

STATEMENT OF
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UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND
BEFORE THE
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A secure and stable Africa

is an enduring American interest

INTRODUCTION

A secure and stable Africa is an enduring American interest.

Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the Committee:

I am honored and privileged to represent the members of U.S. Africa Command, an exceptional team dedicated to protecting our nation and advancing our interests. U.S. Africa Command has been engaged in a “blank slate review” since I took command in July last year, an effort which has accelerated since I provided my initial assessment to the Secretary of Defense in October. In concert with the Department of Defense, we have developed a prioritized list of objectives and actions to protect the Homeland, secure our strategic interests in Africa, and focus the American taxpayer’s investment in the right areas. We are further refocusing U.S. Africa Command’s approach on the objectives of the National Security, Defense, and Military Strategies. These foundational documents acknowledge the strategic importance of Africa and guide our mission:

U.S. Africa Command, with partners, counters transnational threats and malign actors, strengthens security forces and responds to crises in order to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security and stability.

Africa is home to the fastest growing economies and populations in the world, sits at crossroads of international commerce and trade, and watches over the world’s most important sea lines of communication. The U.S. plays a unique role in ensuring these strategic routes remain open to all. The international order we have helped create gives people everywhere the best hope for safe, secure, and prosperous lives. Africans recognize this and continue to look to the U.S. for leadership. Our future security, prosperity, and strategic access in times of crisis rest on free, open, and secure sea and air lines of communication around Africa. Simply put, a secure and stable Africa is essential for America’s security.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

A Vast Continent. The land mass of Africa is larger than the United States, China, India, Japan, and all of Europe combined. This vast continent of opportunity and promise also includes strategic challenges from malign competitors and violent extremist organizations (VEOs). Of the 1.3 billion people who live in Africa, over two-thirds live in conditions of astonishing poverty.¹ Poverty and food insecurity are exacerbated by natural resource degradation, shifting weather patterns, climate impact, infectious disease outbreaks, and conflict. Lack of economic opportunities and a search for a better life leads to internal displacement and refugees, which creates new challenges and conflicts over increasingly scarce resources. These factors and others have led to an uptick in migration to Europe in recent years, under dangerous conditions in many cases, and feed a lucrative market for VEOs and criminal networks.

These challenges will be amplified as Africa's population continues to grow. By 2050, Africa's population is projected to double, and more than a quarter of the world's inhabitants will reside on the continent. By 2100, Africa's population is projected to almost double again.² At that point, almost 1 in 3 people on the planet will live in Africa. This massive population growth will further strain resources, require job creation, potentially lead to surges in migration to Europe and beyond, and will increase political instability, communal conflict, trans-regional terrorism, and further marginalization of already vulnerable populations.

Nonetheless, Africa is also a land of opportunity. Over half of the world's farming land is in Africa, and when effectively managed, Africa's population growth and rich natural resources drive progress. Of note, 26 African nations hold reserves of minerals determined to be critical to the U.S.

¹ 85% of Africans live off less than 5.50 USD per day, World Bank October 2019

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision

economy and national security³. For 2020, the World Bank projects six of the world’s fastest growing economies to be in Africa, with Rwanda identified as the second fastest growing economy in the world (after Guyana) with 8.1% GDP growth. In conditions that promote a healthy business climate, these burgeoning markets present opportunities for U.S. trade and investment.

Africa and National Security. Located at the crossroads of the world, Africa watches over strategic choke points and sea lines of communication, including the Mediterranean Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar on NATO’s southern flank, the Red Sea and the Bab al Mandeb strait, and the Mozambique Channel. These strategic pathways are essential to global commerce and critical to the operations of most of our Geographic and Functional Combatant Commands. These corridors facilitate one-third of the world’s shipping, and are key to the movement of Africa’s vast natural resources including energy and strategic mineral. African, U.S., and global prosperity depend on unhindered access to these waters.

