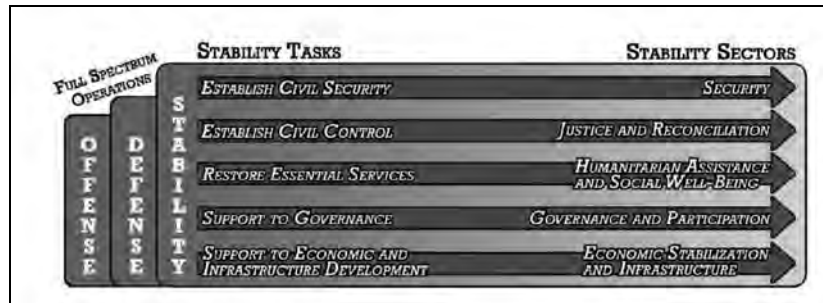
Figure 12. An Integrated Approach to Stability Operations

Source: Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-07, *Stability Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 2-5.

Each of the tasks and the sectors aims to stabilize the environment, so that African nations can implement solutions to eliminate the root causes of conflict and state failure. Crucial methods AFRICOM uses to support stability tasks in the Sahel include military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence missions. These activities occur in the Sahel regardless of any contingency operation or campaigns. The DoS ordinarily takes the lead in these activities; AFRICOM must work closely with U.S. diplomatic missions in each country. Typical activities that occur in the Sahel within these missions include CT, DA, and FID.

Counterterrorism is "primarily a special operations core task and consists of actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks" (Department of Defense 2011a, V-12). JP 3-26, *Counterterrorism,* states that CT activities within the Sahel should be conducted by the theater SOC (Department of Defense 2014b, ix).

The joint CT manual describes three types of activities: advise-and-assist, overseas counterterrorism activities, and defense support of civil authorities. Advise-and-

assist activities include all military efforts to support African states' ability to provide security, prevent terrorists from using their territory as a safe haven, and increase long-term regional stability. Overseas CT activities include counterinsurgency operations, counterdrug operations, and DA. Defense support of civil authorities is an activity that helps the host nation prepare, prevent, or respond to terror attacks from within its territory.

Another component of engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence missions is FID. It is discussed in JP 3-22 and Army Field Manual 3-05. Both explain how it is conducted by the military and other government agencies to provide assistance to another government to "free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency" (Department of Defense 2010b, I-2).

Foreign Internal Defense primarily addresses internal threats. Its purpose is to support the partner nation's established Internal Defense and Development plan of action. FID activities depend on the origin of the threat: for example, lawlessness, subversion, and sabotage. The use of the military in FID usually has involved counterinsurgency. In the Sahel, FID is an important tool to reduce state fragility, increase internal stability, and combat terrorism or transnational criminal organizations.

The joint publication for FID highlights that the DoS is the lead government agency for planning and execution. USAID contributes to non-military assistance programs designed to assist fragile states in preventing the threat of extremism, and keeping terrorists from finding sanctuary. AFRICOM is responsible for the military component. Although FID is a core task of Special Operations, conventional forces also execute it, utilized by AFRICOM.

Security Force Assistance is similar to FID. There is no joint definition for this, but Army Field Manual 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, defines it as "the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority" (Department of the Army 2009, 1-1). SFA, like FID, increases the ability and capacity of the host nation's security forces. By contrast, SFA addresses both internal and external threats, as they are often related, and works with security forces that deal with both types of threats (see figure 13). SFA depends on the activity, not the origin of the threat, and concentrates on activities such as organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding, and advising foreign security forces.

The Army's SFA manual designates the Army brigade combat team to advise foreign security forces (Department of the Army 2009, iv).

Table 2.   Foreign Internal Defense vs. Security Force Assistance

	Foreign Internal Defense	Security Force Assistance
External Threats		X
Internal Threats	X	X
Security–Military	X	X
Security–Civilian	X	X
Economic	X	
Governance–Political	X	
Governance–Social	X	

Source: Derek Jenkins, "Distinguishing Between Security Force Assistance and Foreign Internal Defense: Determining a Doctrine Road Ahead," *Small Wars Journal* (2008): 2.

Within the scope of full-spectrum operations, there is a fundamental relationship between lethal and nonlethal actions. In the fight to control or eliminate terrorist

sanctuaries in the Sahel, a changing balance between violence and restraint must be maintained.

