

**GAO**

Report to the Subcommittee on  
National Security and Foreign Affairs,  
Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform, House of  
Representatives

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February 2009

# DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

Actions Needed to  
Address Stakeholder  
Concerns, Improve  
Interagency  
Collaboration, and  
Determine Full Costs  
Associated with the  
U.S. Africa Command



**GAO**

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

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Highlights of [GAO-09-181](#), a report to Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

In February 2007, the President directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to establish the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) to help strengthen U.S. security cooperation with African nations and bring peace and stability to the continent. For this review, GAO assessed DOD's (1) efforts to establish the command and communicate its mission, (2) progress in integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into AFRICOM, and (3) plans and costs for establishing a permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa. In assessing DOD's efforts to establish AFRICOM, GAO analyzed relevant documentation and obtained perspectives from the combatant commands, military services, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of State (State), U. S. Agency for International Development, and nongovernmental organizations.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that AFRICOM include three key elements in its communications strategy, seek formal commitments for interagency personnel, and develop a comprehensive assessment of the possible locations of its permanent command headquarters and offices in Africa. In responding to a draft of this report, DOD partially agreed with GAO's recommendations and noted that in some cases it was already taking action.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, [click on GAO-09-181](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov).

## DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

### Actions Needed to Address Stakeholder Concerns, Improve Interagency Collaboration, and Determine Full Costs Associated with the U.S. Africa Command

#### What GAO Found

DOD declared AFRICOM fully operational on September 30, 2008, and had more than 950 military and civilian personnel assigned to the command; however, concerns about its planned mission and activities persist. DOD created AFRICOM to bring a more cohesive and strategic focus to its efforts in Africa. However, initial statements made about its mission and the scope of its activity raised concerns among U.S. and African stakeholders that AFRICOM could militarize diplomacy and development. Since the initial announcement, DOD has taken some steps to clarify its mission and in May 2008 published an approved mission statement. But concerns persist and DOD has not yet finalized a strategy for future communication with the wide range of stakeholders. It will take time for concerns generated by the initial announcement to subside and will largely depend on AFRICOM's actions. Unresolved concerns about AFRICOM's intentions could limit support from key stakeholders like State and potential African partners. GAO's prior work shows that a communications strategy can help address stakeholder concerns and clarify expectations.

AFRICOM has begun integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into the command but it has not yet determined the ultimate extent of desired interagency representation. DOD officials said that integrating personnel will help AFRICOM develop plans that are more compatible with U.S. agencies. DOD set some initial personnel goals, but continues to revise them. Initially, DOD conceived of a command in which about a quarter of the staff (about 125 people) would be from other agencies. DOD later reduced the goal to 52 positions, but this number is under review and expected to change. These goals did not fully consider the perspective of contributing civilian agencies, which is important because some face personnel shortages. AFRICOM is now taking steps to involve agencies in determining personnel goals, but this process does not guarantee commitments from agencies to provide personnel. Without agreed-upon interagency personnel commitments, AFRICOM could continue to develop unrealistic targets and ultimately risk losing the knowledge and expertise of interagency personnel.

DOD cannot reliably estimate AFRICOM's total future costs because decisions on the locations of a permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa have not been made. DOD is re-examining its initial concept for AFRICOM's command presence because of concerns over its initial headquarters concept, authorities under which it would operate, and sensitivities about a U.S. military presence. In the meantime, AFRICOM is increasing its representation in some U.S. embassies in Africa and spending about \$140 million to renovate facilities in Stuttgart, Germany, for its interim headquarters. Current cost projections exceed \$4 billion through 2015, but these estimates do not include an operations center or component commands, which could increase costs. DOD plans to make decisions in fiscal year 2012 on command locations. GAO's prior work shows that an assessment of tangible and intangible benefits and costs can help organizations decide between alternatives.

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## Abbreviations

AFRICOM	U. S. Africa Command
DOD	Department of Defense
State	Department of State
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

February 20, 2009

The Honorable John F. Tierney  
Chairman  
The Honorable Jeff Flake  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
House of Representatives

The 2008 National Defense Strategy describes a spectrum of security challenges facing the United States that range from violent transnational extremist networks to natural and pandemic disasters and growing competition for resources. U.S. experiences in Africa, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq over the last several years have demonstrated that U.S. government agencies need to improve the coordination and integration of their activities to address security challenges. In February 2007, in order to provide a more strategic, holistic approach to U.S. military activities in Africa, the President directed the Secretary of Defense to establish the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), a new geographic combatant command that consolidated the Department of Defense's (DOD) activities in Africa under one command. Previously, these activities had been managed by the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific Commands. AFRICOM is primarily focused on strengthening U.S. security cooperation with African nations, creating opportunities to bolster the capabilities of African partners, and enhancing U.S. efforts to bring peace and stability to the continent.<sup>1</sup> To do this, AFRICOM is integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into the command structure and is considering options to establish a permanent headquarters outside Africa as well as placing personnel in Africa.

The Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform requested that we review the establishment of the

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<sup>1</sup>A security cooperation activity is defined as military activity that involves other nations and is intended to shape the operational environment in peacetime. Activities include programs and exercises that the U.S. military conducts with other nations to improve mutual understanding and improve interoperability with treaty partners or potential coalition partners. These activities are designed to support a combatant commander's theater strategy.

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new U.S. Africa Command. In July 2008 we provided testimony to the Chairman and Ranking Member on our preliminary observations on DOD's progress and challenges associated with establishing AFRICOM.<sup>2</sup> We testified that the initial concept for AFRICOM, designed and developed by DOD, met resistance from within the U. S. government and African countries and contributed to several implementation challenges. First, DOD had encountered some concerns from civilian agencies, African partners, and nongovernmental organizations over the command's mission and goals. Second, DOD was having difficulties integrating interagency personnel in the command, which DOD viewed as critical to synchronizing military efforts with other U.S. government agencies. Third, DOD had not yet reached agreement with the Department of State (State) and potential host nations on the structure and location of the command's presence on the continent of Africa. This report expands on the information provided in that testimony and makes recommendations to enhance DOD's efforts to establish AFRICOM. Specifically, we assessed DOD's (1) efforts to establish the command and communicate its mission, (2) progress in integrating personnel from other U.S. agencies into AFRICOM, and (3) plans and costs for establishing a permanent headquarters as well as supporting offices in Africa.

To assess DOD's efforts in establishing AFRICOM and communicating its mission, we met with a variety of DOD officials and reviewed a wide range of DOD guidance, plans, directives, speeches, testimony statements, and reports. We interviewed officials at State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to obtain other agencies' perspectives on the establishment of the command and input into the process. We also interviewed representatives from an organization representing U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations for their perspectives on AFRICOM. In addition, we interviewed officials from AFRICOM on their efforts to communicate the mission of the command to multiple audiences. To assess the extent to which AFRICOM has taken steps to improve interagency collaboration, we obtained information on its plans and goals for integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies and on its efforts to align its plans and activities with federal agencies. To assess DOD's plans to establish a permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa, we obtained information related to the initial and current

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<sup>2</sup>GAO, *Force Structure: Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command*, [GAO-08-947T](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2008).

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plans for AFRICOM's presence in Africa, including DOD implementation guidance, planning documents, budget proposals, and facility renovation plans. We conducted this performance audit from July 2007 to February 2009 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Results in Brief

DOD designated AFRICOM fully operational on September 30, 2008, and the command has assumed responsibility for DOD activities in Africa; however, it continues to face concerns from U.S. government, nongovernmental, and African stakeholders about its mission and activities, which could limit support for the command. In October 2007, AFRICOM began assuming responsibility for existing DOD activities conducted by U.S. European, Central, and Pacific Commands in Africa and began to staff its headquarters with DOD military personnel, DOD civilian personnel, and interagency personnel. DOD subsequently approved 1,356 positions for the command's headquarters, of which 639 are positions that are to be filled by military personnel, 665 are to be civilian DOD employees, and 52 are to be filled by non-DOD agencies like State and USAID. As of October 2008, about 70 percent (959) of the total personnel were assigned to AFRICOM. Most of the military personnel were in place, but only about half of the DOD civilians and about a quarter of the interagency personnel had been assigned. In addition, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and the Special Operations Command have each begun to establish component and theater-level commands that will support AFRICOM's operations and will also require hundreds of additional personnel. Although DOD declared AFRICOM fully operational, concerns surrounding the command's mission and activities persist among its various stakeholders. DOD established AFRICOM to bring a more cohesive and strategic focus to its activities in Africa; however, initial statements about the new command's intended mission and scope of its activities met with concerns from U.S. government, nongovernmental, and African partner stakeholders. Concerns are particularly keen in areas like humanitarian assistance and other non-combat activities that involve non-DOD agencies and organizations. Their concerns center on the view that AFRICOM could blur traditional boundaries between diplomacy, development, and defense. In some cases, these apprehensions stem from DOD having more resources than other agencies and thus could dominate U.S. activities and relationships in Africa. In response to the concerns

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AFRICOM took steps to clarify its mission and goals, such as shifting its emphasis from a whole-of-government approach to more traditional military missions, and AFRICOM now has a mission statement that was approved following consultation with other U.S. government agencies. Stakeholders remain skeptical about AFRICOM's intentions, however. Our previous work suggests that to build trust with stakeholders, clarify misperceptions, and create shared expectations, a communication strategy can be an effective tool, although it alone cannot resolve all concerns. A communication strategy should allow for early and frequent communication, ensure a consistent message, and encourage two-way communications with stakeholders. DOD and the State previously issued guidance on communicating AFRICOM's mission to an early AFRICOM planning team and to U.S. embassies in Africa, but these documents did not address the full range of AFRICOM's stakeholders. According to AFRICOM officials, the command is currently developing an approach to address stakeholder concerns and clarify expectations for the command, but it is unclear what this approach will include or when it will be completed. Until AFRICOM has a communications strategy that ensures a consistent message and facilitates two-way communication with stakeholders, it may be limited in its ability to reduce persistent concerns from U.S. government, nongovernmental, and African stakeholders and garner support for the command. We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Africa Command to include all appropriate audiences, encourage two-way communication, and ensure consistency of message related to AFRICOM's mission and goals as it develops and implements its communications strategy.

