

UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND 2015 POSTURE STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to update you on the efforts of United States Africa Command. Africa continues to present a broad spectrum of opportunities and challenges to the United States and our allies and partners. U.S. Africa Command is working closely with allies and partners to build relationships and capacity vital to advancing our national interests of security, prosperity, international order, and the promotion of universal values. American interests in Africa Command's 53-country area of responsibility include the prevention of terrorist attacks against U.S. interests, security of the global economic system, and protection of our citizens abroad. In addition, Africa's growing importance to allies and emerging powers presents opportunities to reinforce U.S. global security objectives through our engagement on the continent.

African states and regional organizations are important partners in addressing security challenges, including terrorist and criminal networks that link Africa with Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and North and South America. Africa's role in the global economic system is expanding: the continent is surrounded by international shipping lanes and holds eight of the world's 15 fastest growing economies. Africa is rich in natural resources and the human capital represented by a large youth population. Forty-one percent of Africans are under the age of 15, and by 2050, roughly one in four people on the planet will live in Africa. The capacity of African partners to contribute to multinational efforts, including those aimed at preventing, mitigating, and resolving armed conflict, is increasing. Many countries have made progress in developing institutions that uphold the rule of law, as reflected by adherence to the law of war and respect for human rights. However, in many countries, weak leadership and corruption continue to constrain progress in governance, security, and development.

The past year was a dynamic time for Africa Command and our partners. Together, we made progress in several areas. In East Africa, our regional partners continued to lead security efforts in Somalia and demonstrated greater effectiveness and coordination in operations against al-Qa'ida affiliate al-Shabaab. By supporting the continued development of partner capacities, and through enabling assistance and selective unilateral operations, we enhanced the collective gains our partners made against al-Shabaab. As a result of improved security, the Somali people and government have greater opportunities to make progress in the development of governance and economic institutions.

In North and West Africa, we expanded our collaboration with allies and partners to address growing threats in Libya, Mali, and Nigeria, including an increasingly cohesive network of al-Qa'ida affiliates and adherents, a growing Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant presence, and Boko Haram. We built capacity and enabled our allies and partners to disrupt transnational terrorist and criminal networks, strengthen border security, and contribute to multinational peacekeeping operations. We also ensured that cooperative security locations on the continent are able to support the temporary staging of crisis response forces to protect U.S. personnel and facilities. When deteriorating security conditions in Libya led several countries to suspend embassy operations, we supported the U.S. State Department in ensuring the safe departure of

American and allied personnel. We captured suspected terrorists in support of efforts to bring justice to the perpetrators of violence against American citizens and interests. Although security declines in Libya have limited bilateral military activities, we have improved our coordination with regional and international partners and are prepared to expand our bilateral engagement when conditions are more conducive to building the capacities of defense institutions and forces. In Nigeria, we are conducting a range of bilateral efforts and preparing to expand our engagement as security and partner capacity allow. Simultaneously, we are working with Nigeria, neighboring countries, and our international partners to improve the planning and coordination of efforts to counter Boko Haram.

In Liberia, we supported the Liberian government and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in addressing the complex humanitarian emergency associated with the largest Ebola epidemic in history. Our combined efforts with Liberian partners helped to save lives and potentially avert a global health crisis. Nearly 3,000 Department of Defense personnel, including civilians and contractors, deployed to Operation UNITED ASSISTANCE last fall. Under the superb leadership of Major General Williams and U.S. Army Africa, followed by Major General Volesky and the 101st Airborne (Air Assault), Joint Force Command – United Assistance provided unique capabilities in coordination and communication, logistics, engineering, and health worker training. The speed and flexibility of the U.S. military response was enhanced by U.S. Transportation Command’s flexible joint expeditionary capabilities in planning, communications, public affairs, and port opening, and the presence of U.S. European Command and Africa Command forces forward-positioned in Europe. The U.S. military demonstrated flexibility and capability to assist when others could not, and ensured critical initial gaps were filled while civilian partners ramped up their capabilities. The deployment of U.S. forces helped boost the confidence and courage of others to join the effort, and served as a catalyst for the robust international response required to turn the tide of the epidemic. Joint Force Command – United Assistance transitioned military tasks to civilian partners as they attained sufficient capacity. We are tailoring remaining Joint Force Command capabilities and Africa Command security cooperation efforts to build additional capacity and ensure our regional partners are prepared to respond to potential future outbreaks.