The last approach to combating the terrorist threat in the Sahel is DA, but it is only a small part of the overall approach. DA "entails short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted with specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets in hostile, denied, or diplomatically and/or politically sensitive environments" (Department of Defense 2011, x). DA is different from other offensive military actions; it involves less diplomatic or political risk, and more discriminate and precise use of force to accomplish specific objectives.

The National Defense Authorization Act, which Congress approves each year, funds the DoD, setting policies and priorities. Two main funding authorities govern the capacity of the DoD to accomplish these activities. They are:

> Title 22 funds. These are appropriated to the DoS; it often transfers them to the DoD, which manages and executes most security assistance programs. Title 22 includes foreign military sales programs. Congress authorizes and appropriates these funds on a by-country, by-program basis, and requires congressional notification and permission to move funds from one program to another.

> Title 10 funds. These are appropriated to the DoD, intended for operations and maintenance of the U.S. military. They pay for international participation in joint exercises, military personnel exchanges, or military-to-military contacts, to enhance relationships between partner militaries and U.S. forces. (Kelly and Marquis 2010, xii)

Congress provides two special funds to cover CT tasks assigned by Joint and Army doctrine: sections 1206 and 1208 of the National Defense Authorization Act. Section 1206, often referred to as train-and-equip authority, provides authority and funds for SOF to build the capacity of foreign military forces. This marks a departure;

historically, the DoD trained other national militaries through DoS funding, but now, it does so independently of DoS. The DoD requested its own funding authority, because it believed the planning and implementation process of Title 22 funds was too slow and cumbersome (Serafino 2014, 3).

The second unique fund, Section 1208, provides authority and funds for SOF to train and equip not only regular, but irregular indigenous forces to conduct CT operations. Unlike Section 1206, Section 1208 cannot fund U.S. CT activities, only the activities of surrogate forces. According to a Congressional report, Section 1208 is "a key tool in combating terrorism and is directly responsible for a number of highly successful counter-terror operations" (Feickert 2011, 8).

Although not an element of AFRICOM, USAID is a key partner in the TSCTP. USAID implements a $90 million program known as Peace through Development II, designed to reduce the risk of instability and strengthen resilience to violent extremism (USAID 2013, 3). Peace through Development II works directly with vulnerable populations to promote moderate voices, strengthening civil society and local government. The program successfully developed enduring relationships with influential government officials and community and religious leaders to better target resources, and provided community members with training and resources to moderate disputes, reducing ethnic tensions and conflict (USAID 2013, 12).

Africa Command uses many methods to thwart terrorist safe havens in the Sahel, such as CT, FID, and DA activities. AFRICOM also works closely with interagency partners, such as USAID, and host nation partners to eliminate the terrorist threat. In the

next section, we will review specific examples of military operations in the Sahel, to determine what elements of the military are best suited to execute AFRICOM's mission.

Case Studies

This section provides examples of recent and current AFRICOM missions in Nigeria, Mali, and Niger. AFRICOM assigns personnel to U.S. embassies to coordinate security cooperation activities. To enable theater security cooperation, AFRICOM often utilizes RAF. The RAF is comprised of elements of U.S. Forces Command: a brigade of the First Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kansas, that would deploy to Africa to conduct episodic engagements to support AFRICOM's cooperation requirements.

The RAF mission is to prepare specific operational plans for military-to-military engagement, familiarization training, exercise participation, train-and-equip support, and SFA under Title 10 authority. Title 10 funds for the RAF come through the newly created Global Security Contingency Fund, authorized in the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (Serafino 2014, 3).

Further, AFRICOM established the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Trans-Sahara, run by SOCAF, to coordinate efforts to combat extremism. This portion of the study concentrates on activities to eliminate or control extremist sanctuaries.

Special Operations Command Africa operates the TSCTP program for AFRICOM. SOF, including Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations soldiers, are the major military implementers of TSCTP. However, because of SOF commitments to CENTCOM, specifically in Afghanistan and Iraq, other agencies and contractors have fulfilled requirements.

Under TSCTP, SOF trains units specifically designed to conduct CT. These SOF units train the host nation forces to combat threats within their own country.

In Nigeria, SOF works with Nigerian forces to fight Boko Haram. In Niger, SOF trains partner nation CT forces to combat Boko Haram as they cross into Niger, fleeing Nigeria forces. Additionally, SOF trains Niger's CT unit to combat AQIM in undergoverned areas, and provides logistics and surveillance equipment to support the specialized CT unit (Schmitt 2014). SOF also maintains critical intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to support the action partner nations against terrorist threats.

