

**GENERAL THOMAS D. WALDHAUSER, COMMANDER, U.S. AFRICA COMMAND
PREPARED OPENING STATEMENT
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MARCH 9, 2017**

Chairman McCain,
Ranking Member Reed,
Distinguished members of the committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to update you on the activities and efforts of United States Africa Command.

For the past nine months, I have been honored to command the men and women of Africa Command.

Africa is an enduring interest for the United States. Small, but wise investments in the capability, legitimacy, and accountability of African defense institutions offer disproportionate benefits to Africa, our allies, and the United States, and importantly, enable African solutions to African problems.

Parts of Africa remain a battleground between ideologies, interests, and values: equality, prosperity, and peace are often pitted against extremism, oppression, and conflict.

Today, transregional violent extremist organizations constitute the most direct security threat to the United States.

To address this threat, our military strategy articulates a long-term, regionally-focused approach for a safe and stable Africa.

Specifically, the strategy outlines an Africa, in which regional organizations and states are willing and capable partners, addressing African security challenges, all while promoting United States interests.

The Africa Command strategy builds our partners' ability to direct, manage, sustain, and operate capable and sustainable defense institutions. While we have achieved progress implementing our strategy, threats and challenges remain.

In East Africa, we supports African Union and European Union efforts to neutralize al-Shabaab and other violent extremist organizations operating in Somalia, and we also support the transfer of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF).

In 2016, al-Shabaab regained some territory, and, today, the group continues to conduct attacks on AMISOM forces, the SNSF, and the Federal Government of Somalia.

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Additionally, we have also seen elements of ISIS begin to make in-roads into Somalia, which will further test AMISOM forces and the Federal Government of Somalia.

The instability in Libya and North Africa, caused by years of political in-fighting, may be the most significant, near-term threat to U.S. and allies' interests on the continent.

Stability in Libya is a long-term proposition. We must maintain pressure on the ISIS-Libya network, and concurrently, support Libya's effort to re-establish a legitimate and unified government.

This is a significant challenge. And we must carefully choose where and with whom we work with in order to counter ISIS-Libya in order not to shift the balance between factions and risk sparking greater conflict in Libya.

In West Africa, our primary focus is containing and degrading Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.

Since 2011, Boko Haram has consistently carried out attacks against civilians and targeted partner regional governments and military forces in the Lake Chad Basin.

With forces from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, we are working with the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to enable regional cooperation and expand partner capacity to ensure Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa do not further destabilize the region.

The MNJTF has been successful in enabling multinational cooperation and coordinating multinational operations and has placed significant pressure on Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.

In Central Africa, through the combined efforts of military forces, civilian agencies, and non-governmental organizations, we work to build the capacity of our partners to address regional threats such as maritime security, illicit trafficking of goods and persons, the Lord's Resistance Army, and other criminal networks and enterprises.

Africa-wide, we support efforts to enable African partners to respond to humanitarian crises, mass atrocity, and disaster contingencies and to support peace operations.

Through the National Guard's State Partnership Program and their African partners, we have improved disaster management competency and readiness to assist civilian-led efforts.

We continue to see the value of the National Guard's persistent engagement and fully support State Partnership Program's efforts.

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Africa's security environment is dynamic and complex requiring innovative solutions. Even with limited resources or capabilities, Africa Command leans forward, working with partners and allies, to execute its mission and mitigate risk.

Moving forward, we continue to focus our decisive effort on building African partner capacity and will continue to work closely with international and Interagency partners to make small, wise investments which pay huge dividends in building stable and effective governments—the foundation for long-term security in Africa.

I am confident with your support, Africa Command will protect and promote United States interests and keep the United States safe from threats emanating from the African continent.

On behalf of United States Africa Command, I thank you for the opportunity to be with you this morning and look forward to you questions.