Africa Command’s operational requirements to support efforts in East, North, and West Africa and the protection of U.S. personnel and facilities across the continent increased in the past year. In Fiscal Year 2014, we conducted 68 operations, 11 major joint exercises, and 595 security cooperation activities. In comparison, we conducted 55 operations, 10 major joint exercises, and 481 security cooperation activities in Fiscal Year 2013. With our requirements expanding faster than resources are increasing, we are utilizing innovative and creative ways to mitigate capability gaps, including sharing forces with other Combatant Commands and leveraging the capabilities of multinational and interagency partners.

MISSION STATEMENT

U.S. Africa Command, with national and international partners, disrupts transnational threats, protects U.S. personnel and facilities, prevents and mitigates conflict, and builds defense capabilities in order to promote regional stability and prosperity.

CURRENT TRENDS

Africa's security environment remains dynamic and uncertain. Africa is rising and so are the expectations of Africans. While greater popular demands can accelerate needed political and economic reforms, they can also be destabilizing, particularly in fragile states. Across much of the continent, crime and corruption impede the development of democratic institutions, reduce security and stability, and constrain economic development. A number of autocratic regimes are failing to meet the growing expectations of their people. Corrupt leadership, persistent economic inequalities, swelling youth populations, expanding urbanization, and ready access to technology can fuel popular discontent and violent civil unrest. When populations cannot rely on the ballot box for accountable governance, they are more likely to resort to violence. Where governance is weak and steeped in corruption, the government and security forces can be as feared and distrusted by the population as criminal and terrorist organizations.

Corruption is a universal challenge that encourages the complicity of public servants in criminal and terrorist activities and destroys public trust in decision-making systems. To help our African partners address corruption, we must carefully tailor the conditions for military assistance. Where corruption permeates military institutions, its consequences can be deadly. When resources are diverted from military pay and sustainment, forces are less capable and more vulnerable on the battlefield. They are less effective at protecting civilians and may resort to predatory behavior. Corruption is corrosive to the foundation of trust and mutual responsibility on which enduring partnerships must be built.

Terrorist, insurgent, and criminal groups exploit corruption, regional instability, and popular grievances to mobilize people and resources, expand their networks, and establish safe havens. The nexus between crime and terror is growing on the continent as terrorists and criminals increasingly utilize the same illicit pathways to move people, money, weapons, and other resources. The network of al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents continues to exploit Africa's under-governed regions and porous borders to train and conduct attacks. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is expanding its presence in North Africa. Terrorists with allegiances to multiple groups are expanding their collaboration in recruitment, financing, training, and operations, both within Africa and transregionally. Violent extremist organizations are utilizing increasingly sophisticated improvised explosive devices, and casualties from these weapons in Africa increased by approximately 40 percent in 2014. These groups have also successfully adapted to the internet and social media, and leverage these tools to generate funds, recruit followers, and spread their ideology to the United States and around the world.

In East Africa, al-Shabaab remains the primary security threat to U.S. interests, despite progress by regional partners in liberating parts of southern and central Somalia from the group's control. The effectiveness of the African Union Mission in Somalia continues to increase. The security situation in Mogadishu is improving gradually and several countries, including the United Kingdom, resumed or expanded embassy operations in Somalia last year. Weakened by the African Union Mission in Somalia's recent offensive, al-Shabaab has modified its operational structure and tactics to increase the reach of its attacks into troop-contributing countries. This underscores the importance of both continuing to improve the effectiveness of the African Union Mission in Somalia, as well as taking a regional approach that counters al-Shabaab's expanding operational reach.

