



The Africa Center for Strategic Studies

Africa's security is of great interest to the United States, both because of its impact on the continent and its global implications. While this seems like an obvious statement to those who have worked with Africans in the security arena, historically Africa has not always received appropriate attention from Washington DC; and even today, there are many in the U.S. who under-estimate its importance.

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies is Secretary of Defense's primary asset for outreach and network-building to Africa. By offering academic programs and networking opportunities, the Africa Center creates, maintains, and supports "communities of influence" with an interest in African security. These efforts focus on these core objectives:

- Counter ideological support for terrorism
- Harmonize views on common security challenges
- Educate on the role of security in civil societies

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld has often noted the need for more aggressive, swift and nontraditional information campaigns to counter the messages of extremist and terrorist groups. This philosophy is incorporated into many U.S. policy documents and strategies including the updated *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* released in September 2006 which states, "In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas."

Similarly, the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Review* released earlier this year notes that, "The United States will not win the war on terrorism or achieve other crucial national security objectives discussed in this Report by military means alone. Victory in the long war ultimately depends on strategic communication." By building networks of trust and communications that bridge the gaps between individuals with an interest in Africa, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies is an integral part of this effort.

The Africa Center "Community"

The Africa Center Community is the network of leading professionals in African security who have taken part in Africa Center programs. Members, numbering more than 2500, include program participants, guest speakers, adjunct faculty, distinguished visitors, stakeholders, and full-time staff from Africa, Europe and the United States. While other institutions use terms like students and alumni, the Africa Center refers to these individuals as participants and community members to illustrate that the Africa Center does not teach but instead provides a forum for dialogue among equals.

One of the Community's strengths is its incredible diversity. Members include civilian, military, parliamentarian, law enforcement, and civil society officials from across the United States, Europe, and Africa. Members also range from senior leaders (including several current and former African Heads of State) to individuals who are just starting their careers.

Separated by geography, culture, language, and many other factors, most community members would have no other way to meet each other, much less maintain an on-going dialogue on security issues.

Programs

Africa Center programs are as diverse as the people worldwide that the organization reaches, spanning topics from counter-terrorism to health and its impact on security.

Academics

Since the Africa Center's inception in 1999, more than 2500 participants have taken part in its academic programs. Many Africa Center programs take place in Africa, and all operate under the umbrellas of academic freedom and non-attribution which allow participants to speak freely and candidly. This creates a unique environment full of lively debate and discussion, and allows innovative and practical ideas to come forward. In addition to plenary presentations and breakout discussion groups, most academic programs also include a capstone exercise which allows participants to put ideas into practice in a simulated Africa environment.

The flagship academic program is the Senior Leader Seminar. Held once per year in rotating locations, this program includes nearly every African country as well as Europe and U.S. Its curriculum is also the most expansive, covering content on counter-terrorism, civil-military relations, defense economics, conflict management, and security studies. Smaller Sub-regional Seminars and Topical Seminars allow participants to more closely examine the unique challenges of a single topic or sub-region. Previous programs in these categories have included:

- The Security Challenge of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Africa (Uganda, 2004)
- Energy and Security in Africa (Nigeria, 2005)
- Towards Enhanced Conflict Management in Central Africa (Cameroon, 2004)

The Africa Center also organizes recurring academic courses such as its African Defense Attaché Course and Next Generation of African Military Leaders Program.

Community Chapters

Community Chapters are the Africa Center's major tool for maintaining its network in Africa. By forming national associations devoted to promoting security debate and networking, former Africa Center program participants maintain communications with the Africa Center, keep in touch with each other, and even develop independent programs that build on their Africa Center experiences. To date, there are fifteen chapters that span the continent. Within a general framework set up by the Africa Center, chapter members choose for themselves how they want their chapter to function. Some are only seeking a chance to network, while others are interested in more formalized projects. The Africa Center Burkina Faso Chapter has organized two seminars since 2005 on peace and security with several hundred participants, and is currently conducting a European Union funded, train the trainer project to offer instruction to security professionals.

