

U.S. AFRICOM

Media Delegation

Speaker:
General David Rodriguez
Commander,
U.S. AFRICOM

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MR. : OK, thank you very much, General, for joining us. This is the delegation of journalists from Angola and from Mozambique. I've asked the journalists to introduce themselves individually as they ask questions. We have – I understand you need to leave a little bit earlier, that we have about 45 minutes for questions. These are on the record. I've asked each of the journalists to ask a question each as we go around and then hopefully we'll have time to work our way back. Try to keep it kind of short so we get a chance to ask and answer a lot of questions. I'd also like to introduce John Vandiver from Stars and Stripes is sitting in the back as well. So without any further ado, the floor is yours, sir.

GENERAL DAVID RODRIGUEZ: OK, well, thank you. Well, good morning to all of you and thank you for accepting the invitation and making the trip to visit the United States Africa Command. I understand you've had a full schedule this week and learned a lot about how we work and our shared goals. I'm sure that you now have some good questions for me. So I'll keep my remarks short so we have plenty of time for that conversation.

In our work, we emphasize the importance of building enduring partnerships to help strengthen the security and stability of African nations. I strongly believe by working together we're making positive contributions to promoting peace and security. Our strategy focuses on developing partner nations' military forces throughout – by the various programs that you heard about this week. It's important to remember that all of our activities are led and guided by the U.S. Department of State. We use a comprehensive approach and are just part of the U.S. government – many other U.S. government departments and agencies as well as international agencies such as the United Nations, the European Union and NATO.

Most importantly, everything we do on the continent is at the request or approval of the host nation. I can't overemphasize this supporting and cooperative approach. Since this command was stood up and as we increased our understanding of the continent of Africa, our relationships with our African partners and our security cooperation engagements have also matured in both focus and effectiveness. But we have not changed our basic premise that it is Africans who are best able to address African security challenges. While there are multiple challenges in Africa, I'm optimistic about the future.

There is increasing accountability of governments as a new generation of political, social and economic leaders take charge. There is also increased regional and international integration as well as a willingness by both African nations and African organizations such as the African Union to respond to crises on the continent. Africa Command is committed to assisting African partner nations and everything we do on the continent is at the request of and are approved by our African partners. It is guided by the ambassador's team in each country and is executed in coordination with our State Department.

Our strategic approach recognizes that developing strong and responsive defense institutions can support regional stability, allowing partner militaries to operate under civilian authority while respecting the rule of law and international human rights. I strongly believe by cooperating and working together we will make enduring positive change possible as African nations and organizations continue to lead in addressing African security challenges. And now, I'll open it up to your questions.

Q: (Via translator.) Mr. Leonel Mucahno from the Mozambique News Agency. Thank you, sir. I know that the United States is spending a lot of money trying to help partners deal with specifically the terrorist threat. Unfortunately, we see that that threat only is getting stronger

and stronger. When we compare the two, it looks like the strategy is not working. How do you see adjusting that strategy so that it's more successful in the future?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I think the important part is to know that most of the challenges are not just purely military challenges. Much of it is about government leadership and economic development and education and health and opportunities for the fast-growing populations of Africa. And for most of those development challenges and education and health, you know, you need security and stability and that's really where we're supporting our African partners to provide that security and stability.

And, the African nations themselves long-term are really the solution to the challenges. And that's why really it's most important that everybody, the whole interagency and the international community as well as the countries themselves develop a broad approach that is not just about security but is about all those factors and economic development as well as government improvements. And that's the part where I think we can improve on the strategy is all working together as cooperatively so that we tend to advance all of those elements – government – governance as well as economic development and security. Thank you.

Q: (Via translator.) I'm Mario Dumeis (ph). I work for a magazine, political –

TRANSLATOR: He is a political reporter for the Africa Today magazine.

Q: (Via translator.) I would like to talk about the Libya case. In that case, some of the rebels were given weapons and support so that they could be successfully against the Gadhafi regime. The problem with such activities, as we've seen in the past, is that you would help that rebel now but then if he ever makes it to power, he may turn around and become a threat. So how do we deal with such situations?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I think the challenges in Libya, as you say, is mainly built around all the arms, ammunition and explosives that are all over the place and provide opportunities for these violent groups to generate revenue, to exert their will through violence and I think that, we all have to work together as an international community to help support the efforts of the good leaders to do the best as they change the culture in that country. And as you know, in Libya the challenges that they have had, building a government and building a Congress and getting a constitution that is representative and serves the populations of Libya has continued to be a challenge. And they've been at it for a couple of years now and continue to be thwarted in their efforts to develop a government that serves the people.

