Children scavenge for food and clothing in garbage dump, Juba, Sudan

UN (Tim McKulka)

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

Value Added

By MARY C. YATES

While working and living in Africa during my service as foreign policy advisor to U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), I have gained a hands-on appreciation for how the U.S. military employs geographic combatant commands (GCCs). Contrary to the views of Ambassador Edward Marks, I am convinced these commands are more relevant in the post-9/11 environment than ever before. The manner in which they perform their roles has shifted in response to the new realities of the 21st century and the National Security Strategy, just as the roles of all U.S. Government agencies have shifted. In particular, this shift is reflected in National Security Presidential Directive 44 (which requires broader interagency integration during postconflict stabilization and reconstruction operations) and in subsequent trends toward interagency approaches for addressing other complex security challenges. However, because of the visibility of the Department of Defense (DOD) and geographic commands in recent years, there has been a tendency to overstate the intentions of some Defense Department initiatives.

Ambassador Marks' article effectively asserts that the motives behind the establishment of U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) extend well beyond that of being simply a DOD reorganization. The truth is that no such ulterior motives ever existed. This command was

created to address shortfalls in DOD abilities to support African efforts to build partner security capacity, efforts that were previously divided among three GCCs. Its unique organizational structure and designated focus areas were designed with the needs of Africans in mind, such that this new command will not only continue previous efforts, but also add value to them.

The GUC Role

Words are important. One of Ambassador Marks' points is that the term *geographic combatant command* is not "consumer-friendly." From my work with African leaders, I tend to agree. Furthermore, as the USAFRICOM mission is primarily nonkinetic, we avoid using the term ourselves. Instead, we refer to our command as a *geographic unified command* (GUC).

The purpose and roles of GCCs (that is, GUCs) are described in Joint Publication 1 (JP 1), *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*:

GCCs [GUCs] *develop strategies that translate national and multinational direction into strategic concepts or* [courses of action] *to meet strategic and joint operation planning requirements.* [GUCs'] *plans provide strategic direction; assign missions, tasks, forces, and resources; designate objectives; provide authoritative direction; promulgate rules of engagement . . . or rules for the use of force.*[1]

Strategic direction is later described to include theater security cooperation activities 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 a region."[2]

With respect to their relationships with counterparts from the Department of State and U.S. Embassies, JP 1 states that GUCs:

are responsible for integrating military activities with diplomatic activities in their areas of responsibility (AOR).[3] *The U.S. ambassador and the corresponding country team are normally*[4] *in charge of diplomatic-military activities in countries abroad. When directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, the* [GUC] *employs military forces in concert with the other instruments of national power.*[5]

These roles apply to all GUCs. What is different is that their priorities are based on the strategic environment in their respective AORs, which then feed into their organizational structure and the programs and activities routinely conducted. But all GUCs are expected to maintain contacts with and address the security needs of every willing nation within their AORs. The main focus of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) has been operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the command has maintained full engagement with the nations of the Horn of Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

all geographic unified commands are expected to maintain contacts with and address the security needs of every willing nation within their areas of responsibility

Those accustomed to the USEUCOM availability of resident forces might assume that USAFRICOM's lack of such forces equates to no military response capability. This is absolutely false. When the President, through the Secretary of Defense, directs a military operation, that operation is implemented with the right capabilities to do the job, whether they come from a GUC's own assigned forces (if they have them) or elsewhere. Moreover, assigned forces still belong to the DOD global force pool, and USEUCOM has already contributed greatly to the deployed power employed in the Middle East.

The greatest value of the GUC is in providing strategic direction and planning missions within its AOR. Here is where the command's establishment was deemed necessary.

Still Relevant

When I was the U.S. Ambassador to Ghana in the summer of 2003, the Liberian peace talks were under way in Accra and making progress under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and United Nations leadership. Concurrently as the conflict was winding down, peacekeepers were needed. I was honored that, despite the strain on USEUCOM's resources and forces from commitments to the Middle East, the command sent U.S. military advisors to help West African militaries plan and deploy peacekeepers to Liberia. The employment of the Southern European Task Force as Task Force Liberia raised morale and lent military support by deploying peacekeepers into Monrovia's air and seaports. I witnessed first-hand the U.S. military's successful effort to provide needed expertise, but USEUCOM was forced to prioritize between two ongoing operations on different continents. Although a team was ultimately deployed, it would have been more effective with the presence of a USAFRICOM to maintain Africa-specific expertise and a "dedicated" response.