Special Operations Forces trains the partner nation CT units to conduct civil military operations and combat patrols, and foil terrorist ambushes. SOF, in concert with partner nation CT units, coordinates with national officials to provide government services to at-risk populations in undergoverned spaces. Military training events that include organizing a medical or veterinary clinic to support nearby villages have a significant beneficial effect. According to a soldier in the Niger Army trained by SOF, "If you can develop a trusting relationship with people, you can gather any information you need" (Schmitt 2014, 5).

Providing basic services in undergoverned areas builds ties between the people and their government, increases trust, and strengthens intelligence-sharing between the populace with the military.

When the partner nation armed forces meet with civic leaders, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, they increase the reputation of the government and learn about VEO threats. SOF also maintains a presence in Nigeria, Mali, and Niger that ensures that SOCAF maintains critical partnerships with the host nation governments,

military, and the populace. Further, SOF interacts daily with American embassy staff to ensure that SOF activities harmonize with DoS long-term approaches.

More recently, AFRICOM began using the RAF construct to build partner nation capacity to combat extremist threats. The Global Security Contingency Fund is a four-year pilot program jointly administered and funded by the DoD and DoS to carry out security, CT training, and rule-of-law programs. As part of the ACOTA program, the RAF also uses Title 22 authority to train African troops deployed on peacekeeping missions.

An example of a recent RAF mission using Title 10 authority consists of a one-month advanced infantry training for the 143rd Nigerian Infantry Battalion. According to the RAF trip report, the RAF trained the Nigerians on advanced infantry tactics before they deployed to northeastern Nigeria to fight Boko Haram (Helsham 2014, 1). This was the second round of advanced infantry training; the first had been conducted several months earlier. It emphasized improving small-unit tactics and developing the Nigerian staff's understanding of the military decision-making process.

Collective tasks that were taught included squad battle drills: React to Contact, Break Contact, React to Ambush Near/Far, Platoon situational exercises, AK-47 basic rifle marksmanship, and Convoy Operations.

The trip report for the mission also discussed logistics training the RAF provided and plans to incorporate additional logistics training into future events, as well as heavy weapons, artillery, and communications training (Helsham 2014, 6).

In the undergoverned parts of Niger, using Title 10 authority, the RAF provided extensive logistics training to units that conduct CT operations. Training included leader

development, individual training, and team development in multi-functional logistics tasks.

Following the training, the RAF increased the ability of the army of Niger to execute logistics resupply missions and support extended CT operations, as far the national supply chain will allow, to counter VEOs and terrorist safe havens (Phipps 2014, 1).

Under Title 22 authority, the RAF is conducting training under the ACOTA program. Because Nigeria provides significant numbers of troops for African peacekeeping missions, they frequently receive training under ACOTA. The RAF ensures that units deploying on United Nations or African Union peacekeeping missions are prepared. Although this training is aimed at peacekeeping, many of the skills apply to combating extremist sanctuaries as well. In fact, Chadian troops trained under ACOTA did much of the work to curb AQIM before the mission became part of a United Nations peacekeeping force (Apps 2013).

The RAF concept is not entirely new. The National Guard State Partnership Program also provides a regionally aligned capability to combatant commanders. The National Guard has state partnerships programs in 10 countries in Africa, though only two in the Sahel: Nigeria and Senegal. California National Guard Special Forces detachments partner with Nigeria (California National Guard 2014). Special Forces troops recently conducted a two-month mission with the Nigerian army's 143rd Infantry Battalion, the same battalion that trained with the RAF.

Col. John Ruffing, Chief of U.S. Army Africa's Security Cooperation Division, said about the mission: "It is every bit of what we call 'decisive action,' meaning those

soldiers will go in harm's way to conduct counterinsurgency operation in their country to defeat a known threat, and it's all purely funded by the Nigerians" (California National Guard 2014). The goal of the California Guard is to work with the Nigerian military and help them "take the fight to the enemy in restricted terrain and really impact the threat within their borders so that they can then provide more resources to peacekeeping operations, which Nigeria has extensive experience with" (California National Guard 2014).

This chapter presented the data that allow the research questions to be answered. First it provided background on the operations environment and the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel. Second, it discussed U.S. foreign policy toward West Africa and described how the U.S. and its partners likely will face the challenges of terrorist organizations and instability in the region.

Third, this chapter discussed the doctrinal role the U.S. military have on the effort to control terrorist sanctuaries, based on Army and joint doctrine. The last portion discussed how SOF and conventional forces have historically been used in the Sahel to combat extremist sanctuaries.