Global Power Competition⁴. China and Russia have long recognized the strategic and economic importance of Africa, and continue to seize opportunities to expand their influence across the continent. The National Defense Strategy directs us to prioritize great power competition with China and Russia due to the “magnitude of the threats they post to U.S. security and prosperity today and the potential for those threats to increase in the future.” The U.S. encourages constructive partners helping to develop Africa’s economic, infrastructure, humanitarian, and security sectors to the benefit of all Africans. However, malign actors, unencumbered by international norms and professional military standards, leverage speed of action and access to economic and security arenas

³ Executive Order 13817, A Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals, December 20, 2017

⁴ I use “global” rather than “great” because China and Russia are “global powers” but they are not “great powers” in the way the U.S. is. Further, calling Russia “great” plays right into the Russian’s hands as their dream is for Russia to be considered great like the U.S. and they are far from it.

in many parts of the continent. Their coercive and exploitative activities undermine and threaten many African countries' stability. China is outpacing all of its competitors in Africa, where, with the construction of a military port and helicopter landing pads, it is converting its first overseas military base in Djibouti into a power projection platform. We know they seek to open more bases and their unprofitable seaport investments in East Africa and Southern Africa track closely with involvement by Chinese military forces. These Chinese seaports are not genuine commercial ports; these investments are geo-economic tools to increase the PRC's geopolitical influence throughout the continent. China continues to invest heavily in African infrastructure and currently maintains 52 embassies in Africa – three more than the U.S. and a 24% increase since 2012. China also leads its G20 partners in head of state and senior leadership visits to the continent over the last decade. In the last seven years, China has sold over two billion USD in arms to African partners. During the same period, Russia increased access agreements by 200% and remains the top arms dealer for the entire continent, selling nearly nine billion USD in arms to African partners. Russian private military companies (PMCs) have a highly destabilizing influence in Africa, as they are frequently employed to secure Russian investments at the expense of Africans, to prop up corrupt regimes and establish a broader Russian military footprint globally. In Libya, Russian PMCs almost certainly downed a U.S. unarmed, unmanned aircraft in November using a sophisticated Russian air defense system. From the 7th Forum On China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing in September 2018 where China pledged over 60 billion USD in investments, to the October 2019 Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi where all 54 African countries attended with over 43 Heads of State, it is clear that China prioritizes Africa and Russia sees an opportunity to gain a strong position on NATO's southern flank. China and Russia's corrupt and exploitative investment and security assistance often prioritizes their own gains rather than building long-term African security capacity, and their activities often undermine transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights. Importantly,

they erode U.S. influence and access over time.

VEOs Remain a Reality. Violent extremist networks are expanding in Africa at a rapid pace, due in large part to weak governance and disenfranchised populations while employing violence to exacerbate despair and hopelessness. They undermine public trust in local governments and militaries, eventually filling - via illegitimate means - security and public service voids while expanding their radical ideology. In general, African governments view VEOs as near-term threats to their capacity to govern effectively, protect their populations, and improve their economies. They also pose threats to U.S. interests. Most VEOs in Africa seek to strike at the U.S. in the region, and some aspire to strike the U.S. Homeland. U.S. Africa Command prioritizes efforts on the most capable VEOs today. In East Africa, we focus on al-Qa'ida's al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab is the largest and most kinetically active al-Qa'ida network in the world. After a series of complex attacks targeting Somali and U.S. bases last year, in November al-Shabaab's leadership publicly identified Americans and U.S. interests worldwide as priority targets – mirroring Usama bin Laden's declaration of war on the U.S. in 1996. The latest manifestation of this threat was the 5 January 2020 attack by al-Shabaab on U.S. forces at the Kenyan Naval Base at Manda Bay, which killed three Americans and clearly demonstrated al-Shabaab's willingness and capability to attack the U.S. outside of Somalia.

