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# **Rolling Up Sleeves at the United States Africa Command: Tips for Starting a New Job in African Security Assistance**

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On October 1, 2007, a new sub-unified command devoted solely to Africa was established with the official stand-up of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) at Kelley Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany. While the creation of a new regionally-based, major command, centered on Africa, was, in itself, a key, historic event for the Department of Defense (DoD); what may eventually prove to be more significant is the mission and design of this new command, which will be focused not so much on traditional warfighting and combat force projection, but on the prevention of military conflicts and other crises before they begin. AFRICOM intends to do this mainly with “soft power” - helping DoD to coordinate with other U.S. government agencies, while simultaneously partnering with international elements, both individual nations and international organizations to deliver security cooperation contributions to Africa, including professional education, training, equipment, and humanitarian assistance. The objective:

To further build African capacity to prevent or respond to internal security issues and various man-made or natural disaster

As AFRICOM becomes a fully independent unified command, sometime before September 30, 2008, and continues to grow and mature into its mission, many U.S. military personnel from all of the services, and from a broad variety of backgrounds and occupational specialties within their respective services, will be melded into its structure. For many of these personnel, AFRICOM will likely be their first assignment working at the strategic, international level in security cooperation; for many more, it will likely be their first time working on issues related to Africa, often in jobs involving close working relationships with African governments/militaries.

With this in mind, I thought that it might be a good moment in time for someone to write an article for those beginning their careers in African security cooperation. The focus of this short piece is where to go quickly to get the information needed to do these jobs, to include positions as J-3 and J-5 desk officers, command logisticians, security assistance officers, defense attaches, etc. My intent is not so much to provide a comprehensive “how-to” guide for doing specific jobs or even to offer advanced, wisdom-laden advice for carrying out U.S. security policy. My goal is simply to pass on some very basic tips to novice security cooperation specialists working African issues, based on what I have learned from my own experience and education as an African foreign area officer (FAO) and what I have learned through the benevolence of others.

The first piece of advice I would give is learn about the region. Africa is truly unique in many aspects, and a far different operating environment than what many are familiar with in Europe, the Pacific, the Middle East, or even Latin America. For example, beyond the capital areas of most countries, modern infrastructure may be unavailable:

- No paved or even all-season/all-weather roads
- No hard-line telephone systems or universal cellular phone coverage
- No water or electrical delivery systems, beyond a village hand-pump or local clinic 35 KVA generator

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Day-to-day business is often carried out primarily through personal relationships as opposed to formal bureaucracies or public regulations, and done at a pace that may be frustratingly slow, but culturally and politically necessary. Corruption may be much less subtle and much more pervasive than imagined. And, the basics needed to receive even free security assistance, fundamentals like secure warehouses, safe munitions storage areas, fully functioning ports or airfields, literate officer corps, or noncommissioned officers with basic technical skills, cannot be assumed.

Fortunately, there are many sources available on-line and elsewhere to learn about the specific countries or regions in Africa. For profiles and background notes on specific countries:

- The Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/protals.html>
- The DoS Bureau of Political-Military Affairs <http://www.state.gov/t/pm>
- The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

The above are handy sources, offering data on everything from the ethnic composition and infant mortality rate of a nation to the types and lengths of roadways and train tracks. Other information, particularly broader information on sub-regions, can be obtained:

- Through the African Union (AU) <http://www.africa-union.org>
- Through the United Nations (U.N.) <http://www.un.org>

The U.N. site, under its section on “peace and security,” provides mission reports and other statistics on past and ongoing U.N. peacekeeping operations in Africa. More specific or by-subject information can be found at other web sites:

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov>
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS <http://www.unaids.org/en> publishes statistics, descriptions, and the effects of endemic African diseases that may be useful for developing humanitarian assistance programs
- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) <http://www.usaid.gov> lists country program data linked to security assistance provided under the Economic Support Fund (ESF)
- The Department of Commerce <http://www.commerce.gov> posts information on existing and pending foreign trade agreements, guides on how to conduct business transactions in various countries, and economic statistics and forecasts on both countries and regions.