The study successfully answered all of the research questions. The primary question asked if Special Operations are uniquely qualified to draw upon its Title 10 authorization, such as CT, DA, and FID, to control, manage, or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. The answer is no, Special Operations are not uniquely qualified to control, manage, or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries; however, Special Operations have some unique capabilities that make them best suited for the mission.

The next chapter will provide an interpretation of the finding that Special

Operations are not uniquely qualified, but best suited to control, manage, or dismantle

extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. The next chapter will also provide conclusions

and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of this research is to determine if Special Operations, because of its understanding of the operational environment, U.S. foreign policy toward West Africa, U.S. military CT doctrine, and military experience in the Sahel, is uniquely qualified to control or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries there. In this chapter, the research questions will be answered, in accordance to the findings in chapter 4.

<u>Interpretation of Findings</u>

The study successfully answered all of the research questions. The primary question asked if Special Operations are uniquely qualified to draw upon its Title 10 authorization, such as CT, DA, and FID, to control, manage, or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries. The answer is no, Special Operations are not uniquely qualified to control, manage, or dismantle extremist groups that exploit sanctuaries; however, Special Operations have some unique capabilities that make them best suited for the mission.

Special Operations are the most appropriate force to prioritize, plan, coordinate, and direct AFRICOM's first objective: to ensure that the Al Qaeda networks and associated VEOs do not attack the U.S. It also is specifically tasked with these objectives.

They are accomplished through the containment of extremist sanctuaries. SOCAF is tasked with the responsibility for synchronizing AFRICOM planning against terrorist networks in the Sahel and, as directed, conduct operations against those networks.

SOCAF receives, reviews, coordinates, and prioritizes AFRICOM plans that support the global campaign against terror. SOCAF is responsible for coordinating the training and assisting of partner nation forces. Further, SOCAF is AFRICOM's lead organization for counterthreat financing: identifying means to disrupt terrorist financing efforts.

Despite all this, other units of the military can and should be used to support SOCAF's efforts. Case studies on the use of the military to counter the extremist sanctuaries in the Sahel highlight how SOF and conventional forces collaborated.

One unique capability of SOF comes from the National Defense Authorization Act sections 1206 and 1208, and funding to combat terrorism. Sections 1206 and 1208 allow SOF to conduct security assistance rapidly, without relying on the DoS Title 22 authority.

Under the newly created Global Security Contingency Fund, conventional forces also have the ability to fund CT training programs, for at least the duration of the pilot program. Section 1208, however, still remains the only authority to fund surrogate forces directly. The Global Security Contingency Fund provides an additional capability and funding source for AFRICOM to contain terrorist safe havens.

Conventional forces, specifically the RAF, support ongoing security cooperation requirements. For emergent missions, those not already specified in the AFRICOM baseline operations order, U.S. Army Africa, working with specific embassies, will request the allocation of additional forces. Requests are approved by AFRICOM then sent to United States Forces Command.

Forces Command is the force provider for AFRICOM. It determines whether the RAF has the authority to execute the event. If so, Forces Command then determines

whether it has the authority to deploy in support of the theater security cooperation plan mission. Although the RAF is allocated to AFRICOM, AFRICOM does not have the authority to assign tasks to it without Forces Command authorization. Authorization and approval requirements can significantly delay the deployment of forces.

However, recent changes to the Unified Command Plan, which established SOCOM as a geographic combatant command, significantly streamline the process of SOCOM's deploying forces in support of AFRICOM. If significant time constraints apply, and deployment of forces must occur rapidly, SOF units are the best choice.

Although the RAF requires additional authority and approval, it provides a sizeable force to support AFRICOM's theater security cooperation plan and build partner nation capacity. Conventional forces bring a large force structure that SOF units do not offer. A trip report from a training event under the ACOTA program in Nigeria indicated that, even with a full battalion from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, too few soldiers were on hand to successfully execute the training. Even with an entire conventional force U.S. Battalion, the report explained, the ratio was only three U.S. soldiers for every 828 host-nation soldiers (Wahl 2014, 2). Thus, when large units must be trained, conventional forces are the best choice.

Conventional forces also provide unique or specialized capabilities that are not robust in special operations units. RAF trip reports highlight specialized training to partner nations in large-scale logistics, which better suit conventional forces. Additional specialized skills provided by conventional forces to partner nation forces include artillery training, forklift training, and supply management.