At the same time, the militias and many of the ethnic and tribal organizations have been the one providing the security and not the state. And now, they're in that tenuous situation of, you know, the chicken and egg, whether they get the government stood up or whether they build the security and they continue to be challenged by all those things at the same time as well as the challenges they have with the economic development and the security of the oil and the benefits that don't always go to the state. So I think it will take a huge international effort from first the diplomatic effort to help build a government that is representative and serves the people. Thank you.

Q: (Via translator.) Mr. Eugenio Mateus, with the private paper, O Pais, political report. I know that AFRICOM is working with partners in the Gulf of Guinea to deal with piracy. There was a ship that was taken hostage and showed up later on the Nigerian coast. Why isn't

AFRICOM helping monitor the Gulf of Guinea to help the partners there in the region deal with such problems?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Well, you know, we do not have the capacity to handle all the security challenges and the maritime challenges throughout the whole of Africa. And as you know, it's a huge challenge in the Gulf of Guinea for not only the capacities in many cases of the countries to patrol and secure their waters but there's also challenges in willingness in all the governments to work together as well as the huge corruption challenges in the Gulf of Guinea that have contributed to that problem. And one of the big challenges is also the legal regime so that the people can hold the pirates and the corrupt shipping, or the stolen goods, the fishing illegally and all those accountable through a rule of law that is challenged in that area.

And most of the countries that we work with, again, they don't want us to do it. They want to get – to gain and build the capacities so they can do it themselves which obviously is our strategy and much better for the African nations as a whole. So we work with many of the partner nations over there to build and support their development of maritime operation centers which can do a better job of understanding the situation out in the waters off their coast. We have supported ECOWAS and ECCAS in developing a code of conduct for the Gulf of Guinea so they all have shared standards and principles with which to operate in the area and have a maritime law enforcement program where we help build the capacity of law enforcement to properly handle the cases in accordance with international standards.

And while we have made some progress in some of those areas, they are small efforts compared to what has to happen across the Gulf of Guinea and all the host nations that share that water to properly secure it for their better economic and – economic future. And one of our efforts is always to regionalize and get all the regional partners to support as well as internationalize the effort because, as you know, part of the challenges in the Gulf of Guinea originate in South and Central America. So we just finished an exercise down there that included about 11 different nations, several from Europe, many of the African nations as well as Brazil to try to help coordinate those efforts and support the coordination.

And we're trying to encourage all the partners in the Gulf of Guinea to adopt some of the things that have been successful over in the eastern part of Africa, off the coast of Somalia where it really is a success story in what they've done to be able to reduce the piracy issues on that coast. Thank you.

Q: (Via translator.) I am Manuel Jose and I am reporter with the political center with the Voice of America in Rwanda and Angola. General, sir, lately there's been a lot of diplomatic activity in Angola, specifically a lot of folks – a lot of the high ranking diplomats visiting the country including from the United States. And there's a lot of talk about Angola playing a major role in helping resolve some of the conflicts regionally. What do you think a role that Angola could play in the future to help resolve conflicts regionally? Do you think it could play something like – a role – such a role?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. I do. I think Angola has a lot of very good strengths and has continued to build capacity in many areas that could be a positive role model for the region. And as I mentioned, we tried to get all the African partners working together because one of the challenges in Africa is those networks that operate, whether it be criminal networks or the terrorist networks or the insurgent networks don't respect boundaries. So we think that the countries in Africa that have all the elements of national power that are fairly well-developed can

be a positive role model, be a positive influence on the region, help their border states to improve some of the challenges there and we think that Angola can do that, yes. Thank you.

Q: (Inaudible.) (Via translator.) There are some challenges in the Strait of Mozambique in the eastern part of Africa on the coast in the area. What is AFRICOM doing to help partners in the region deal with those maritime specifically challenges and is AFRICOM considering establishing a presence besides the one in Djibouti to help the partners do that specifically?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: We do several types of activities to help improve the African capabilities to provide security in those critical straits, like the one you mentioned. We do capacity-building efforts that include training leaders. The African Partner Station, which is an exercise-type series that we continue to work with partners to help secure those critical straits. And again, we have the programs to help with building the maritime operation centers and including the law enforcement for the maritime.

As I mentioned, we really respond to the demands and the needs of the leadership of their militaries as well as the State Department who guides those efforts. And as far as where there are no long-term basing plans in Africa, we really send people down in small teams, again tailored to what is needed by the countries to increase their capacity and those are mainly temporary. Thank you.