While al-Shabaab is most dangerous to U.S. interests today, ISIS is rapidly franchising VEOs in all corners of Africa and may become a pre-eminent threat to U.S. interests, as it did until western intervention in Iraq and Syria. In West Africa, the primary VEO threats are al-Qa'ida's Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and ISIS networks in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Unlike we have seen elsewhere, in this region, both al-Qa'ida and ISIS networks are working together to exploit under-governed regions, disenfranchised populations, and porous borders and threaten the security and stability of our African partners, our allies, U.S. commercial

and security interests, and U.S. citizens. Kidnapping for ransom remains a pervasive threat throughout Africa where Americans and other Western partners are often targeted by VEOs to raise revenue or exact other concessions from Western countries. Left unchecked, this threat will continue to expand across Africa.

Africa is a complex continent with a unique environment. There are numerous big challenges, but its potential is enormous. Today our African partners are under siege from new agents coming to strip them of their natural resources, trap them in unpayable debt, and undermine the international order. Chinese investment has brought some benefit to the continent through infrastructure projects that have improved roads and connected markets to transportation hubs. However, the United States offers a unique partnership, as we believe in investing in and fortifying our African partners to enable “African solutions to African problems” – the bedrock of long-term self-sufficiency, security, and development.

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND STRATEGIC APPROACH

U.S. Africa Command’s operations are a bargain for America...

an “ounce of prevention” that is just pennies on the defense dollar.

The United States must continue to advance our national interests in Africa within the international order that underwrites global security and prosperity. Following our national strategic guidance to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals, U.S. Africa Command applies a partner-centric, interagency-based approach dating back to the inception of the command in 2007. In an era of global power competition, the combined efforts of the Department of Defense, Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the broader interagency, American businesses, and the charitable generosity of the American people are critical to achieving our objectives in the National Defense Strategy. This whole-of-government model defines U.S. Africa Command’s strategic approach across three themes: we partner for success, compete to win, and

maintain pressure on malign networks.

First, we understand Africa's challenges cannot be resolved solely through the use of U.S. military power. U.S. Africa Command must **Partner for Success** with a diverse network that includes African nations, strategic allies, U.S. government agencies and departments, and multinational coalitions to prevent, address and mitigate conflict in Africa. We emphasize military support to diplomacy and development as our security activities directly complement Department of State and USAID efforts to reduce the spread of harmful ideologies, strengthen governments to protect their citizens, and promote stability and security, good governance, and economic successes. Security is a key enabler of U.S. whole-of-government and whole-of-society efforts - a minimum security threshold must be met for diplomacy to work, economies to flourish, and development efforts to take root. On the other side, development and diplomatic engagement are necessary to consolidate military and other security gains. U.S. Africa Command helps African partners create this operational space in Africa to build the governance and economic growth necessary for them to repel malign actors and VEO influences.

Second, we **Compete to Win**. We conduct our security activities to safeguard U.S. interests. We seek areas where our interests align with those of our allies and partners as we work together to achieve shared objectives. This is particularly true where we see unhelpful activities and pressure exerted by malign actors. Chinese, Russian and VEO activities on the continent are destabilizing and promote a disregard for human rights and inclusive economic growth that will upend the progress the continent has seen in the last ten years. U.S. Africa Command must continue to find ways to expand the competitive space and outpace Chinese and Russian influence to maintain our strategic access in Africa. America's values, our high standards of professionalism, our direct focus and commitment to addressing partner security needs, and our high-quality equipment and niche capabilities give us a qualitative advantage over these competitors in

Africa...which our African partners actively seek.

Most importantly, in order to counter potential threats to the U.S. and our core interests, we work closely with allies and partners to apply persistent **Pressure on the Malign Networks** of global and regional competitors, VEOs, and transnational criminal organizations. Our principal means for applying pressure is working with our African and international partners, increasing African security capabilities, information operations, and, only when necessary, using military force. Ultimately, in countries like Somalia that have seen progress over the course of a decade of investment, our use of force in Africa directly supports host government, African, and international partner efforts to provide the security required for development activities to bring about long-term stability and prosperity.

This strategic approach allows us to protect our citizens and interests at home and abroad, advance American prosperity and values, and support allies and partners overseas so they become more self-reliant and less dependent on U.S. security assistance.