The presence of a large U.S. military footprint may also have negative effects. The RAF is largely confined to military training events on a military base with little to no interaction with the local population. A large presence of U.S. Military in undergoverned spaces may have a negative effect on perceptions of the populace, giving rise to beliefs that Americans are attempting to colonize their territory, or that the host nation military is a tool of colonial oppression. Terrorist organizations can try to build upon such perceptions to recruit or to receive sanctuary.

Through an understanding of the operational environment, AFRICOM will be able to determine whether an activity or mission requires the larger presence of conventional forces, or the more subtle presence of SOF.

Although the quantity of troops is important, the quality is more critical when engaging in theater security cooperation. The RAF contains many highly professional soldiers with years of experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, but they often lack the specific skills required for the multicultural, multilingual, and multinational environment of the Sahel.

Special Operations Forces personnel are specially trained to operate outside of military-to-military engagements and better understand the local social environment. SOF units are able to understand migratory routes of nomadic Sahel ethnic groups, and get an intimate understanding of their needs and wants. SOF is better designed to incorporate diplomacy and development into partner nation defense-building:

> [SOF] understand what groups operate in the area: non-governmental
> organizations, NGOs; international organizations; intergovernmental
> organizations, IGOs; religious groups; business people; social groups; tribes;
> military leaders; and governmental employees of the state. [SOF] understand this
> network and by understanding gaps in the state's capabilities to deliver services or

security in an area . . . and . . . the capabilities of other groups like IGOs or NGOs, [SOF] can coordinate those services to bolster the capabilities of the state to counter the VEO's attempts to lure the people away from the state. (Wishart 2012, 1)

Without an understanding of the local population, military operations in the Sahel will be unsuccessful at eliminating the threat of terrorists. SOF units, in close partnership with embassies, address factors of instability beyond the security threat. SOF units create an operational environment that is less hospitable to extremist groups by increasing the host government's capacity to address porous borders, education, poverty, corruption, and lawlessness, to name a few. SOF units understanding of the operational environment also provide early warning of increasing instability. Conventional forces confined to military bases have little or no interaction with the local populace and lack the same operational understanding.

The first secondary question asks the extent of terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel. Research indicates that several factors contribute to terrorist safe havens: The vast area of the Sahel, the large Muslim population that is being radicalized by Islamic extremists, and weak and-or distant governments.

Incidents of terrorism have quadrupled in the past decade, as these risks have increased. Kidnapping for ransom and the trade of illicit goods have raised money for terrorists, enabling them to increase activity. Further, the porous borders of states in the Sahel allow these terrorist organizations to freely travel across the region and increasingly cooperate with each other to conduct more intricate attacks.

The next secondary question concerns United States foreign policy toward West Africa. West Africa's strategic importance the U.S. is steadily growing because of security threats and an increased desire for natural resources. With each National Security

Strategy published, the U.S. priority for Africa has risen. Currently, the U.S. government defines West Africa as a high priority in national security strategy and policy. This is unlikely to change over the next several years.

The strategy emphasizes building indigenous security and intelligence capabilities. It depends on partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile or failing states and bring terrorists safe havens under the control of effective governments.

Also, the U.S. is threatened by pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola originating in Africa. Currently, the U.S. has forces deployed to Liberia to contain the Ebola outbreak. U.S. foreign policy in West Africa aims to build state capacity.

The next secondary question concerns United States doctrine toward dismantling terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel. Joint and Army doctrine overwhelmingly convey that SOF has the authority and responsibility for synchronizing, planning, and conducting operations against terrorist networks. SOF is the proponent for Stability Operations, SFA, and counterthreat financing. SOF core tasks that relate to dismantling terrorist sanctuaries in the Sahel include CT, DA, and FID.

The final secondary question concerns how SOF has historically been used in the Sahel to combat extremist sanctuaries. SOF forces conduct both persistent engagements in cooperation with embassies, and episodic engagements through training exercises and counterterrorism operations. SOF elements in the Sahel are conducting their core activities of CT, DA, and FID. The research also provides evidence of the successful use of conventional forces in the Sahel that complement the work of SOF and enhance the theater security cooperation plan.

Because West African states are fragile, and government capacity and capability are lacking, the research shows that the U.S. will need to continue to provide security assistance. Otherwise, state failure is increasingly likely, and the terrorist organizations' potential to conduct attacks on U.S. soil, generated from safe havens in the Sahel, is enhanced.