AFRICOM has taken initial steps to integrate personnel from other U.S. government agencies into the command, but it has not yet determined the ultimate extent of interagency representation. AFRICOM has focused on integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into staff, management, and leadership positions. According to DOD and AFRICOM officials, integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies is essential to achieving AFRICOM's mission because it will help AFRICOM develop plans and activities that are more compatible with those agencies. As of October 1, 2008, AFRICOM had 13 personnel from six other agencies assigned to the command, including the Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities, who is from the State. DOD continues to revise its interagency personnel goals and has not yet determined the total number of interagency positions it will ultimately need in the command. Initially, DOD conceived of a command with about a quarter of the headquarters staff (roughly 125 people) being filled by other agencies, but later reduced this goal once it became clear that other agencies would not be able to



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provide that level of personnel support.<sup>3</sup> DOD later established a goal of 52 interagency personnel for fiscal year 2009, but said that this number would also change as the command learned about the skills other agencies could provide to the command. Both DOD and AFRICOM officials said that these initial personnel goals were notional and not based on an analysis of the skill sets needed to accomplish its mission. In addition, agencies that would be contributing personnel were not always included in developing or reviewing AFRICOM's initial personnel targets, and therefore, personnel shortages at some agencies were not fully taken into consideration. For example, the State Department, which is facing a 25 percent shortfall in mid level personnel, did not have the opportunity to provide input until after the personnel target for that agency had been established. DOD has officially requested that State fill 13 positions at AFRICOM in addition to the 2 it has already filled; however, State officials told us that they would not likely be able to fill these positions due to personnel shortfalls. Our previous work indicates that successful organizations need valid and reliable data about the personnel number and skills required to accomplish their mission, stakeholder involvement in determining those elements, and strategies to address gaps in number and skills. AFRICOM has recently begun taking steps to work with other agencies to help identify the number of interagency positions by inviting representatives to the command to survey the need for their personnel to help carry out the mission of the command. Because contributing agencies ultimately decide whether or not to provide personnel to fill requested positions, this process does not guarantee a commitment to contribute personnel to AFRICOM. In addition, AFRICOM officials told us that they had not developed action plans or alternative solutions to gain other agencies perspectives should interagency positions go unfilled. Without including all relevant stakeholders in assessing needed interagency skills and obtaining commitments from them, AFRICOM could continue to develop unrealistic personnel goals that contributing agencies are not able to support or acquire skill sets that are less relevant for its mission. We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Africa Command to seek formal commitments with contributing agencies to provide personnel as part of its efforts to determine interagency personnel requirements and to develop alternatives for how AFRICOM can obtain interagency perspectives in the event that interagency personnel cannot be provided due to personnel shortfalls in contributing agencies.

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<sup>3</sup>AFRICOM's initial interagency personnel goal was based on a headquarters size of 500-600 personnel; therefore, one quarter would be approximately 125 people.

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The total future cost for AFRICOM will be significant but remains unclear because decisions on the locations of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and its supporting offices in Africa have not been made. DOD is re-examining its initial concept for AFRICOM's command presence in Africa because issues surrounding the location of AFRICOM's proposed headquarters and the authorities under which it would operate caused concern with State and several African nations. In the interim, DOD located AFRICOM's headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, and now estimates it will spend about \$140 million in fiscal years 2007 through 2009 to renovate those facilities, which is more than double the initial cost estimates. In addition to renovation costs, cost projections exceed \$4 billion through 2015 to operate AFRICOM's interim headquarters, expand DOD's presence in 11 U.S. embassies in Africa, and improve existing facilities for a combined joint task force in Djibouti. However, these projections do not include the costs to establish AFRICOM's permanent headquarters or other supporting offices in Africa, a potential joint operations fusion center to support the headquarters, or costs associated with its new component and theater special operations commands.<sup>4</sup> DOD officials told us that decisions on command locations will have a significant effect on future cost projections. DOD does not intend to decide the locations of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and supporting office locations until fiscal year 2012. Our prior work provided key business practices that can inform DOD's decisions on command locations, such as discussing alternatives with key stakeholders to incorporate their insight and conducting an analysis of the costs and benefits, both tangible and intangible, of potential alternatives. Such considerations include infrastructure costs, risks to the effectiveness of DOD operations, and geopolitical impact on U.S. relationships with African partners. Until decisions are made on the structure and locations of AFRICOM's headquarters and supporting offices in Africa, the total investments required for the command will remain unclear. The merits of infrastructure investments in Germany in the interim may be difficult to assess without knowing how long AFRICOM will use these facilities or how they will be used after permanent locations are established. We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State as appropriate, conduct an assessment of the costs and benefits of potential alternative locations for AFRICOM's permanent

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<sup>4</sup>AFRICOM will have four service component commands and a theater special operations command. They are: U.S. Army Africa (USARAF); U.S. Naval Forces, Africa; U.S. Marine Forces, Africa; U.S. Air Forces Africa Command; and Special Operations Command, Africa.

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headquarters and supporting offices to help in determining the long-term fiscal investment for AFRICOM infrastructure and limit additional expenditures on interim AFRICOM infrastructure until decisions are made or investment plans developed.

In reviewing a draft of this report, DOD partially agreed with each of our three recommendations, stating that in some cases, actions were already underway that would address the issues identified in this report. Based on these comments we modified two of our recommendations to incorporate DOD's comments. State did not provide written comments on our report. In written comments, USAID affirmed its support of AFRICOM and stated that it had met its personnel requirements in support of AFRICOM. DOD and USAID's written comments appear in their entirety in appendix III.

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## Background

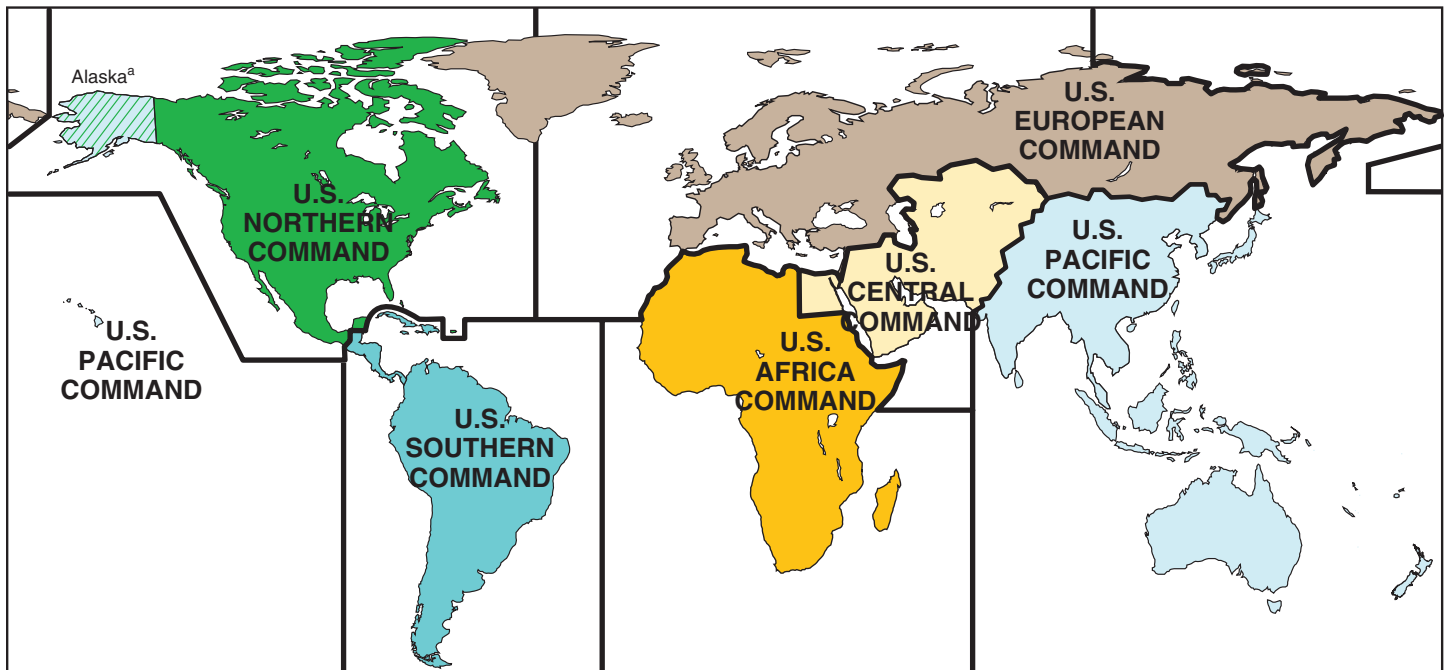
To perform its military missions around the world, DOD operates geographic combatant commands that conduct missions and activities within assigned areas of responsibility (figure 1 illustrates the boundaries for each of the geographic combatant commands' areas of responsibility). Combatant commands are responsible for a variety of functions including tasks such as deploying forces to carry out a variety of the missions that range from humanitarian assistance to combat operations; providing administration and support, including control of resources and equipment and training; and assigning command functions to subordinate commanders. Combatant commands are supported by service component commands (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) and a theater special operations command. Each of these has a significant role in preparing the detailed plans and providing the resources that the combatant commands need to execute operations in support of their mission and goals. On February 6, 2007, the President directed the Secretary of Defense to establish a new geographic combatant command to consolidate the responsibility for DOD activities in Africa that had been shared by U.S. Central Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. European Command.<sup>5</sup> AFRICOM was officially established as a sub unified command within the European Command on October 1, 2007, and