PRIORITIES, PARTNERS, AND COMPETITORS

U.S. Africa Command advances U.S. strategic objectives by focusing on global power competition to maintain strategic access, by prioritizing efforts that protect the Homeland and U.S. personnel on the continent, and by responding to regional crises across our area of responsibility. U.S. security cooperation with African partners builds professional, capable militaries that can provide security which sets the conditions for economic growth and development. We achieve and maintain influence with our African partners through security cooperation, exercises, engagements, operations, and “setting the theater” or maturing infrastructure on the continent.

Protecting U.S. personnel and facilities remains U.S. Africa Command’s number one responsibility. Our mission to protect U.S. embassies and forces in Africa is central to our force posture. The Department of State has designated 32 diplomatic facilities worldwide as High Threat,

High Risk posts - 15 are in our area of responsibility, spread across an area 3.5 times the size of the United States. This critical mission requires heightened readiness and vigilance. Additionally, on any given day there are approximately 6,000 Department of Defense personnel across the continent supporting U.S. interests, addressing global security challenges, and maintaining strategic access and influence. Even if the numbers of at-risk diplomatic posts and military personnel are reduced, the remainder will still require the backing and protection of the Department of Defense. Al-Shabaab's capability to reach outside the borders of Somalia to strike Americans in locations we once considered beyond their reach highlights the growing threat to our interests. After the 5 January attack in Kenya, we have taken swift measures to increase our force protection posture and harden our location at Manda Bay, while pursuing the attackers and their network. We are also taking a hard look at all our locations across the continent in light of this expanded threat.

We benefit greatly from close coordination with a variety of U.S. and international partners. There are currently 28 representatives from 13 different U.S. government departments holding key positions on my staff. All U.S. Africa Command activities are closely coordinated with Defense Attachés and Chiefs of Security Cooperation in our embassies across Africa. In addition, U.S. Africa Command collaborates with the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP), where 15 African countries are paired with U.S. National Guard units. The SPP creates enduring bonds between Americans and Africans, and we are encouraged as more African countries apply to the program every year. Furthermore, foreign liaison officers representing 18 countries and multinational organizations are assigned to U.S. Africa Command headquarters providing key reach back capability within their Ministries of Defense and General Staffs. Outside the command, we regularly work with the African Union, European Union, NATO, United Nations, and the Regional Economic Communities in Africa on operations, exercises, engagements, security cooperation, and maturing the theater activities.

In Africa, Counter-VEO is Global Power Competition. U.S. Africa Command prioritizes global power competition, even while we remain engaged in counter-VEO (C-VEO) operations. At AFRICOM, we recognize the strategic environment is changing and the Joint Force must orient the bulk of our efforts against China and Russia even as we counter VEOs that threaten America. In Africa, the C-VEO fight is a key component of global power competition as these efforts are not mutually exclusive. Our experience, training, equipment, advice, and other unique capabilities to support C-VEO efforts led by our allies and partners addresses immediate partner needs, builds relationships for the future, and is a distinct U.S. advantage that our competitors cannot match. Al-Qa'ida and ISIS influence is growing in Africa and al-Shabaab's capability to threaten American interests in East Africa and the Homeland is on a dangerous trajectory. The international community is not making durable progress to contain priority VEOs in Africa, mainly because military activities remain insufficiently coordinated and lack a "whole of coalition" balance between military and non-military investments. Outside of arms sales that they leverage to their own benefit, China and Russia do little to counter violent extremist groups seeking to destabilize Africa. However, as one African leader recently shared, "a drowning man will accept any hand." In the absence of even limited U.S. C-VEO assistance, African partners are turning to our competitors to fill the void, including by accepting training and other military engagement opportunities overseas. In our highest priority countries, where U.S. interests are greatest, C-VEO assistance is a key tool in our global power competition toolkit.