Recommendations

After more than a decade of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. has little appetite for another long war. U.S. foreign policy toward West Africa, U.S. Army and Joint Doctrine, and case studies of the use of the military in West Africa illustrate how, without large troop commitments, the U.S. desires to combat the spread of extremist organizations and their use of ungoverned spaces. Also, with military expenditures constricting, the ability of the U.S. to deploy large armies overseas will diminish.

Given that threats in the Sahel continue, the U.S. military must concentrate the limited resources available on training, advising, and assisting host nation governments and armed forces to address their own security threats. The best way to do this is through the combined efforts of SOF and conventional forces, in cooperation with the other elements of national power. In the words of the former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates:

> We must tailor deterrence to fit particular actors, situations, and forms of warfare. The same developments that add to the complexity of the challenge also offer us a greater variety of capabilities and methods to deter or dissuade adversaries. This diversity of tools, military and non-military, allows us to create more plausible reactions to attacks in the eyes of opponents and a more credible deterrence to them. In addition, changes in capabilities, especially new technologies, permit us to create increasingly credible defenses to convince would-be attackers that their efforts are ultimately futile. (Department of Defense 2008, 12)

Based on the results of this thesis, SOF should focus on persistent engagements with partner nation counterterrorism forces and conventional forces should provide episodic engagements to train African contingency forces. Special Operations have some unique capabilities that make them better suited than other forces to conduct persistent engagements. SOF units have the authorization to accompany their partner nation forces to the last covered and concealed position before contact with the enemy. Mentoring and training cannot be conducted remotely, so SOF units must be able to move forward with their partner nation counterparts. SOF unique logistics also allow for the sustainment of SOF elements for a long duration in austere environments that conventional forces are not capable of. Persistent engagements with the partner nation allow SOF to better learn the grievances that VEOs exploit. By addressing the grievance the partner nation can reduce the ability of the VEOs to exploit.

In addition to SOF and conventional forces, AFRICOM must better balance defense objectives with diplomacy and development in coordination with the DoS and USAID. The Pentagon's share of developmental assistance funds is 21.7 percent, only about half the 40 percent controlled by USAID (Kieh 2013, 99). SOF units provide non-traditional security assistance where USAID or its partners have difficulty operating, or government control is weak. SOF should continue to have the ability to provide this assistance, but should increase dialogue with specialists within the DoS and USAID, partly to eliminate duplication. SOCAF must integrate planning with USAFRICA, USAREUR and the DoS. Integration must be conducted by the use of liaisons between organizations as well as joint planning conferences to discuss collaborative way ahead.

SOCAF must also better integrate their efforts and assets with the African Union. The African Union is a key partner that can build legitimacy, rule of law and allied coalitions such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and the African Union Standby Force.

A more balanced approach in the use of defense, diplomacy, and development is necessary to combat the threat of extremism in West Africa. The U.S. military budget in Africa dwarfs that of the DoS, USAID, and other civilian agencies by approximately 17 to 1 (Malan 2008, 2). Further, the DoS has far fewer hands available in Africa than the DoS: in any given week, SOF deploys 4,800 personnel, more than the 4,000 Foreign Service officers in the entire DoS (Rudy and Eland 1999, 5).

Because SOF plays such a critical role in foreign policy, working directly with African partner nations, it must guard against getting ahead of diplomats; instead, it must work closely with them. Respectful deference is as important as tactical competency. SOF must also guard against getting ahead of the political will of the partner nation. SOF must work with partner nations that have a strong political will. Without a county that is willing, even the best SOF warriors will fail. Mali is a case in point. Nigeria is another.

For African states to succeed in eliminating terrorist safe havens and addressing other security challenges, they must also develop economically, and build effective, democratic governance. SOCAF is making great strides at managing extremist sanctuaries in the Sahel, but without increased funding for the DoS and USAID programs, African states will be unable to support security successes.

SOF plays a critical role in foreign policy, but must realize they do not create policy. SOCAF must work closely with the diplomatic corps to ensure that proposed

security programs support the DoS long-term goals for economic development, social development and improvements in health.

The U.S. government should continue to support SOCAF's efforts to prevent Al Qaeda and other violent extremists from attacking the United States. SOCAF has done a great deal to eliminate the threat of terrorists, dismantle extremist groups that exploit safe havens, and build partner nation capacity. SOCAFs activities and missions to conduct CT, DA, FID, SFA, and counter-threat financing all require consistent and long-term commitment, particularly given the increased insecurity in the region, and the high demand for African peacekeeping operations.

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