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<sup>5</sup>AFRICOM's area of responsibility will include the African continent and its island nations, with the exception of Egypt. Egypt will remain within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility, and AFRICOM and U.S. Central Command will have overlapping but distinct relationships with Egypt, which will be addressed under separate memorandum of agreement.

designated fully operational as a separate, independent geographic combatant command on October 1, 2008.

Figure 1: Geographic Combatant Commands and Areas of Responsibility, as of December 2008



Source: GAO presentation of DOD data; map©Corel Corp., all rights reserved.

<sup>a</sup>The state of Alaska is assigned to the U.S. Northern Command's Area of Responsibility. Forces based in Alaska, however, may be assigned to multiple commands.

In November 2005, DOD directed that stability operations be given priority on par with combat operations.<sup>6</sup> DOD has defined stability operations as an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other U.S. government agencies to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction and humanitarian relief.<sup>7</sup> This new policy emphasized that integrating civilian and military efforts is key to

<sup>6</sup>DOD Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Washington, D.C. November 28, 2005).

<sup>7</sup>Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD's Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C. September 2008).

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successful stability operations and it recognized that these types of activities will not always be led by the military and that DOD needs to be prepared to provide support to both government and nongovernmental organizations when necessary. DOD's efforts to address this shift are captured in numerous publications and documents, including the 2008 National Defense Strategy, the Guidance for Employment of the Force, and guidance for joint operations and joint operation planning.<sup>8</sup> AFRICOM is primarily focused on this shift toward emphasizing the importance of stability operations. Its mission is to act in concert with other U.S. government agencies and international partners to conduct sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy. Some of AFRICOM's programs, activities, and operations are either conducted jointly or coordinated with State and USAID, and other departments and agencies as required.

According to the President's National Security Policy, defense, diplomacy and development comprise three key elements of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus. While DOD is responsible for national defense, State plans and implements foreign diplomacy, and USAID leads foreign development, including efforts to support economic growth and humanitarian assistance. For example, in implementing the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership in the countries of northwest Africa, State has hosted educational and cultural exchange programs intended to marginalize violent extremism; USAID has supported efforts to improve education and health; and DOD has provided counterterrorism training and distributed equipment to the program's partner countries.<sup>9</sup> Although State and USAID work together closely on strategic and program planning, they are independent agencies, both of which coordinate with AFRICOM.

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<sup>8</sup>Guidance for Employment of the Force (May 2008), Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C. September. 2006), and Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, D.C.: December. 2006).

<sup>9</sup>GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership*, [GAO-08-860](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2008).

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## AFRICOM Declared Fully Operational but Stakeholder Concerns Persist

On September 30, 2008, DOD declared AFRICOM to be fully operational, but the command continues to face persistent concerns from U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and African partners over its mission and scope of activities. To establish the command, AFRICOM focused on obtaining staff and building the capabilities necessary to assume responsibility for all existing DOD activities in Africa. DOD, however, continues to face persistent stakeholder concerns, such as fears of AFRICOM militarizing foreign aid because of initial statements about the new command's intended mission. Our previous work suggests that to build trust with stakeholders, clarify misperceptions, and create shared expectations, a communication strategy can be an effective tool. Although it alone cannot resolve all concerns. It will take time for concerns generated by the initial announcement to subside and will largely depend on AFRICOM's actions. AFRICOM has taken some steps to clarify its mission after it received initial pushback from stakeholders and, after consultation with other agencies, now has an approved mission statement. But concerns persist and DOD has not yet finalized a strategy for future communication with the wide range of stakeholders. Until AFRICOM has a strategy that ensures a consistent message and facilitates two-way communication and that is linked to other U.S. government communication efforts, AFRICOM may be limited in its ability to address stakeholder concerns and achieve their acceptance and support for the command.

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## AFRICOM Has Assumed Responsibility for Existing DOD Missions in Africa

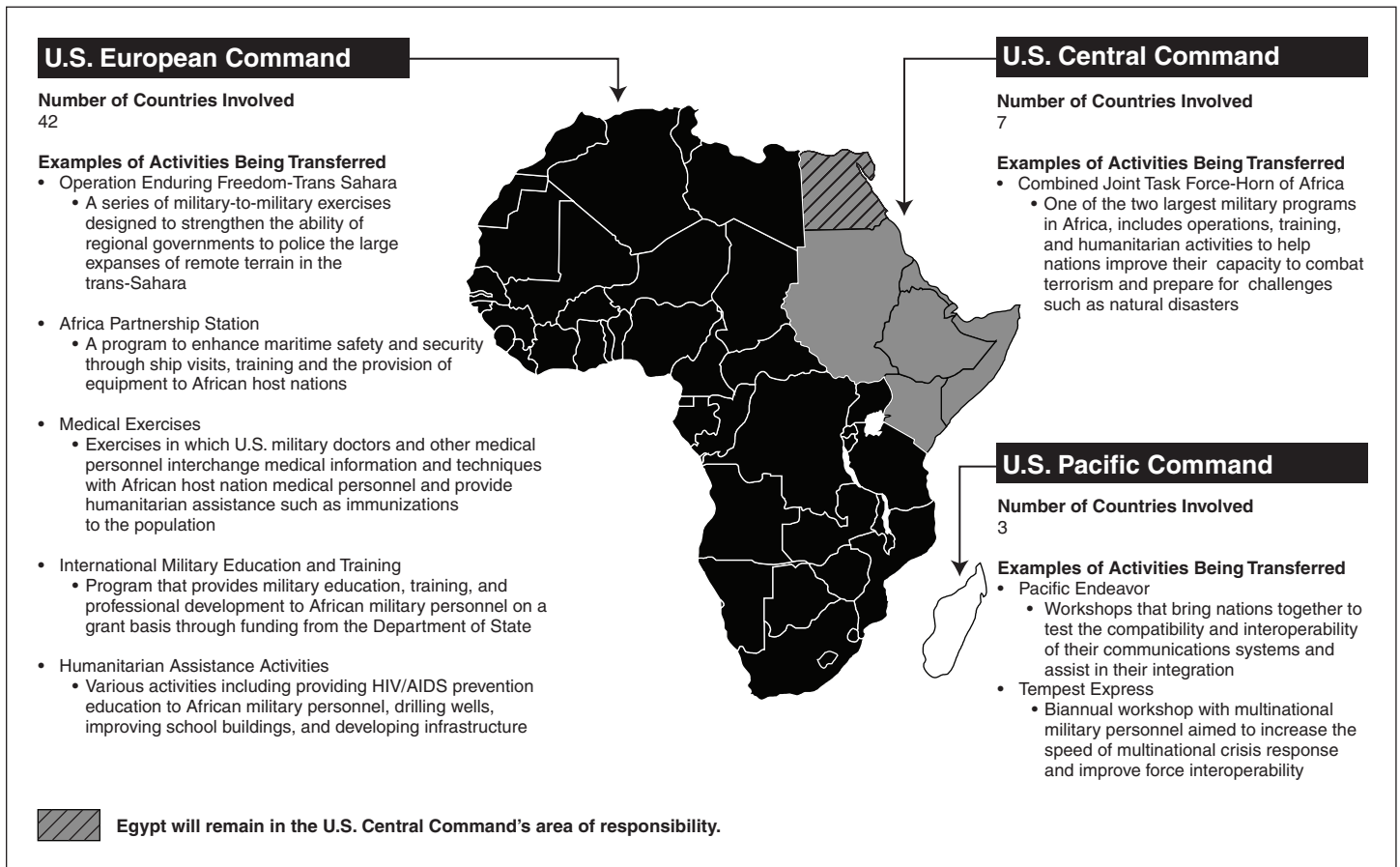
After the President announced the creation of AFRICOM, the command focused its efforts on building the capabilities necessary to assume responsibility for all existing DOD activities inherited from the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific Commands without disrupting them or other U.S. government and international efforts. To accomplish this task, AFRICOM officials created a process to manage the transfer of ongoing activities that it had identified within its area of responsibility. These activities ranged from efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in foreign militaries to programs that provide training opportunities for foreign military personnel and include the two largest U.S. military activities in Africa, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa and Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara.<sup>10, 11</sup> The areas of responsibility and examples of activities being transferred to AFRICOM from the U.S. European, Central, and Pacific Commands are presented in figure 2.