In North and West Africa, Libyan and Nigerian insecurity increasingly threaten U.S. interests. In spite of multinational security efforts, terrorist and criminal networks are gaining strength and interoperability. Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar al-Sharia, al-Murabitun, Boko Haram, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and other violent extremist organizations are exploiting weak governance, corrupt leadership, and porous borders across the Sahel and Maghreb to train and move fighters and distribute resources.

Libya-based threats to U.S. interests are growing. If left unchecked, I believe they have the highest potential among security challenges on the continent to increase risks to U.S. and European strategic interests in the next two years and beyond. Libyan governance, security, and economic stability deteriorated significantly in the past year. Competition between the House of Representatives and General National Congress, each backed by various militias, has fueled conflict over resources and power. Some North African and Gulf states have complicated the situation by supporting military operations within Libya. Today, armed groups control large areas of territory in Libya and operate with impunity. Libya appears to be emerging as a safe haven where terrorists, including al-Qa'ida and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-affiliated groups, can train and rebuild with impunity. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is increasingly active in Libya, including in Derna, Benghazi, Tripoli, and Sebha.

Libyan leaders have yet to demobilize militias, create a sense of national identity, build judicial capacity, and develop state security institutions and forces representative of the population. Instead, they have opted to contract militia groups for security. Despite political commitments and coordination between the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Union, United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Turkey, Morocco, and other partners to support security sector development, the Libyan government's weak capacity has prevented the execution of many initiatives.

The spillover effects of instability in Libya and northern Mali increase risks to U.S. interests in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, including the success of Tunisia's democratic transition. Tunisia held its first democratic elections last year and is the only Arab Spring country that remains on a positive trajectory. Libya's insecurity has created a regional humanitarian crisis and has enabled increased foreign fighter, migrant, and drug flows that threaten the stability of North Africa, Europe's southern flank, and the greater Mediterranean basin. Weapons and fighters exported from Libya have increased the capacity of criminal and terrorist organizations in North and West Africa. Several thousand foreign fighters have traveled from North Africa to Syria and Iraq, often via southeast Europe, and some are beginning to return with increased training and experience.

The security situation in Nigeria also declined in the past year. Boko Haram threatens the functioning of a government that is challenged to maintain its people's trust and to provide security and other basic services. In recent months, Nigeria has faced a confluence of stresses: an escalation in terrorist attacks, economic stresses exacerbated by falling oil revenues, and political –tension associated with highly contested national elections. Boko Haram has launched attacks across Nigeria's borders into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Lake Chad Basin states are now expanding their cooperation in efforts to counter Boko Haram, including by beginning to develop a Multinational Joint Task Force.

In Liberia, the government and military have demonstrated their ability to lead through crisis. The military was called to assist in responding to the Ebola epidemic and responded with pride and professionalism, reflecting leadership at all levels and the positive effects of U.S. engagement. The Liberian military was demobilized and rebuilt from the ground up following 14 years of civil war, and the United States has supported this effort with sustained investment in developing the capacities of Liberian defense institutions and forces. In addition to assisting in containing the Ebola epidemic, the Liberian army's efforts strengthened the trust between the government, military, and people of Liberia; bolstered the army's institutional and operational capacities; and deepened the enduring partnership between Liberia and the United States.

In the Gulf of Guinea, the international community is increasing its cooperation to address maritime security challenges, including piracy and armed robbery at sea; trafficking in drugs, arms, and persons; and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. African, European, and South American navies, as well as representatives from the private sector, are increasing their participation in combined maritime exercises in the Gulf of Guinea. Despite modest progress in strengthening regional maritime security capacities and cooperation, maritime crime continues to hinder trade, development, and food security.