Strategic Communications

The Africa Center provides its community members with free access to a series of communications initiatives focusing on African security. The Africa Center's web site is the following: www.africacenter.org, monthly electronic publication, and quarterly print newsletter provide information on current events on the continent, U.S. policy statements towards Africa, analysis of security issues, and information on Africa Center events. They also allow community members to maintain communications by providing contact information, news about promotions and current projects, and articles written by community members. A book focusing on counter-terrorism and Africa is currently being produced.

Collaborative Projects and Support Programs

The Africa Center seeks to support the programs of other U.S. government agencies and find ways to work with other organizations around the globe. The Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea series of events, for example, are collaborations with the U.S. European Command and U.S. Naval Forces Europe. The Golden Spear Symposium Series is a U.S. CENTCOM program designed to facilitate open discussion on regional cooperation and capacity building to prevent and respond to natural and humanitarian disasters in the Horn of Africa. The Africa Center also collaborates with non-U.S. organizations, including a series of events working with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and war colleges in Africa.

The Future of the Africa Center

The Africa Center is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of the security environment in Africa and the growing importance of Africa to the United States government and Department of Defense.

Africa Center Regional Office; U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

In October 2006, the Africa Center opened its first permanent office on the continent. This on-the-ground presence will allow the Africa Center to increase its influence and support U.S. security interests in the region by strengthening relationships with governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society, non-government organizations, U.S. missions in the sub-region, leading academic institutions, and Africa Center community chapters. In time, the Africa Center plans to open annexes in each African sub-region.

Online Learning and Content

For the past two years, the Africa Center has experimented with offering portions of its course content online. The Africa Center recognizes that online learning and communications will continue to grow in its importance. Video teleconference, interactive uses of the internet, and other technological innovations could allow the Africa Center to dramatically expand its audience and facilitate more communication among its community members.

Research

The Africa Center plans to conduct original research in its fields of expertise. The capability will allow the Africa Center to provide additional resources to its community and other U.S. government agencies and other partners, as well as improve the content of its own programs.

Why Africa Matters

Experts agree that Africa's strategic importance to the U.S. will increase substantially in the future.

- **War on Terror**

Africa has been and will remain a crucial front in the global war on terror. Radical Islamism has largely failed to take hold in sub-Saharan Africa, but poverty and other threats to Africa's stability offer terrorist organizations with potential recruitment grounds, and Africa's under-governed spaces could offer safe havens. These areas include the vast tracks in and around the Sahara, Somalia, and marine areas such as Gulf of Guinea and parts of the Indian Ocean along Africa's coast.

- **Energy**

Estimates vary, but as much as 18 percent of the petroleum used in the United States is imported from Africa, and this figure is estimated to grow to at least 25 percent in the near future. Freedom from the dependence on Mid-East oil is fundamental to

U.S. economic development and the Bush Administration's energy strategy. African nations have been and will continue to be invaluable partners in this regard, but oil exploration and production expansion is threatened by instability.

- **Growing Markets**

Recent gross domestic product productivity increases in sub-Saharan Africa are greater than other regions. For example, developing countries as a whole experienced a 0.5 percent increase in gross domestic product from 2003 to 2004, but Africa's gross domestic product increased by four times as much in the same period. Africa's population, currently 800 million, is predicted to grow to more than 2 billion by 2050, and approximately 44 percent of the population is under the age of fifteen, representing the world's youngest population.

- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome and Other Diseases**

One of the greatest threats to security and stability in Africa is infectious diseases, particularly human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). Estimates state that approximately 25.8 million African are currently living with HIV/AIDS. In addition to the instability to the general population this can cause, these countries also have high infection rates among their soldiers presenting obvious challenges. The Bush Administration's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, an unprecedented five-year, \$15 billion effort, illustrates the importance of this issue to the U.S.

In addition to these issues, there are a number of additional factors that impact Africa's security. Poverty, displacement, natural disasters, climate change, and others have critical impacts on Africa security and U.S. policy towards Africa.

As U.S. priorities and the security challenges in Africa change, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies will continue to be a conduit among interested individuals around the world as they work together towards a free, peaceful, and prosperous Africa.