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<sup>10</sup>The Horn of Africa countries include Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Yemen. The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa was formed to work with Horn of Africa governments to promote capacity building, support professionalization of militaries, and counter the proliferation of terrorism.

<sup>11</sup>Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara is designed to strengthen the ability of regional governments to police large expanses of remote terrain in the Trans-Sahara.

**Figure 2: Areas of Responsibility and Examples of Activities Being Transferred to AFRICOM from Other Combatant Commands**



Source: GAO presentation of DOD data; map©Corel Corp., all rights reserved.

Beginning in October 2007, AFRICOM began staffing its headquarters with DOD military personnel, DOD civilian personnel, and personnel from other U.S. government agencies. Officials explained that staffing the command's positions was the most critical and limiting factor in the process for assuming responsibility for activities in Africa because activities could not be transferred without personnel in place to execute them. DOD approved 1,356 positions for the command's headquarters, of which 639 are positions that are to be filled by military personnel, 665 are to be civilian DOD employees, and 52 are to be filled by non-DOD agencies like State and USAID. Table 1 illustrates the number of authorized and assigned positions as of October 2008.



**Table 1: Number and Percentage of Military, Civilian, and Interagency Personnel Planned and Assigned for U.S. Africa Command Headquarters as of October 2008**

<b>Fiscal year 2009</b>	<b>Authorized number of positions</b>	<b>Number assigned</b>	<b>Percentage of authorized positions with personnel assigned</b>
Military	639	628	98
Civilian	665	318	48
Interagency	52	13	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1356</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>71</b>

Source: GAO analysis of DOD budget justification materials, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and AFRICOM documents.

In addition to establishing AFRICOM as a combatant command, DOD directed the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and the Special Operations Command to establish component command or theater-level headquarters that would support the planning and execution of AFRICOM's operations. Each of the services and the Special Operations Command has either initiated or completed steps to identify the organizational structure and resource requirements to establish the various component and theater-level commands. For example, in terms of resources, personnel requirements for the various component commands range from approximately 90 personnel for the Marine Corps to more than 400 for the Army.<sup>12</sup> Army officials have said that they will likely face difficulties in filling positions because of the limited number of personnel with the rank or level of experience required due to the high demand for these individuals to support operational requirements already underway around the world.

**AFRICOM Faces Persistent Stakeholder Concerns about Its Mission**

AFRICOM continues to face persistent concerns among stakeholders within the U.S. government, nongovernmental organizations, and African countries over its mission. Beginning in February 2007, DOD held numerous press conferences, briefings, and meetings with State, USAID, and African nations in an effort to convey the purpose and goals for establishing AFRICOM. According to officials, DOD created AFRICOM to

<sup>12</sup>The staff for these component commands are in addition to the staff the military departments are providing for the headquarters. For example, in fiscal year 2009, Department of Army is providing 260 personnel for AFRICOM headquarters and approximately 400 personnel to staff its component command to support AFRICOM.

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bring a more cohesive and strategic focus to its activities in Africa. Although DOD often stated that AFRICOM is intended to support, not lead, U.S. diplomatic and development efforts in Africa, some State officials expressed concerns that AFRICOM would become the lead for U.S. government activities in Africa, even though U.S. embassies lead decision making on U.S. government non-combat activities conducted in African countries. Other State and USAID officials noted that the creation of AFRICOM could blur traditional boundaries among diplomacy, development, and defense, thereby militarizing U.S. foreign policy. At the same time, however, some saw AFRICOM as a key organization that could support other U.S. government activities on the continent.

An official from an organization that represents U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations told us that many nongovernmental organizations shared the perception that AFRICOM would further militarize U.S. foreign aid and lead to greater U.S. military involvement in humanitarian assistance. An official from another nongovernmental organization testified before a Senate Foreign Relations Committee in August 2007 on fears of the military using humanitarian assistance for its own purposes. Nongovernmental organizations are concerned that this could put their aid workers at greater risk if their activities were confused or associated with U.S. military activities. In our discussions with USAID officials, they stated that these concerns persist within this community. In some cases, these concerns stem from the fact that DOD has more resources and capacity than other U.S. agencies and could therefore overwhelm non-DOD agencies' and organizations' activities in Africa.

Among African countries, there is some apprehension that AFRICOM will be used as an opportunity to increase the number of U.S. troops and military bases in Africa. African leaders also expressed concerns to DOD that U.S. priorities in Africa may not be shared by their governments. For example, at a DOD-sponsored roundtable, a group of U.S.-based African attachés identified their most pressing security issues as poverty, food shortages, inadequate educational opportunities, displaced persons, and HIV/AIDS, while they perceived U.S. priorities were focused on combating terrorism and weakened states.

AFRICOM has taken some steps to clarify its mission after it received initial pushback from stakeholders. For example, initial stakeholder concerns led to a shift in how DOD portrayed AFRICOM's mission, moving from an emphasis on a whole-of-government approach to a reorganization within DOD with an emphasis on traditional military missions, like exercises with African militaries. AFRICOM's mission statement also went

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through several iterations between February 2007 and May 2008, ranging in its emphasis on humanitarian-oriented activities to more traditional military programs. The mission statement was approved following DOD's consultation with U.S. government stakeholders, but some stakeholders remain skeptical of AFRICOM's intentions. According to an official from an organization representing nongovernmental organizations, the emphasis on humanitarian assistance as part of AFRICOM's mission early on has contributed to their fears that AFRICOM would be engaged in activities that are traditionally the mission of civilian agencies and organizations.

Our prior work notes that during large-scale organizational transformations, such as the establishment of AFRICOM, a communications strategy can be an effective tool for building trust with stakeholders, clarifying misperceptions, and creating shared expectations.<sup>13</sup> Such a strategy should include early and frequent communication with stakeholders, a consistent message, and two-way communication. By communicating early and often, organizations help build an understanding of the purpose of planned changes and trust among stakeholders. Ensuring that the message is consistent in tone and content can help reduce stakeholder misperceptions and uncertainties. Encouraging two-way communication that facilitates an honest exchange with and allows feedback from stakeholders can help organizations make appropriate changes and create effective partnerships that are vital to the organization's success.

DOD and State developed two separate documents to guide U.S. government communication on the establishment of AFRICOM, but neither document addressed the widely varying interests among U.S. government, nongovernmental, and African stakeholders. DOD's initial planning team on AFRICOM included in its December 2006 final report a section on strategic communications, but this document was focused on government-to-government interactions and did not include shaping public opinion.<sup>14</sup> DOD officials noted that negative public opinion in Africa has

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<sup>13</sup>GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, GAO-03-669 (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003).

<sup>14</sup>DOD defines strategic communication as focused U.S. government efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of U.S. government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power. Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C. September. 2006).

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influenced African governments' public responses. AFRICOM officials also noted that this document was also focused more on process, rather than the messages that would be communicated. State, which has a role in strategic communications through its Office of Public Diplomacy and embassies, issued an interagency strategic communications strategy in December 2007 for use in U.S. embassies in Africa. This document was issued about 10 months after AFRICOM had been announced and was facing significant stakeholder concerns. According to DOD officials, it emphasized strategic communications tools but did not provide guidance on how to use them. Both DOD and State officials noted that neither document included efforts to communicate with other U.S. government agencies on the establishment of AFRICOM or its mission and goals.

According to AFRICOM officials, the command recognizes the need to address persistent concerns and is working on a strategic communications approach. However, at the time our review, it was unclear what the effort would include or how the views of State and other stakeholders would be incorporated. Officials told us that they plan to complete this effort in early 2009 but the publication date is not firm. Officials told us that the approach will be based on DOD-wide guidance on strategic communications and draw on State's interagency strategic communications documents. Given the underlying concerns inside and outside the U.S. government about AFRICOM and its mission, we believe a communications strategy is an important first step in reducing stakeholders' concerns, but we also recognize that it alone may not be able to resolve all of them. It will take time for concerns generated by the initial announcement to subside and will largely depend on AFRICOM's actions. Until AFRICOM has a comprehensive communications strategy that includes all appropriate audiences, encourages two-way communication with stakeholders, and ensures a consistent message, the command may continue to be limited in its ability to reduce persistent skepticism and garner support for the command.