Central Africa remains fragile and vulnerable to humanitarian disasters. The Lord's Resistance Army, an armed group that emerged in northern Uganda in the late 1980s, has a small presence in border areas of the Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Over the course of its history, the group committed atrocities against tens of thousands of civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians. Military operations and the efforts of civilian agencies and non-governmental organizations have resulted in the capture or surrender of senior Lord's Resistance Army leaders, facilitated defections, and increased civilian early warning networks. Four of the top five Lord's Resistance Army leaders have been apprehended or removed from the battlefield. Today, the Lord's Resistance Army no longer threatens regional stability and its ability to harm civilian populations has been reduced significantly. The group continues to prey upon scattered and isolated local communities for survival and is resorting to wildlife poaching as a primary source of revenue.

United Nations, European Union, and French forces contributed to modest improvements in security in the Central African Republic, where conditions stabilized sufficiently to warrant resuming operations of the U.S. Embassy in Bangui. However, both the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo are at risk of further destabilization by insurgent groups, and simmering ethnic tensions in the Great Lakes region have the potential to boil over violently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Small elements of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are making gradual progress in professional development and institutional reform, and played constructive roles in addressing insecurity in the Central African Republic and countering the Lord's Resistance Army last year.

Southern Africa remains relatively stable. The region fields some of the most professional and capable military forces on the continent and is a net exporter of security. In the past year, South Africa, Angola, and Tanzania contributed to regional and continental security, including through participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite its relative stability, the region faces economic

and social challenges that include poverty, crime, and social inequality. Future leadership challenges in countries such as Zimbabwe will increase the risk of regional instability.

APPROACH

Africa Command works closely with allies and partners to share information, reinforce shared priorities for democratic governance and security, address immediate threats, and respond to crisis. We are strengthening our relationships with other elements of the U.S. government to improve our ability to align strategies, leverage and support multinational and interagency partners, and ensure we effectively support comprehensive U.S. government efforts led by U.S. Ambassadors. We work closely with other combatant commands, especially U.S. European Command, Central Command, Special Operations Command, and Transportation Command, and Strategic Command's sub-unified Cyber Command, to plan collaboratively and share capabilities when appropriate. The trust and teamwork we build with partners are vital to the success of our collective efforts.

Africa Command's primary tools for implementing our strategy are **posture, presence, programs, exercises, engagements, and operations.**

Our strategic **posture** is the platform for our presence, programs, exercises, engagements, and operations on the continent. Our posture is designed to maximize operational flexibility and agility, and is primarily comprised of expeditionary cooperative security locations and contingency locations.

The single enduring element of our **posture** and **presence** in Africa is a forward operating site at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, which provides a critical platform for the activities of multiple combatant commands. Camp Lemonnier and expeditionary facilities hosted by African nations support the activities of U.S., allied, and partner forces. This strategic posture was enhanced by the signing of an Implementing Arrangement in May 2014 that secures our presence in Djibouti through 2044. Posture and presence in Europe also provide vital support to our mission, and include a joint intelligence analysis support center in the United Kingdom and crisis response forces stationed in Spain, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom to enable rapid deployment to the African continent.

Our **presence** in Africa and Europe includes Defense Attaché Offices and Offices of Security Cooperation in U.S. Embassies in Africa. Offices of Security Cooperation in the Africa Command area of responsibility increased from nine in Fiscal Year 2007 to 33 in 2014. We will add a 34th office, in Malawi, this year. Our presence also includes a combined joint task force at Camp Lemonnier and five component commands in Europe, some of which are shared with U.S. European Command. We also have small advisory teams embedded in allied and partner strategic, operational, and tactical headquarters. These teams support our programs, exercises, engagements, and operations, and their activities help build mutual trust and confidence and enhance interoperability.

Our **programs** and combined **exercises** assist in the development of partner defense capacities as part of a broader U.S. government effort, and also support the development of the African continental and regional security architecture. We build partner defense capacities in executive functions, including national military staff functions associated with strategic planning, readiness, and budgeting; generating force functions, such as recruiting, training, equipping, and maintaining infrastructure; and operating force functions necessary to conduct collective training and perform assigned missions. When appropriate, we design combined training and exercises to help maintain, and even enhance, the readiness of U.S. and partner forces.