7th ATC, TSC-HD, Photo Lab

Ambassador Mary C. Yates

Ambassador Mary C. Yates is Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities, U.S. Africa Command.

Moreover, the African Union (AU) is emerging as an important collective African organization, and the AU Peace and Security Commission has not only taken on significant peacekeeping missions but also is working hard on conflict prevention. African nations are collaborating to establish their own standby forces prepared to respond to contingencies across the continent. These forces are being aligned regionally, such as the brigade formed by ECOWAS. While in Ghana, I watched this evolve from a concept to a detailed draft command structure plan for the first regional brigade under the leadership of the then–chief of defense, a general who had been identified decades earlier and schooled and trained in U.S. military institutions. USAFRICOM, as requested, will work closely with the AU, its regional communities, and allies in developing and training these forces. When U.S. military engagement in Africa was divided among multiple GUCs, it was difficult to have one consistent program that holistically addressed what is a continent-wide partner capacity-building requirement. USAFRICOM will be *value added*.

Ambassador Marks highlights the fact that Africa is not a cohesive whole and should not be treated as a single entity, and the above experiences showed that lumping most of Africa with the whole of Europe and Eurasia was not the best solution. The security environments were completely different, causing the GUC to be organizationally bifurcated. When national security interests become heightened, prioritizing among the needs of European, Middle Eastern, and African nations—even for military issues alone—should not be undertaken at the GUC level. That type of prioritization should occur at the highest levels of our government through policy. USEUCOM (like USCENTCOM and U.S. Pacific Command [USPACOM]) did its best to mitigate this concern and became a staunch advocate for military engagement in Africa as evidenced in its most recent posture statements. But it was clear the time had come for military matters across Africa to be addressed as a whole for greater consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness and to work with those African institutions focused on security. The time for USAFRICOM had come.

The parameters under which the command was established were a direct reflection of the African strategic environment. A major distinction between Europe and Africa related to the fact, to which Ambassador Marks alluded, that security issues in Africa required a holistic approach and that the establishment of good governance and development had to occur in concert with efforts to improve and professionalize African militaries. This was hardly a new idea. African civilian and military leaders have been saying so for many years, and we listened to these leaders this past year at two conferences.

The manner in which we built interagency coordination into the command shows that we listened. Rather than establish an interagency task force somewhat divorced from the rest of the headquarters staff, USAFRICOM integrated interagency members throughout the command and placed them in positions where their subject matter expertise could be best used. The rules of engagement are such that no one in USAFRICOM exercises any authorities over the activities of other U.S. agencies and that the command's roles are not expanded beyond that designated in JP 1.

USAFRICOM integrated interagency members throughout the command and placed them where their subject matter expertise could be best used

Importance of USAFRICOM

Ambassador Marks' assertion that the command is going to be in charge of interagency coordination or activities in Africa is incorrect. The command may ultimately add to the narrative of the application of the "whole of government" approach, but in fact, this paradigm was not a consideration as the plans were being drawn by the command's Implementation Planning Team, nor was it

UN Photo (Eskinder Debebe)

Refugee camp in Chad near border with Sudan

addressed in the USAFRICOM Implementation Guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense. The command's structure was designed to help the military make better informed decisions on security matters in Africa so it could add value to the programs it was responsible for.

Ambassador Marks' assertion that USAFRICOM would be the "primary organizational interlocutor with African countries" is wrong, as is the implication that we would create a new stovepipe in governmental operations. What occurred on October 1, 2008, is that instead of African nations calling USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, or USPACOM for DOD business, they now call USAFRICOM. Meanwhile, everything the command does is in support of U.S. foreign policy and subordinated to chief of mission authority and the mission campaign plans produced.