Since DoD operations are closely governed in many aspects by the President, the DoS, and Congress, other useful on-line resources regarding relevant Africa-specific U.S. foreign policy issues, include:

- The White House Africa page <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/africa>
- The DoS Bureau of African Affairs <http://www.state.gov/p/af>
- DoS also provides policy background information and current figures and trends on foreign military financing (FMF) and international military education and training (IMET) accounts by region and country at [www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj](http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj)

Naturally, there also a number of books and other hard publications available that are filled with invaluable country and regional information; perhaps the most useful of these are the *Lonely Planet* guides, usually published annually, which are available for both the entire continent and on specific

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sub-regions (i.e., the West Africa Guide) and which feature cultural and language tips, information on local/seasonal weather patterns, brief country histories, hotel recommendations (good for lodging DoD visitors), useful country and city maps, and a wide range of other information. Another important reference I would recommend is the *Michelin* series road maps, which often provide the most detailed information on African road networks in many areas.

Beyond these public sources of information, there is a wealth of information available within the command, or from each of the combatant commands (COCOMs) which formerly dealt with distinct portions of Africa i.e., U.S. European Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Central Command. These COCOMs each publish a *Theater Security Cooperation Strategy* (TSCS), which may be further broken down into regional or even country campaign plans, describing DoD objectives and priorities in Africa and the COCOM plans, to include specific program elements and timelines, for executing these strategies. The COCOMs also maintain copies of country-specific Combined Education and Training Program Plans (CETPPs), compiled annually by each country's Security Assistance Office (SAO) or Defense Attaché Office (DAO) to outline education and training activities with the host country. In addition, these commands should have copies of the DoS Mission Strategic Plans (MSPs), which are statements on U.S. government national interests, planned activities, and goals regarding our relations with each country, produced by local U.S. embassies in Africa. All of this information is located within the J-4 or J-5 of the COCOM. In addition, the COCOM J-3, J-4, J-5, and other staff elements should be able to provide copies of the status of forces agreements (SOFAs), acquisition and cross-servicing agreements (ACSAs), and non-combatant evacuation plans on particular countries. These documents offer insight on these countries relationships with the U.S. as well as details on country infrastructure, economies, military/security organizations, and legal systems.

The second piece of advice I would give is learn the basics on how the U.S. government conducts security cooperation. There are numerous U.S. laws and DoD regulations that strictly define and limit how security cooperation may be conducted, and specific procedures and systems that must be used to plan and execute security cooperation activities. Some of the best sources for information on-line would include the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) <http://www.dsca.mil> and the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) <http://www.disam.dsca.mil>, which provide guidance and education on all aspects of security cooperation, including very detailed information about pertinent U.S. policy and legislation, the U.S. foreign military sales (FMS) process, end use monitoring requirements, excess defense articles, and many other topics. DISAM also posts links to other sources of knowledge regarding security assistance on its web site, such as the on-line DoD 5105.38-M. *Security Assistance Management Manual* (SAMM) and available on-line courses on a variety of subjects related to security cooperation/assistance.

For more in-depth knowledge on both African regional topics and security cooperation, formal resident course training is also available through a number of sources. DISAM, in particular, offers a ten to fifteen day Security Cooperation Management Overseas Course (SCM-O) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, specifically tailored for SAO, DAO, regional COCOM, and service component command personnel, that provides practical knowledge on security cooperation policies and procedures and includes a regional studies program addressing regional and country-specific political, military, economic, geographic, and cultural considerations, and discussing historic and current relationships between the United States and Africa. The Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI), located in Arlington, Virginia, also offers a wide variety of resident courses designed to enhance the professional skills of foreign affairs specialists. FSI's educational programs feature instruction on foreign languages, regional cultures and issues, DoS operations, and U.S. foreign policy. Yet another good source for resident education is the United States Air Force Special Operations School (USAFSOS) at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. USAFSOS conducts a one-week regional and cultural