Our **engagements** play critical roles in strengthening our military-to-military relationships, advancing our mutual interests, and promoting shared values.

We closely coordinate our **operations** with allies, partners, and other combatant commands. Most are planned with and executed by the military forces of our African partners, with the United States in a supporting role. Our operations play a role in building partner capacity, especially when we enable partner operations with our advice and assistance.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

Our long-term objectives are to support the development of partnerships that can help expand the positive influence of nations with the greatest potential to advance good governance, security, and economic growth on the continent. Population size and prospective economic, political, and military power can all contribute to this potential influence. In addition to partnering with potential continental influencers, we work closely with regional influencers – countries that contribute to regional stability, and with whom our pursuit of mutual objectives can reinforce U.S. interests.

Our tools for strengthening partnerships include programs for building defense capacities in executive functions, generating forces, and operating forces. The Department of State's programs, such as International Military Education and Training, Peacekeeping Operations, Foreign Military Financing, and Foreign Military Sales, are particularly important in this regard. The National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program provides a unique and vital mechanism for sustaining the long-term engagement critical to building relationships and capacity. I appreciate the Congress's support to new initiatives, such as the Security Governance Initiative, Counter-terrorism Partnership Fund, and Africa Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership, which will facilitate more comprehensive U.S. Government security engagement in Africa.

Parallel efforts by civilian agencies to support progress in democracy, governance, and security sector reform are essential to achieving U.S. peace and security objectives, and I appreciate the Congress's support to the Department of State and USAID in these critical areas. Too often, efforts to strengthen progress in democracy, governance, justice, and security in the non-military sphere fail to keep pace with those in the defense sector. Without good governance and the economic development it enables, security gains are rarely sustainable. We continue to support interagency efforts to achieve the more comprehensive approach to security sector assistance envisioned by Presidential Policy Directive 23.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

As we strengthen partnerships with continental and regional influencers, we simultaneously pursue five priorities:

1. Countering Violent Extremism and Enhancing Stability in East Africa

Several years of modest U.S. security assistance in East Africa, including military training and mentoring, have helped our partners gradually strengthen their capacity to conduct peacekeeping operations and counter violent extremist organizations in Somalia. In the past year, with advice and assistance from U.S. forces, African Union forces improved their operational planning, demonstrated increased proficiency on the battlefield, and gained significant territory from al-Shabaab. During Operation INDIAN OCEAN, African Union forces liberated key terrain from al-Shabaab's control and disrupted the group's training, operations, and revenue generation. The African Union Mission in Somalia, United Nations, and East African partners improved their coordination in planning for offensive and stability operations. U.S. forces also conducted successful unilateral operations against high-value terrorists in Somalia this year, including lethal strikes against al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane and his intelligence chief.

Although al-Shabaab is weaker today than it was a year ago, it remains a persistent threat to regional and western interests, continues to conduct attacks, and is likely to regenerate its operational capacity if given the opportunity. Over the past year, al-Shabaab has either planned or executed increasingly complex and lethal attacks in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, and Ethiopia aimed at impeding Somalia's political development and discouraging African Union Mission in Somalia troop contributing countries from sustaining security commitments in Somalia. Additional military pressure on al-Shabaab, strengthened governance, and expanded economic opportunity in Somalia will contribute significantly to neutralizing this threat. Off the coast of Somalia, multinational military efforts continue to sustain maritime security improvements achieved over the past few years, and no ships were successfully hijacked by pirates last year.

In the coming year, we will continue to support partner operations against al-Shabaab, facilitate coordination in planning for offensive and stability operations in Somalia, and support maritime security efforts in the region. We will also continue to encourage multinational coordination in efforts to develop the institutional, operational and tactical capacities the Somali National Army will require to assume security responsibilities in the future. The Somali government and people will need to accelerate progress in state formation, preparing for an on-time constitutional referendum and elections, strengthening institutions, developing a sense of national identity, and building security forces that are representative of the population. The Federal Government of Somalia's ability to hold terrain, govern effectively and democratically, and deliver services to the Somali people will determine its ability to sustain security gains and stabilize the country. We look forward to the establishment, when conditions permit, of a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in Mogadishu to facilitate more robust political, economic, and security engagement.