Ambassador Marks expressed a great deal of concern over the command's formation to conduct "nationbuilding" or other activities that are of a political or economic nature. This is a mischaracterization of the types of civil-military operations (CMO) that all GUCs are chartered to perform—activities that I greatly welcomed during my ambassadorial tours in Africa. Joint Publication 3–57, *Civil-Military Operations*, describes CMO as a collective term for efforts to "consolidate and achieve operational U.S. objectives through the integration of civil and military actions." These include support to civil administration, populace and resource control, foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA), nation assistance, and civil information management. All CMO is conducted under chief of mission approval.

Most CMO conducted in Africa is foreign humanitarian assistance, which is "conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or man-made disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation." But this is done to supplement the activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or other agencies conducting FHA. These activities do not constitute nationbuilding, but they do provide an important stabilizing effect. None of these activities is led by the Defense Department, but there are times when DOD's assets visibly assist USAID missions, such as in Pakistan after the earthquake or in Aceh, Indonesia, after the tsunami. Moreover, USAID has been supportive of USAFRICOM from the initial days of the planning team because that agency sees the great potential in our working together to advance goals.

Regarding the employment of the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the lead DOD element for executing the war on terror, I must clarify an important point that Ambassador Marks overlooks. Military-to-military relationships belong to a GUC and fall under chief of mission authority. USSOCOM is not a GUC; it is a functional unified command that exercises global responsibilities for a particular function *in support of* GUCs. Therefore, while USSOCOM (through U.S. Special Operations Command–Africa) conducts many capacity-building activities in Operation *Enduring Freedom–Trans Sahara*, the command and control of those activities falls under USAFRICOM and is coordinated with chiefs of mission. As a former chief of mission, I never dealt with USSOCOM for one thing and the GUC for another. I wanted a simple, consistent, single horizontal line of communication to address DOD matters. That was the GUC.

Ambassador Marks correctly points out that the proper framework of a whole-of-government approach has yet to be developed and adequately resourced. But that is no reason to denigrate USAFRICOM's efforts to add value to the GUC contributing role in the security domain. The national approach is being pursued, but it will take time. I highlight the joint statement of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Congress early in 2008, calling for increased funding and resources to U.S. Government agencies so the mandate for interagency integration at the national level could be fulfilled.

the proper framework of a whole-of-government approach has yet to be developed and adequately resourced

I recognize that there are readers who will share Ambassador Marks' sentiments about USAFRICOM. For them, I recommend watching the ongoing deployment of the Africa Partnership Station (APS) in the waters around West Africa. This year's at-sea training platform is the second deployment in the APS program that helps partner nations to build maritime capacity to manage their territorial waters. The program combines several aspects of maritime security that cut across the civil and military domains: counterpiracy, counter-trafficking, and maritime domain awareness, among others. Consequently, it includes not only U.S. Sailors but also U.S. Coastguardsmen and other agencies and international partners working together to present a cohesive and coherent training program tailored to the needs of our partners. Or they could watch the development of African Endeavor 2009, an annual communications interoperability exercise that last year involved 26 nations. These programs and others similar to them are what U.S. Africa Command is about, and they demonstrate how we add value to the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

The command has an extensive outreach program designed to build partnerships and support for its efforts. Information is available through the Web site at <www.africom.mil>, and we are always available to answer questions and discuss the command, its activities, its relationships with other U.S. Government agencies, and its perspectives on African military matters. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] Joint Publication 1 (JP 1), *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, May 14, 2007), I–14.

[2] Ibid., I–16.

[3] We have also found that the term *area of responsibility* (AOR) is as consumer-unfriendly as *geographic combatant command*. While the term is defined to explain the area within which a geographic unified command (GUC) is responsible for DOD programs and activities, there is a perception that it implies responsibility over the affairs of the nations themselves. In addition, U.S. Africa Command has requirements to support other nations (such as Egypt, which we share with U.S. Central Command) that are not in Africa Command's AOR. Therefore, we developed a new term, *area of activity*, that encompasses the land, air, and maritime domains in which a GUC conducts its activities. We recommend that this term, along with *geographic unified command*, be formalized and considered for entry into joint doctrine.

[4] The word "normally" implies that there are exceptions, but only in extreme emergencies where the diplomatic apparatus is not present or has been incapacitated. Even in such circumstances, the military recognizes the importance of restoring diplomacy as quickly as possible.

[5] JP 1, I–9.