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## AFRICOM Has Not Determined Needed Interagency Representation

AFRICOM has taken initial steps to improve interagency collaboration, focusing mainly on integrating interagency personnel into the command, but it has not yet determined the extent of interagency representation it ultimately needs. DOD officials have said that embedding personnel from other agencies is essential to AFRICOM carrying out its mission because it will help its plans and activities to be more compatible with other agencies. DOD set some initial interagency personnel goals, but they were notional and did not take into consideration perspectives or resource constraints of potential contributing agencies. AFRICOM has recently

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taken steps to involve stakeholders by inviting representatives to the command to survey the need for their personnel in achieving AFRICOM's mission. This process, however, does not guarantee that other agencies will commit to filling interagency positions. In addition to seeking interagency participation at its headquarters, AFRICOM is also adjusting its planning to involve other agencies and better align its plans and activities with those agencies. Without interagency collaboration and synchronized effort with its U.S. government partners, AFRICOM may not be able to achieve the level of effectiveness it expects from its plans and activities.

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### AFRICOM Has Some Interagency Personnel in Place, but Has Not Yet Fully Identified Positions to Be Filled by Other Federal Agencies

To facilitate interagency collaboration, AFRICOM initially focused on integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into the command, which according to DOD and AFRICOM officials, is essential to AFRICOM carrying out its mission. By bringing knowledge of their home agencies into the command, personnel from other federal agencies, such as USAID and the Departments of the Treasury and Commerce, are expected to improve the planning and execution of AFRICOM's plans, programs, and activities and to stimulate collaboration among U.S. government agencies. Unlike liaisons in other combatant commands, AFRICOM is integrating personnel from other federal agencies into leadership, management, and staff positions throughout the command structure.<sup>15</sup> For example, AFRICOM's Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities, one of two deputies in the command, is a senior Foreign Service officer from State. As members of the AFRICOM staff, embedded interagency personnel are intended to be involved at the beginning of AFRICOM's planning process to help ensure that AFRICOM's plans and activities are compatible and aligned with plans and activities of other agencies. DOD will reimburse agencies for the salaries and expenses for these personnel.

As of October 1, 2008, AFRICOM had filled 13 embedded interagency positions with personnel from six federal agencies into the command, as seen in table 2. These positions constitute about 1 percent of AFRICOM's authorized headquarters staff level, which is in sharp contrast with DOD's original concept of a command with significant interagency involvement.

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<sup>15</sup>AFRICOM also has several non-DOD personnel in non reimbursable liaison positions, such as the Foreign Policy Advisor and the Humanitarian Assistance Advisor.

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**Table 2: Embedded Interagency Personnel on AFRICOM staff as of October 2008**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Number of Positions Filled</b>	<b>Position Titles for Filled Positions</b>
Department of State	2	Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities Director for Outreach
U.S. Agency for International Development	2	Deputy Director for Strategy, Plans, and Programs Humanitarian Assistance Branch Chief
Department of Homeland Security	3	Acting Illicit Traffic Branch Chief Operations and Logistics Directorate Strategy, Plans, & Programs Directorate, Engagement Division
Director for National Intelligence	3	Unspecified
Department of the Treasury	2	Treasury Terrorist Finance Policy Advisor AFRICOM Liaison Specialist
Department of Commerce	1	Deputy Director for Resources
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	

Source: GAO from AFRICOM data.

Establishing AFRICOM with interagency involvement is more challenging than establishing a command staffed only with DOD personnel because DOD has to rely on other federal agencies to help meet its personnel needs. Our prior work has shown that valid and reliable data about the number of personnel required to meet an agency's needs are critical because personnel shortfalls can threaten an organization's ability to perform missions efficiently and effectively. To build a staff with the necessary skills and competencies to accomplish strategic goals, successful organizations should involve stakeholders in the workforce planning process and conduct systematic assessments and analysis to determine the critical skills and competencies needed to achieve results.<sup>16</sup> Involving stakeholder agencies in developing personnel goals is important for ensuring goals are realistic and for gaining stakeholder commitment. Getting buy-in is especially critical in an interagency context because DOD

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<sup>16</sup>GAO, *Human Capital: Key Principles for Effective Workforce Planning*, GAO-04-39 (Washington, D.C.: December 11, 2003).

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cannot compel civilian agencies to assign personnel to fill interagency positions in a DOD command.

Even though AFRICOM has begun integrating interagency personnel into the command, it has not yet finalized the number of interagency positions it will ultimately need in the command. DOD set some initial personnel targets, but continues to revise them. Initially, DOD conceived of a command that had about a quarter of its headquarters staff filled with personnel from other U.S. government agencies.<sup>17</sup> After recognizing that agencies would not be able to provide that level of personnel support, AFRICOM established a new goal of 52 interagency positions for fiscal year 2009, which is 4 percent of its staff. Both DOD and AFRICOM officials, however, told us that this goal will also change as they learn more about what skills they need and what other agencies can provide. According to DOD and AFRICOM officials, these initial goals were notional and were not based on an analysis of specific skill sets needed to accomplish its mission.

AFRICOM's personnel goals continue to change in part because DOD did not always involve stakeholder agencies in developing personnel targets. As a result, personnel shortfalls in contributing agencies were not fully taken into consideration. State officials said that the interagency personnel goals were not evaluated or accepted by those agencies that would be providing personnel to AFRICOM and could be unrealistic in light of personnel shortfalls in other agencies. For example, DOD has requested that State fill 13 mid level positions in AFRICOM in addition to the two senior positions already filled. State and DOD officials told us, however, that DOD had requested State input only after the positions had been established. Moreover, State officials told us that they would not likely be able to provide active employees to fill the positions requested because they are already facing a 25 percent shortfall in mid level personnel. Given these shortfalls, State officials are considering alternatives to filling positions, such as technological tools, as a way to engage in AFRICOM's plans and activities without having to physically locate personnel in the command in Stuttgart.

AFRICOM has recently begun taking steps to involve stakeholder agencies in identifying the number of interagency positions and skill sets needed in

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<sup>17</sup>AFRICOM's initial interagency personnel goal was based on a headquarters size of 500-600 personnel; therefore, one quarter would be approximately 125 people.

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each position. Agencies are now sending representatives to AFRICOM on a temporary basis to develop a better understanding of the command and its mission, survey the need for their personnel to help carry out AFRICOM's mission, and help determine their level of participation and the role their personnel could play in the command. These representatives work with the AFRICOM staff to identify the skill sets for their agencies' personnel within the AFRICOM structure. DOD then sends a formal request inviting the contributing agency to provide personnel. While this process does allow other agencies to provide input into the development of interagency positions, it does not guarantee commitments in filling those positions. Contributing agencies ultimately decide whether or not to provide personnel after weighing DOD's request against their own resource priorities.

Without taking into consideration stakeholder agencies as it determines its level of needed interagency representation, AFRICOM could develop unrealistic personnel goals that agencies may not be able to support, acquire skill sets that are less relevant for its mission, or be unable to obtain commitments from agencies to provide needed skills. Our previous work on effective workforce planning recognizes the need for strategies to address gaps in critical skills and competencies.<sup>18</sup> If AFRICOM is not able to fill interagency positions or lacks necessary skill sets, AFRICOM risks losing the full benefit of the knowledge, skills, and expertise it can derive from other federal agencies' personnel, which is the cornerstone of interagency collaboration for the command. And even though integrating interagency personnel is considered essential to its mission, AFRICOM officials told us that they have not developed specific action plans to fill needed personnel slots or alternative solutions to address the growing likelihood of shortfalls in interagency personnel.

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<sup>18</sup> [GAO-04-39](#).



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## AFRICOM Is Taking Steps to Involve Other Agencies in Its Strategic Planning Process

In addition to its efforts to integrate interagency personnel into the command, AFRICOM has also taken steps to reach out to other agencies in developing its first theater strategy and theater campaign plan.<sup>19</sup> DOD strategic documents call for collaboration among federal agencies to ensure that their activities are integrated and synchronized in pursuit of common goals, and DOD guidance notes that the quality of DOD planning can improve with early and regular involvement from relevant U.S. government agencies. In developing its theater campaign plan, AFRICOM is one of the first combatant commands to employ DOD's new planning approach to involve other U.S. government agencies at the beginning of the planning process and may result in a better informed DOD plan for its activities in Africa.<sup>20</sup> As part of the campaign planning process, AFRICOM met with representatives from 16 agencies in a series of workshops in the summer of 2008 designed to gain interagency input on the plan's strategic end states and on how to align the plan with other agencies. For example, participants noted that security cooperation activities to enhance African military professionalism needed complementary efforts from other agencies in law enforcement, judicial, and economic reform. However, it is important to emphasize that the end result of this process will be a DOD product and not reflect an overarching national strategy or whole-of-government approach, one of many current national security system issues that are discussed in detail in the November 2008 report by the Project on National Security Reform.<sup>21</sup>

Our past work indicates that AFRICOM may encounter some challenges as it moves forward in seeking to align its plans and activities with U.S. government agencies. For example, DOD planning guidance acknowledges that U.S. government agencies have their own unique approaches and processes for planning, which may be based on different time frames and

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<sup>19</sup>A theater strategy outlines concepts and courses of action for achieving the objectives established in national policies and strategies through the synchronized and integrated use of military forces and other instruments of national power. See Joint Publication 1-02. A theater campaign plan encompasses the activities of a geographic combatant command and translates national or theater strategy into operational concepts and those concepts into unified action. See Joint Publications 1-02 and 5-0.