2. Countering Violent Extremism and Enhancing Stability in North and West Africa

In North and West Africa, allies and partners are increasing their capacity and collaboration in addressing security threats across the Maghreb, Sahel, and Lake Chad Basin regions. As conditions in Libya declined significantly, Algeria expanded its assistance to neighboring countries, and both Algeria and Tunisia strengthened counter-terrorism and border security efforts. U.S. assistance facilitated the strengthening of regional partnerships and capacity, and we expanded dialogue and collaborative planning.

In the past year, we built partner capacity and enabled allies and partners to disrupt terrorist and criminal threat networks in the Maghreb and Sahel. We supported the State Department in preparing partners for deployment to multilateral peacekeeping operations in Mali, where 11 African countries are contributing troops to the United Nations mission. U.S. forces captured Ahmed Abu Khattala, who is a suspected ringleader in the 2012 attack against U.S. facilities in Benghazi that resulted in the deaths of four Americans, and Abu Anas al-Libi, who was suspected of planning the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

In the year ahead, we will continue to look for opportunities to constructively influence the situation in Libya. We will work with partners to improve our overall effectiveness in containing the spillover effects of Libyan insecurity; preventing the movement of terrorist fighters, facilitators, and weapons into Libya; and simultaneously disrupting the violent extremist networks within. We are working within existing authorities to address the threat posed by violent extremist groups, including the growing Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant presence in Libya. As required, we will also seek new authorities to ensure that this threat does not grow. Working with U.S. European Command, we will seek to align our efforts to disrupt foreign fighter flows and illicit trafficking between North Africa and Southern Europe with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Southern Flank strategy. As conditions improve in Libya, we will be ready to support the development of Libyan defense institutions and forces.

In the past year, allies and partners also increased their cooperation in efforts to address Boko Haram and other regional security challenges emanating from Nigeria. We provided training to and expanded information-sharing with the Nigerian military and other regional partners, such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

In the coming year, we will continue to work with the Nigerian military and will work with allies and partners to support the development of the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force.

3. Protecting U.S. Personnel and Facilities

U.S. Africa Command is responsible for supporting the protection of U.S. personnel and facilities in Africa. Fifteen high-risk, high-threat diplomatic posts are located in the Africa Command area of responsibility. Our response forces consist of U.S. Army and Air Force elements staged in Djibouti and a Marine Corps Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force and two Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Teams based in Spain. We also have Special Operations Crisis Response Force elements located in Germany and the United Kingdom. With limited forces

and infrastructure, we are working to maximize our adaptability and flexibility to respond effectively to crisis.

In the past year, we improved our ability to temporarily stage response forces closer to hotspots when there are indications and warnings of crisis. We leveraged force-sharing agreements with other Combatant Commands to move personnel and equipment quickly between theaters during crisis response operations. We also made progress in securing resources and agreements to relocate intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets so they can be utilized more effectively to build our situational understanding and support operations.

Last year, U.S. Africa Command and our components reinforced the security of U.S. Embassies in South Sudan and Libya and supported the departure of U.S., Korean, French, and other allied personnel from Libya. We provided security to enable the resumption of U.S. Embassy operations in the Central African Republic, complementing our enabling support to French forces and to African partners participating in the United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. In the coming year, we will continue to develop additional expeditionary infrastructure in host nations and work with the Department of State toward a common understanding of decision points for reinforcing embassies, prepositioning response forces, and executing military-assisted departures.