In Africa, Building Partner Capability is Global Power Competition. Building partner capability is also an important tool in global power competition, reinforcing the U.S. role as the world's elite professional fighting force and furthering American values, respect for human rights, and adherence to obligations and commitments. We have learned that we cannot surge trust. The enduring relationships built while we develop partner capabilities provide us with the long-term

strategic alliances we need to address future challenges.

U.S. Africa Command and its component commands conduct engagements and exercises throughout the region designed to strengthen key partnerships and improve partner capabilities in basic military skills, maritime security, C-VEO efforts, counter-trafficking, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and control of key infectious diseases. U.S. Africa Command leverages an interagency toolkit and coordinates a broad group of programs to complement our capability-building efforts such as, among others, the Department of State's Global Peace Operations Initiative, Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, Africa Military Education Program, and the Women, Peace & Security Initiative. These programs help professionalize partner military and security forces and strengthen defense institutions through training on human rights, the rule of law, and prevention of violence against women.

U.S.-facilitated exercises offer some of the best return on investment by advancing our force readiness and providing our African partners with exposure to American values, expertise, and professionalism. Our exercise program improves partners' capabilities, encourages self-sufficiency, and develops opportunities for burden sharing over the long-term. U.S. Naval Forces Africa completed Exercise Cutlass Express in November, combining for the first time with U.S. Central Command's International Maritime Exercise, creating the second largest maritime exercise in the world for little in the way of additional resources. This exercise also allowed U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Central Command to practice cross-boundary operations along our seam. The ability to attract large coalitions of partners and allies to exercises addressing shared security concerns is a unique U.S. advantage that sends a strong message to our partners and competitors.

Another U.S. Africa Command niche capability with long-term and high return on investment is U.S. professional military education and training. In 2019, African partners sent 763 of their best and brightest military leaders for training at professional military schools in the U.S.

through Department of State's International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. In addition, in August, U.S. Africa Command's Senior Enlisted Leader hosted the third annual and largest African Senior Enlisted Leader Conference with over 67 African partners from 29 countries. These are important stakeholders that our competitors dismiss - strong officer *and* enlisted leadership is a bedrock of responsible defense institutions and our African partners look to U.S. forces as a model.

U.S. Africa Command engages partners to establish the security environment required for economic opportunity and trade to flourish. With a whole-of-government approach, enhanced security fosters development and investment with U.S. initiatives such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Prosper Africa, and the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act. Efforts like these open doors for U.S. companies to compete overseas and respond to China's increased economic engagement in Africa.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS

In **East Africa**, we see opportunity in several countries and strong partners in others. Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Kenya are the top African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troop contributors and some of our strongest African partners in the fight against al-Shabaab in Somalia. Djibouti also contributes troops to AMISOM and hosts our largest presence on the continent at Camp Lemonnier, home to more than 3,000 Americans supporting multiple U.S. combatant commands and other organizations. Thanks to our collective security and whole-of-government efforts, we have seen real and tangible progress in Somalia over more than a decade, albeit slower than we would like. AMISOM and the Somali National Army (SNA) have made gains in al-Shabaab strongholds in the south, holding territory and establishing outposts. Gains are fragile, though, and at risk of stalling, so there is much work to be done. Al-Qa'ida's al-Shabaab is a very real threat to Somalia, the region, the international community, and even the U.S. Homeland,

but political friction between the Federal Government of Somalia and Somali Federal Member States threatens to distract Mogadishu from the fight. Somalia's Prime Minister Khayre called 2019 Somalia's "Year of Action," and has led encouraging security sector reforms replacing corrupt leaders with reform-minded officers. U.S.-trained "Danab" SNA units, along with U.S. counterterrorism efforts, are important to maintain momentum and secure hard-fought gains. Importantly, the European Union continues to fund AMISOM stipends at over 200M EUR per year. Underscoring the importance and urgency of the international effort, al-Shabaab's 5 January Manda Bay attack – the group's first ever attack on a military base inside Kenya – demonstrates their intent and capability to strike outside Somalia. It is critical that AMISOM remain in the fight, as the SNA requires more time and international support before they are able to counter al-Shabaab themselves. In the next six months, I intend to review U.S. military operations in Somalia in detail to assess our progress and the way ahead.