<sup>20</sup>DOD planning guidance provides for a process that enables combatant commands to attain headquarters level involvement of other departments and agencies in DOD campaign and contingency plans. AFRICOM is one of two combatant commands that will be the prototype test cases for campaign planning. Guidance for Employment of the Force (May 2008).

<sup>21</sup>Project on National Security Reform, *Forging A New Shield*, (Arlington, VA: Nov 26, 2008)

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different purposes. Our 2007 report on stability operations also noted that a lack of understanding of planning processes and capabilities among DOD and other federal agencies and differing planning cultures and capacities limited the effectiveness of interagency collaboration efforts.<sup>22</sup> U.S. Joint Forces Command reported in 2007 that military campaign planning assumes a starting point and an established end state, which can be compatible with USAID's planning process, but other civilian planning is continuous and seeks to achieve certain thresholds, such as an acceptable level of criminal activity. In a 2008 report on the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, a multi-agency program in Africa led by the State, we found that the program lacked a comprehensive, integrated strategy to guide the implementation of State, USAID, and DOD activities aimed at strengthening country and regional counterterrorism capabilities and inhibiting the spread of extremist ideology in northwest Africa.<sup>23</sup> Our work showed that, as a result, State, USAID, and DOD developed separate plans focused on their respective program activities. Although these plans reflected some collaboration, such as in assessing a country's development needs, they did not constitute an integrated approach and may have hampered the ability of key agencies to collaboratively implement their activities.

In addition, different agencies involved in diplomatic, development, or defense activities can have varying strategic priorities based on their respective agency missions, and definitions of success can vary. One Joint Staff official said that deconflicting differing priorities among federal agencies has been a significant challenge over the last few years and will likely pose a challenge for AFRICOM in the future. Furthermore, according to Joint Forces Command, restrictions exist on how funding for many programs can be used, which can result in stove-piped funding streams that inhibit the integration of programs and activities into comprehensive solutions. Given the differences in planning cultures, strategic priorities and definitions of success, the outcome of AFRICOM's efforts to involve federal agencies in its planning efforts and the ability of AFRICOM to align its plans and activities with other agencies remains to be seen.

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<sup>22</sup>GAO, *Military Operations: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning*, [GAO-07-549](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2007).

<sup>23</sup>[GAO-08-860](#).

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## Total Costs to Establish AFRICOM Are Uncertain, and Depend on the Location of AFRICOM's Permanent Headquarters and Supporting Offices

DOD cannot reliably estimate AFRICOM's total future costs because decisions on the locations of the permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa have not been made. AFRICOM has already projected that its current plans for an interim headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, and expanded presence in U.S. embassies in Africa could exceed \$4 billion through 2015. However, the location of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and its supporting offices in Africa will have a significant effect on AFRICOM's total future costs. DOD initially delayed decisions on its command presence after concerns arose surrounding the location of the headquarters, the authorities under which some supporting offices would operate, and resistance from a number of African countries. DOD has since postponed decisions on command locations until fiscal year 2012. Without deciding on the locations of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and supporting offices, DOD will be unable to estimate the future costs of the command.

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## Future Costs for AFRICOM Are Unknown but Likely Significant

AFRICOM's total future costs are still unknown but will likely be significant and could expand dramatically once decisions are made on the locations of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa. Senior Office of the Secretary of Defense officials stated that preparing budget estimates for future fiscal years is difficult without a clear plan for AFRICOM's headquarters and supporting offices because DOD will derive the assumptions it uses to estimate future costs from such a plan.

Current cost estimates for operating AFRICOM's interim headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, and expanding DOD's presence in 11 U.S. embassies in Africa already exceed \$4 billion for fiscal years 2010-2015; however, these estimates do not include potential cost for establishing a permanent AFRICOM headquarters or its supporting offices. During this time period, DOD projects that AFRICOM will require a total of \$2.1 billion to operate its headquarters, pay for interagency personnel, fund improvements to computer and communications systems, conduct exercises and training for headquarters personnel, and cover operating costs in Africa such as leases and transportation. Facilities costs are also projected to be significant. DOD projects that improvements to facilities used by AFRICOM personnel in Africa on a temporary basis and Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa will total \$2 billion. In addition, AFRICOM estimates that the construction of offices and housing for AFRICOM personnel in Africa will cost \$179 million.

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The infrastructure requirements for AFRICOM's interim headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, have already proved more costly than anticipated. Altogether, completed and future renovations for AFRICOM's interim headquarters are estimated at \$140 million. In fiscal year 2007, DOD spent more than \$28 million to renovate facilities for AFRICOM's interim headquarters. In fiscal year 2008, they spent an additional \$62 million to continue renovating pre-World War II facilities to meet minimum military standards, such as providing adequate ventilation and asbestos remediation. These renovation costs were more than double the initial cost estimates. AFRICOM is projecting future renovations in Stuttgart will cost approximately \$50 million more. AFRICOM plans to keep its headquarters in Stuttgart at least until its permanent location is determined in fiscal year 2012.

Other potential costs are not included in DOD's estimates. For example, these estimates do not include constructing a joint operations fusion center to support the headquarters and improve coordination and collaboration among AFRICOM and key partners, which could cost \$200 million or more to construct; the long term costs to meet health care, education, and housing requirements for AFRICOM's soldiers and families; or the costs to establish and operate AFRICOM's four service component commands and theater special operations command which are not included in AFRICOM's initial cost estimates because they are considered service expenditures. These costs are expected to be substantial, however.

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### DOD Postponed Decisions on the Location of AFRICOM's Permanent Headquarters and Supporting Offices

DOD has scaled back its initial concept for AFRICOM's headquarters and regional presence in Africa and postponed making decisions on the location of its permanent headquarters and supporting offices until fiscal year 2012. Decisions about the ultimate location of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and its supporting offices in Africa will have a significant impact on the command's future costs.

Originally, DOD intended to have a forward headquarters element in Africa where the commander would be located, a rear headquarters element outside of Africa where the bulk of the staff would be located, 5 regional offices, and an expanded presence in 11 U.S. embassies in Africa. In addition, the military services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) and the Special Operations Command would establish headquarters outside of Africa to provide operational and planning support to AFRICOM. DOD's initial concept for AFRICOM is illustrated in Appendix II. According to DOD officials, having a command presence in Africa would provide a better understanding of the regional environment and