Q: (Via translator.) Marian Marazo (ph) with Capital in Angola. Throughout the existence of AFRICOM and since its inception, did AFRICOM participate in the actual operations in Angola?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: No, not at all. We don't – the operations that we conduct, as I mentioned, are mainly about building capacity. So no, we have conducted no operations in Angola.

Q: (Via translator.) How about other than the military operations? What are some of the activities you conducted with the Angola military?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: OK. Well, the last couple of years we have conducted security cooperation events with the National Park Service, the gendarmes and the army to help build their capacity to interdict the illicit flows of things that are moved through Angola. And then also, of course, there are some activities that help in the maritime domain which has been requested by the Angolan leadership. But they are capacity-building activities. Thank you.

Q: (Via translator.) Jean Britu (ph) with Radio Mozambique. In its work does it ever happen for AFRICOM to conflict with U.N. objectives when it's collaborating with international – it collaborates but sometimes it does certain things on its own. Is there ever points where it's conflict of interest between the two?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: You know, I think there are very, very few of those people everybody, just like the international efforts in Africa as well as all the African nations, everybody's objective is basically the same, to help support the African nations build stability and security and prosperity. So we do not find ourselves in conflict with those organizations at all. You know, just like everything else, when you put an international or a regional coalition together, you know, you know, whether it be African nations or international organizations – everybody has a difference of opinion of how to get there. But as far as where they're going and

what their objectives are, they're all very, very common.

Q: (Via translator.) In AFRICOM's partnership with Mozambique, what are some of the strengths, some of the challenges and how do you see the future in this partnership?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I mean, the challenges of Mozambique are just like the challenges of most of the African nations. I mean, – the huge resources that are there and, you know, how that country, you know, handles that and all the international economic development, all those things that go on.

I think that, you know, a balanced approach, as I mentioned, that includes, improving the government services, improving the development and the economic opportunities for its people and providing security, both militarily as well as with the police so that the criminal elements and the insurgents and the potential terrorists are able to be managed in an effective way so that it doesn't disrupt the population of Mozambique.

And for our part, what we help with is we assist with demining efforts across the country, medical preparedness and response to medical challenges and then for the maritime domain we work on some boating skills and boarding skills for the navy to help interdict and disrupt those criminal elements. And again, we respond to what Mozambique requests of us and that's the areas they've asked for support.

Q: (Inaudible.) (Via translator.) In your military-to-military partnership with Angola, what has been sold or provided to Angola as far as equipment is concerned and what has been requested so far to be delivered in the future? Do you have any information on that?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: I'd have to get that information. But we can get that to you. But mainly, what we do is work with developing their capacities and to improve things like intelligence collection, intelligence sharing, evidence collection and to help with the law enforcement on the high seas and those are the things that we really help them with versus equipment. But we'll get you the request on what they've done specifically, OK? But as I said, in many of the situations we find ourselves in Africa, it's more about the training and the development of the whole system vice just equipment, OK?

Q: (Inaudible.) (Via translator.) Our country, Mozambique, is going through an exploration and discovery phase. There's a lot of rich natural resources that are being discovered as we speak. A lot of companies from around the world, specifically from the United States, are present on the ground and they're helping with the exploration. And does AFRICOM have a plan, a roadmap for the future to secure those routes, those maritime routes to transport or to help the country transport those resources?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: No, we do not. That effort of the U.S. policy in the region is guided by the State Department and currently there are no plans for us to support securing any of that effort.

MR. : Do we have time for one more question? Or otherwise, I think we're – no, no. I don't know if you still wanted to add that just the support for maritime security is of course –

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, well, obviously as I mentioned before, the piece with what we're doing in Mozambique to help develop those skills for the navy to be able to intercept those

problems again is that we do, is to help to build that capacity, not execute it.

Q: (Via translator.) Isn't it hard to run programs to handle an African AOR from Europe? Are there challenges to that?

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Well, you know, you know Africa is a huge continent. No matter where it would be, it would be a long distance to travel to go to many of the different areas. But the good part is we're in the same time zone and that always helps with the coordination. Plus we have great access from Europe into all parts of Africa plus many of the partners that we work with in Africa and the international community are Europeans because of the common interest with the African nations. So I think it's a good spot to operate from.

MR. : The general needs to go.

GEN. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I have to head off, but I appreciate your time today and I appreciate your questions. And thank you for coming up here and sharing your time and energy with all of us and also thanks for what you do for your nations because the role of what reporters play is hugely important in a free society. So thank you very much. Thank you very much.

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