North Africa is home to some of our oldest friends and newest democratic partners. Morocco was the first country to recognize our new nation in 1777 and remains by our side through exercises, training programs, foreign military sales, and counterterrorism cooperation. We'd like to strengthen our security cooperation with Algeria as it enters a new era under its first new president in twenty years. Tunisia just completed its second free and fair presidential election since its 2011 revolution. The Tunisians are strong partners in the fight against ISIS-Libya and complement our security cooperation investment dollars with national funds. However, much of the international community remains paralyzed in Libya as we watch a civil war play out with no real progress toward a political solution. As we continue to support the United Nations action plan, Turkey and Russia are weighing in heavily on opposing sides. Notably, Russia continues to harvest benefits from the instability in Libya - its military meddling has prolonged the conflict and exacerbated casualties and humanitarian suffering. Moscow continues to deny any Russian involvement in the

conflict, but its private military companies (PMCs), such as the Wagner Group with strong links to the Kremlin, are leading the fight for the self-styled “Libyan National Army” against the UN-backed and U.S.-recognized Government of National Accord. Turkey’s recent deployment of troops and hardware to counter Russian PMCs risks a significant escalation, as both Russia and Turkey are attempting to tip the scales in their favor. A potential bad outcome for both the U.S. and NATO is Russia gaining access to oil and military bases with long-range anti-access area denial (A2AD) capabilities on NATO’s southern flank. Despite these frictions, U.S. Africa Command continues to keep pressure on ISIS and other VEOs as they seek to take advantage of the security vacuum created by the civil war in Libya. Our persistent focus on ISIS-Libya, in coordination with our interagency and African partners and at low cost in Department of Defense resources, continues to disrupt ISIS freedom of action as a regional terrorist threat. We will remain vigilant to counter VEO reconstitution efforts.

In **West Africa**, we see functioning democracies, peaceful transfers of power, and an engaged regional organization in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Senegal remains a stalwart, fully functioning democracy, focused on bolstering their defense institutions. Ghana hosts our West Africa Logistics Network, a unique shared-expense logistics hub that supports U.S., African, and European partners across the continent. However, we also see a serious regional threat from VEOs emanating from the Sahel. Security is deteriorating rapidly, with a 250% increase in VEO violence since 2018 in Burkina Faso, Mali, and western Niger. Having quickly spread from northern Mali, al-Qa’ida’s JNIM, ISIS-aligned groups, and other VEOs are now operating throughout the Sahel region. They are taking advantage of porous borders, weak governments, under-resourced and overextended militaries, and disenfranchised populations, and are now even threatening Gulf of Guinea countries. Our African partners are trying to help address this growing regional threat themselves through the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Accra Initiative and

various ECOWAS initiatives. However, despite U.S. bilateral security assistance and generous pledges of support from the international community coordinated by the European Union, they cannot effectively control their own borders or address security and related governance challenges in the region without substantive external assistance from their Western partners. We praise our French partners who are assisting this African-led effort in a significant way with over 4,400 French troops deployed as part of Operation Barkhane. In our view, African and European partners must do more to roll back the VEO threat and there must be a better synchronization of efforts in West Africa. The window of opportunity to dig a firebreak and prevent the further spread of VEOs is months, not years. We applaud emerging plans by the French and Germans to develop new structures to improve coordination, synchronization, and effectiveness of international assistance, and improve African partner fighting capabilities. We encourage all approaches that will allow regional partners to be more self-sufficient.

In **Central and Southern Africa**, we again see some strong partnerships and a few opportunities. Botswana is a bright spot with its enduring democracy, continued stability, professional military and good relations with the U.S. In 2019, Rwanda became the 15th African nation to join the SPP, establishing their partnership with the Nebraska National Guard in December. South Africa is the second-largest economy in Africa and the largest U.S. trade partner on the continent. There is enormous potential for Mozambique, where the U.S., France, and other partners have invested in an 11 billion USD liquid natural gas project that is located in the same areas as an increasingly violent group that has claimed links to ISIS. In addition, U.S. Africa Command support to USAID for Cyclone Idai relief and recovery efforts have opened a door with Mozambique for future security cooperation opportunities.