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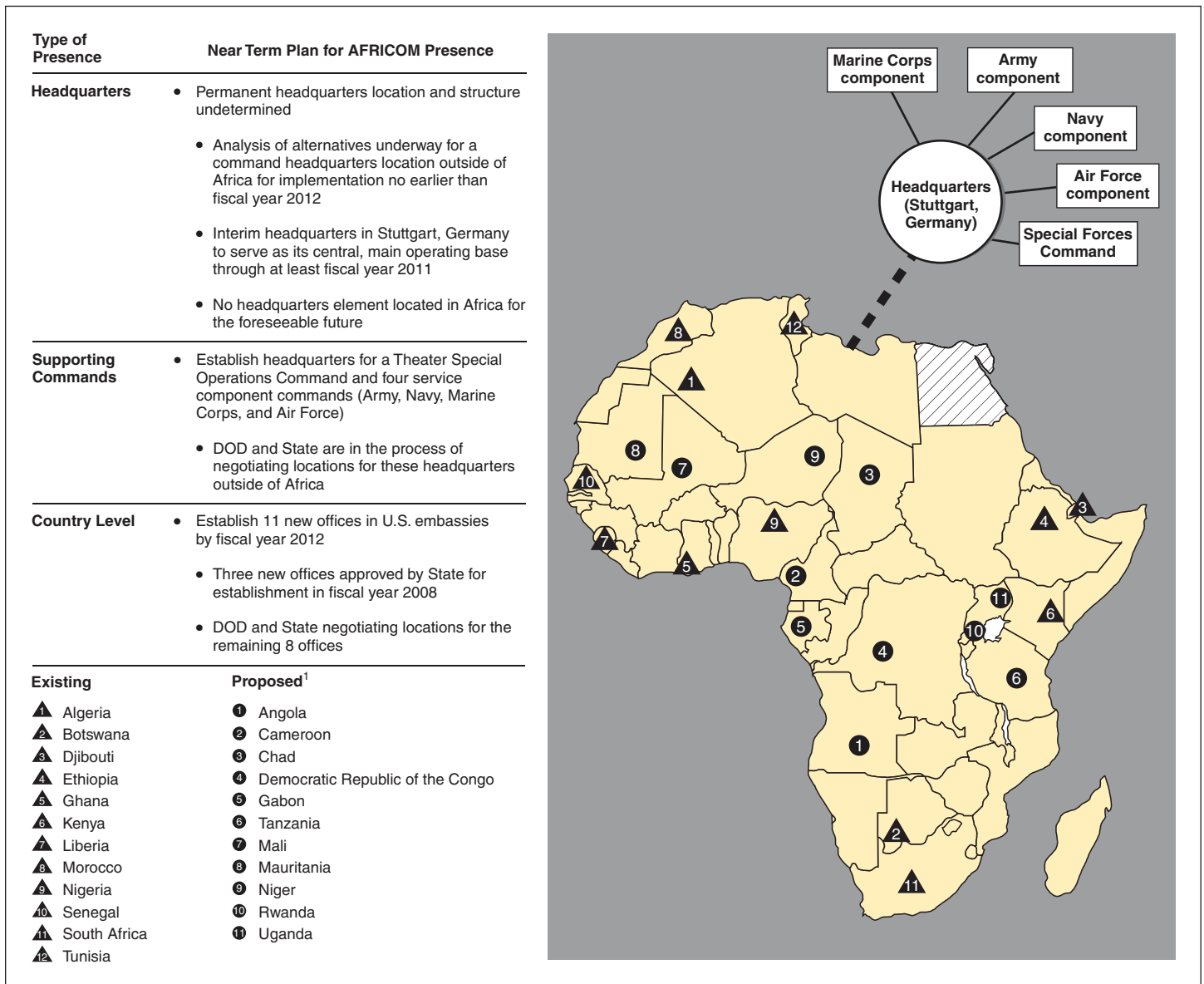
African needs, help build relationships with Africa partners and regional economic communities and associated standby forces, and promote a regional dimension to U.S. security assistance.<sup>24</sup>

After encountering resistance from stakeholders on its initial concept, AFRICOM shifted its focus to maintaining an interim headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, and establishing 5 new offices in U.S. embassies in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. These offices provide in-country management support and oversight for U.S. security assistance programs. Figure 3 illustrates DOD's near term plans for AFRICOM's command presence, including its interim headquarters in Stuttgart, component and theater supporting commands outside of Africa, and embassy-level offices in Africa.

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<sup>24</sup> Africa has 5 regional economic communities, which are the Arab Magreb Union in the north, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development in the east, and the Southern African Development Community. The African Union, a continent-wide intergovernmental organization, established the African Standby Force, which has 5 regional brigades corresponding to each of the regional economic communities. The African Standby Force is intended to conduct peacekeeping operations.

**Figure 3: AFRICOM's Plans for Interim Headquarters Location and Command Presence, as of October 2008**



Source: GAO presentation of DOD data; Copyright © Corel Corp. All rights reserved (map).

<sup>1</sup>AFRICOM has not confirmed whether these 11 embassies are the same embassies in which it currently intends to establish offices, but is still negotiating with State.

AFRICOM postponed decisions on the location of AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa after concerns arose among its U.S. government stakeholders and African partners. As DOD

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coordinated its initial concept for a headquarters and regional offices in Africa with the State, concerns surfaced over where AFRICOM's headquarters element in Africa would be located and how the AFRICOM commander and State would exercise their respective authorities. Although State officials were involved in DOD's early planning teams for AFRICOM, the agencies did not reach agreement on a location for AFRICOM's proposed headquarters in Africa, and State officials voiced concerns about DOD's regional office concept. Locating AFRICOM headquarters and supporting offices in Africa requires an international agreement with host nations; however, an international agreement may not be signed or otherwise concluded on behalf of the United States without prior consultation with the Secretary of State.<sup>25</sup> One State official who participated in the planning process described selecting a headquarters location for AFRICOM as a contentiously debated issue between State and DOD. In addition, DOD and State officials said that State was not comfortable with DOD's concept of regional offices because they would not be operating under the ambassador's chief of mission authority and preferred DOD expand its presence in U.S. embassies in Africa.<sup>26</sup> DOD also experienced resistance from some African nations after it announced its intention to establish a headquarters on the continent. This resistance was the result of concerns over greater U.S. influence in the region and a perceived increase in U.S. military troops in the region.

DOD officials told us that after reviewing a number of alternatives the Secretary of Defense decided in October 2008 to delay decisions regarding AFRICOM's permanent headquarters until fiscal year 2012. According to officials from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa, the Secretary determined that it was more important to build relationships at this stage of the command and that postponing the decision for three years would allow AFRICOM to better understand its headquarters and operational requirements. Our prior work has identified key practices that can help agencies identify and decide between alternatives, such as those for headquarters' and supporting offices' locations, in a manner that promotes stakeholder buy-in, maximizes benefits, and minimizes costs given the constraints and barriers agencies

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<sup>25</sup> 1 U.S.C. § 112b(c).

<sup>26</sup> A Chief of Mission is the principal officer, usually the ambassador, in charge of a U.S. diplomatic mission abroad, and has full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. government executive branch employees in that country. See 22 U.S.C. § 3927.

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face. These practices include conducting an analysis of potential alternatives to provide a basis for decision makers to use in selecting feasible options that meet performance goals. An analysis includes quantitative and qualitative estimates of the expected tangible and intangible benefits and costs; utilizes clearly articulated criteria, methodology, and assumptions; considers the potential of each alternative to achieve desired performance goals; takes into account the full cost and timeframes of implementation; and assesses barriers and risks in implementing each alternative. For example, infrastructure costs, effects on the effectiveness of DOD operations, and geopolitical impact on U.S. relationships with African partners could be taken into consideration in such an analysis.

Unless DOD understands the costs and benefits of its alternatives, sets a long-term strategy based on that analysis, and is judicious in its infrastructure and other investments in the meantime, the delays in deciding AFRICOM's future locations could unnecessarily drive up overall costs. Renovations to the interim headquarters in Stuttgart are estimated to cost about \$140 million by the time they are completed but these interim facilities will not include state-of-the-art capabilities, like a fusion center. Until decisions are made on the structure and locations of AFRICOM's headquarters and supporting offices in Africa, the total investment that the command will require will remain unclear and will make it difficult to assess the merits of additional investments and create uncertainty about the future of AFRICOM.

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## Conclusions

DOD established AFRICOM with many unanswered questions about what role the command would ultimately play in helping to stabilize the African continent. The military's large size brings the promise of increased resources but has also created worries among some stakeholders about potential encroachment into civilian responsibilities like development and diplomacy. On one level, AFRICOM can be viewed as an internal reorganization of DOD's combatant command structure to clarify lines of authority and provide focus on Africa. Early on, however, DOD did not effectively reach out to key stakeholders in communicating its plans for the command and this contributes to lingering concerns today. While DOD has taken steps to clarify AFRICOM's intended goals and mission, AFRICOM will also need to demonstrate that its actions are consistent with its stated mission. Given the interagency nature of the command and its activities, AFRICOM will need to be clear in communications with stakeholders, be consistent in message, and listen to stakeholders in crafting a message during this period. At a broader level, AFRICOM is



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viewed by many as a test bed for a new focus on interagency collaboration in promoting stability in the region. However, AFRICOM should not be viewed as the U.S. government's vehicle for creating an overarching strategy for Africa or ensuring a whole-of-government approach to the region.

This report addresses three challenges that could affect the ultimate success of AFRICOM. First, DOD has not yet fully allayed concerns about the command's role and mission both inside the U.S. government and with potential African partners. Second, AFRICOM has not yet determined how many personnel it needs from other U.S. government agencies or what functions they will perform, and interagency planning processes are still immature. Third, DOD has not yet decided the locations for AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and presence on the continent, or agreed upon criteria with stakeholders for making such decisions, leaving considerable uncertainty about future costs at a time when defense budgets are projected to become increasingly constrained. DOD and AFRICOM are working to address these challenges but it is unclear when their efforts will be completed. Unless these challenges are addressed, the effectiveness of the command may suffer and costs are likely to escalate.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To establish a more effective means to communicate with all stakeholders, clarify perceptions and create shared expectations of what stakeholders can realistically expect from AFRICOM; and to address personnel resource constraints of agencies that are intended to fill interagency positions in the command, we recommend the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Africa Command to take the following two actions:

- Include all appropriate audiences, encourage two-way communication, and ensure consistency of message related to AFRICOM's mission and goals as it develops and implements its communications strategy.
- Seek formal commitments from contributing agencies to provide personnel as part of the command's efforts to determine interagency personnel requirements, and develop alternative ways for AFRICOM to obtain interagency perspectives in the event that interagency personnel cannot be provided due to resource limitations.