4. Enhancing Stability in the Gulf of Guinea

Regional partners are gradually building their capacity to address maritime security challenges. U.S. programs and combined operations like the Africa Partnership Station and African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership are supporting this progress. For example, in January 2015, the Ghanaian Navy interdicted a hijacked tanker and arrested eight pirates, demonstrating capacities we have helped to strengthen through our maritime security initiatives. Naval forces from Africa, Europe, and South America expanded their participation in our regional maritime exercises, and we also increased our collaboration with civilian agencies and the private sector. In the coming year, we will continue to support regional maritime security activities and look for opportunities to complement civilian initiatives that address the root causes of maritime crime by strengthening good governance and promoting economic development.

5. Countering the Lord's Resistance Army

Uganda, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan are participating in the African Union Regional Task Force against the Lord's Resistance Army and leading military efforts to reduce the group's safe havens, capture key leaders, and promote defections. The African Union Regional Task Force, with advice and assistance from U.S. forces deployed to Operation OBSERVANT COMPASS, made significant progress last year in weakening the Lord's Resistance Army and reducing its ability to threaten civilian populations. Today, fewer than 200 fighters remain, the group no longer threatens regional stability, and local communities have greater capacity to receive defectors and communicate warnings about attacks from armed groups. In the coming year, we will continue to work with our regional partners to tailor our support to reflect their efforts.

ADDRESSING FUTURE REQUIREMENTS AND MITIGATING RISK

Africa Command's capability gaps are likely to grow in the year ahead, primarily as a result of growth in transregional threat networks and the mission to protect U.S. personnel and facilities. Our greatest capability shortfalls will likely remain intelligence support and personnel recovery. To address future requirements and mitigate risks to our national interests, Africa Command is pursuing the following actions to increase collaboration with partners, enhance operational flexibility, and close key capability gaps:

- Increase collaboration and interoperability with multinational and interagency partners to better leverage and support allies and partners, including by working with policy-makers and the intelligence community to expand information-sharing. Expanding our sharing with multinational entities, in addition to bilateral sharing, will enhance the trust, confidence, and interoperability of partners.
- Refine our posture and presence in Africa and Europe to reduce risk in operations to protect U.S. personnel and facilities.
- In coordination with interagency partners, improve our use of informational tools to counter the spread of violent extremist ideology, including by re-establishing regional information websites and expanding into social media to provide platforms for regional voices to counter violent extremist ideology and influence.
- Leverage combined training and exercises to strengthen interoperability and help maintain the readiness of U.S., allied, and partner forces.
- Employ new operational concepts and flexible, tailorable capabilities, such as the Army's Regionally Aligned Force and the Marine Corps' Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force.
- Increase operational flexibility by expanding force-sharing with other Combatant Commands and agreements with host nations to facilitate access and overflight.
- Work with the Joint Staff and Office of the Secretary of Defense to pursue increased assignment or allocation of forces, register the demand for critical capabilities, and mitigate gaps in key enablers, such as intelligence, personnel recovery, medical support, and tactical mobility.
- Work with the Joint Staff and Office of the Secretary of Defense to pursue authorities that will increase our ability to implement programs and other activities regionally, which will allow us to respond with greater agility and flexibility to emerging threats and opportunities to advance our interests.

As we look to the future, I anticipate Africa's importance to our national interests of security, prosperity, international order, and the promotion of universal values will continue to grow. We are contributing to progress in regional security through modest and sustained investments in building partner capacity. In some places, the enemy is growing capacity more quickly than our partners. Where our national interests compel us to tip the scales and enhance collective security gains, we may have to do more – either by enabling our allies and partners, or acting unilaterally. Decreasing resources will make this difficult. In addition, the United States and our allies and partners will be increasingly challenged to implement the comprehensive approaches necessary to advance governance, security, and development on the continent. As our Nation's leaders make increasingly difficult decisions about strategic risks and tradeoffs, Africa

Command will continue to sharpen our prioritization, align resources to strategy, increase our flexibility, and inform risk management decisions.

Thank you for your continued support to our mission and to the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, civilians, and contractors advancing our Nation's defense interests in Africa.