China and Russia are in a position of advantage in central and southern Africa. Russia is testing its playbook for malign activity in the Central African Republic, where they are deploying

PMCs, extracting minerals, and attempting to buy influence. In Mozambique, Moscow provided second-rate counterterrorism assistance in the hopes of buying oil and gas concessions. Russia also deployed strategic bombers to South Africa, and participated in the first-ever trilateral Chinese-Russian-South African naval exercise MOSI in November 2019. ISIS and other spoilers look to exploit long-simmering grievances and gaps in governance in the region. We are exploring renewed military-to-military outreach in South Africa.

ECONOMY OF FORCE

U.S. Africa Command continues to assess and implement reform efforts to maximize value from our precious resources. For example, we prioritize the warfighting readiness of assigned and allocated forces through refinement of our exercise program. We are committed to optimizing the effectiveness of our security cooperation assistance and activities and we must be innovative in how we use our assets in support of our strategic objectives. Honest assessments and prudent investments ensure the U.S. maximizes the impact of every taxpayer dollar while remaining the premier security partner for priority African governments.

U.S. foreign assistance should serve America's interests and should support countries that help us to advance our foreign policy goals. U.S. Africa Command's efforts are focused on priority nations and strategic objectives that are sustainable, consistent with our national-level guidance, maintain our strategic access and protect the Homeland and U.S. personnel on the continent.

It is a commander's responsibility to ensure our world-class troops have the resources they need. We must protect our forces when we move them into uncertain environments. The pace of improved base defense capabilities against emerging threats has been too slow. We need to accelerate C-UAS technologies to Africa to improve local domain awareness and provide an additional layer of warning and force protection while also improving capabilities across the joint force. As previously mentioned, our exercises hone partner capabilities and encourage self-

sufficiency and burden sharing. This small investment in relationships and the human capital of our partners can make a difference in a crisis. With the continued support of Congress, U.S. Africa Command can best provide our troops the protection they deserve while enabling engagements critical to war-winning activities in any theater.

CONCLUSION

A secure and stable Africa is an enduring American interest.

U.S. Africa Command remains ready to protect U.S. citizens, interests, strategic access, and respond to crises in our area of responsibility. The men and women of U.S. Africa Command, our partners on the continent, and our broad collection of stakeholders understand how important Africa is to the global economy and security environment. Strategic access to Africa, its airspace, and its surrounding waters is vital to U.S. national security. As outlined in our governing strategies, long-term global power competition with China and Russia and the need to limit the harmful influence of malign actors in the region is of utmost importance.

In my first six months of command, and through our ongoing “blank slate review” process, I have learned that small investments in Africa go a long way. A few bucks and a few troops can make a significant difference and have proven to be the cornerstone of multinational efforts in the region. What U.S. Africa Command accomplishes with relatively few people and few dollars, on a continent 3.5 times the size of the continental United States, is a bargain for the American taxpayer. That said, U.S. Africa Command is diligently working to make our operations even more efficient and adjusting our posture and activities to ensure U.S. strategic access for today and tomorrow. Africa is key terrain for competition with China and Russia, and our support to C-VEO operations is necessary. While we can and will grow more efficient to contribute to higher NDS priorities, if the U.S. steps back from Africa too far, China and Russia will fill the void to our detriment. Violent extremist organizations will be able to grow unchecked, some will ultimately threaten the

Homeland, and we will lose opportunities for increased trade and investments with some of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Finally, it remains my honor to lead the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, civilians, and families of U.S. Africa Command. Our efforts have made the U.S. safer and advanced American interests while helping Africans do more for themselves. U.S. Africa Command is an investment in America's, Africa's, and the world's future.

Thank you.