To determine the long-term fiscal investment for AFRICOM's infrastructure, we recommend the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State, as appropriate, conduct an assessment of possible locations for AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and any supporting offices in Africa that

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- is based on transparent criteria, methodology, and assumptions,
  - includes the full cost and time-frames to construct and support proposed locations,
  - evaluates how each location will contribute to AFRICOM's mission consistent with the criteria and methodology of the study,
  - considers geopolitical and operational risks and barriers in implementing each alternative, and
  - limits expenditures on temporary AFRICOM infrastructure until decisions are made on the long-term locations for the command.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report DOD partially agreed with each of our three recommendations, stating that in some cases, actions were already underway that would address the issues identified in this report. State did not provide written comments on our report. In its written comments, USAID affirmed its support for AFRICOM and stated that it had met its personnel requirements in support of AFRICOM. DOD and USAID's written comments appear in their entirety in appendix III.

Regarding our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Africa Command to develop a comprehensive communications strategy that includes all appropriate audiences, encourages two-way communication, and ensures consistency of message related to AFRICOM's mission and goals, DOD partially agreed and stated that AFRICOM has already been directed, through existing guidance, to develop a comprehensive communications strategy and therefore additional direction is not necessary. DOD noted that, subsequent to our draft report, AFRICOM has developed a Strategic Communications Roadmap and Instruction guidance and a strategic communications annex to its Theater Campaign Plan that is under development. DOD's response also indicated that these documents had not yet been released but did not provide any detail about the content of these documents or the extent to which they address the specific elements outlined in our recommendation. Therefore, until they are completed and released, we have no basis for determining whether they will address the issues raised in our report or the intent of our recommendation. We believe our recommendation is still warranted, but we modified it to emphasize that DOD's communications strategy that is currently being developed should include all appropriate audiences; encourage two-way communication; and ensure consistency of message related to AFRICOM's mission and goals.

In response to our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, AFRICOM, as it develops its interagency personnel requirements, to develop an action plan with contributing agencies to fill

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agreed-upon interagency positions and, as necessary, develop alternative approaches to obtain perspectives and expertise from other U.S. government stakeholders to mitigate any interagency personnel shortfalls, DOD partially agreed and stated that AFRICOM has been working with all potential contributing agencies to fill identified positions, and therefore an action plan is not needed. To address potential shortfalls in contributing agencies' ability to fill positions, DOD commented that the command has directed two of its directorates to work on such issues as they arise. As stated in our report, we acknowledge that AFRICOM has involved other agencies in identifying interagency requirements and is refining its processes for determining interagency goals for the command. However, we also point out that AFRICOM's approach does not guarantee a commitment from contributing agencies to fill identified positions, and significant personnel shortfalls exist in some agencies such as State which can limit their contributions to AFRICOM's personnel requirements. DOD's response provides little information as to how the department will obtain specific commitments from other agencies for meeting interagency personnel requirements or outline alternative ways for AFRICOM to obtain interagency perspectives. We continue to believe a more formal approach is needed to achieve these objectives and have modified our recommendation to more clearly reflect our position.

DOD partially agreed with our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State, conduct an assessment of possible locations for AFRICOM's permanent headquarters and any supporting offices in Africa that (1) is based on transparent criteria, methodology, and assumptions; (2) includes the full cost and time-frames to construct and support proposed locations; (3) evaluates how each location will contribute to AFRICOM's mission consistent with the criteria and methodology of the study; (4) considers geopolitical and operational risks and barriers in implementing each alternative; and (5) limits expenditures on temporary AFRICOM infrastructure until decisions are made on the long-term locations for the command. In its comments, DOD stated that it plans to use those broader criteria in its decision. However, DOD comments did not address how its plans to limit expenditures on temporary AFRICOM infrastructure until long term decisions are made. Given the significant and growing costs associated with AFRICOM's temporary stationing and DOD's intent to apply the elements listed in the recommendation in future decisions for the command's headquarters and supporting offices in Africa, we believe that our recommendation is still warranted.

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As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the issue date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretary of State; the Administrator, United States Agency for International Development; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. The report will also be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3489 or at [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Pendleton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John H. Pendleton  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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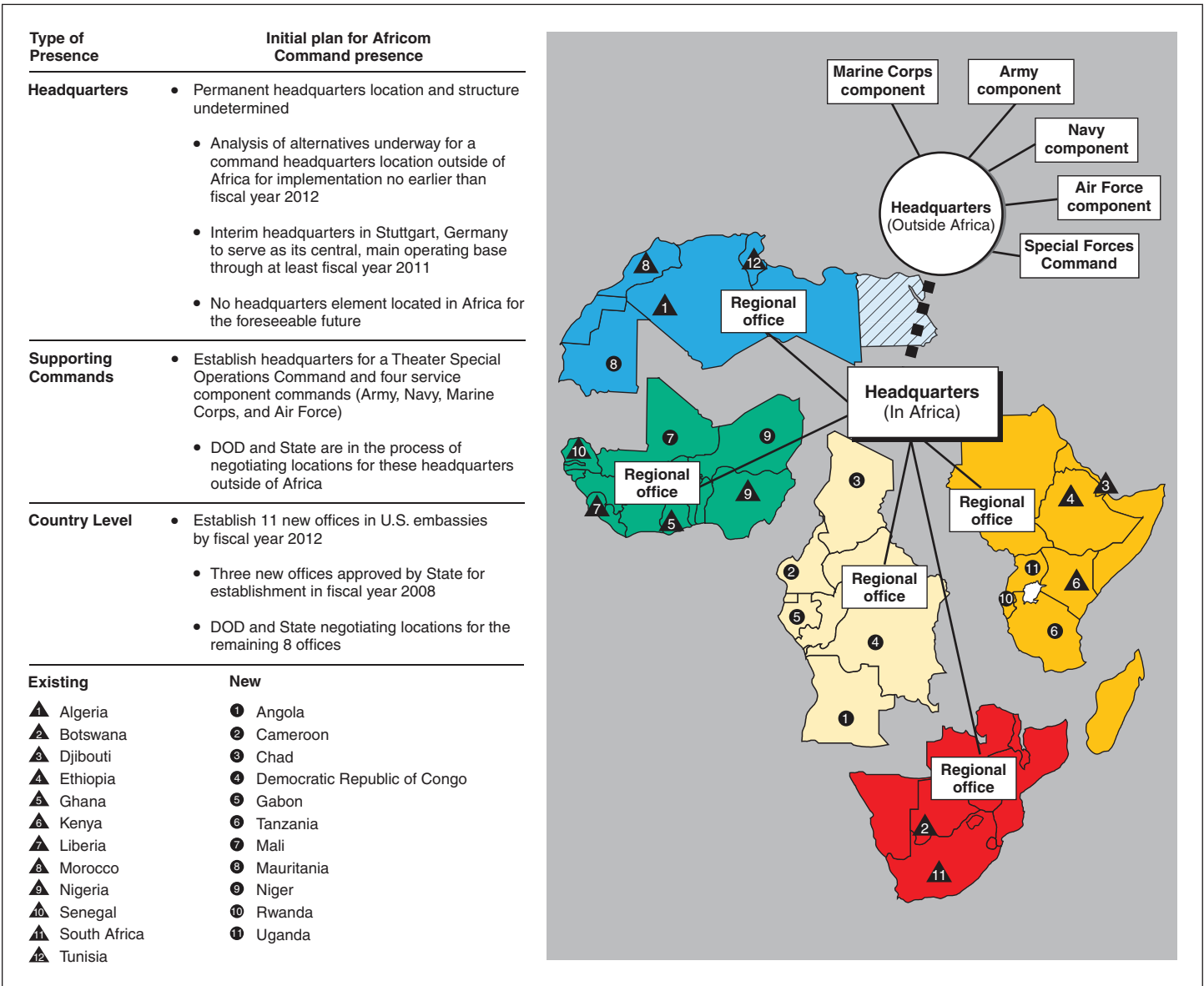
To assess DOD's efforts to establish the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and address stakeholder concerns, we reviewed a wide range of Department of Defense (DOD) and command documentation including AFRICOM guidance, plans, directives, speeches and testimony statements, and reports; implementation plans and directives for creating its new mission organizations; and documentation related to DOD's efforts to create the new command. We also spoke with various officials involved in the command's implementation efforts about their roles, related plans, and actions. When possible, we met with the command and other organizations' senior leadership to discuss and obtain their views on various command issues. Specifically within DOD, we interviewed officials at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation, Undersecretary of Defense Comptroller; the Joint Staff; the Services; two Geographic Combatant Commands (European Command and Africa Command); and U.S. Joint Forces Command. We also interviewed officials at the Department of State's Bureau of Political Military Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs, and the Office of Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, as well as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to obtain other agencies' perspectives regarding DOD's process of establishing the command and the inclusion of non-DOD perspectives in establishing of the command. In these interviews, we reviewed relevant information and discussed implementing guidance for establishing the command and the range of stakeholder concerns, the interviewees' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in establishing the command, progress in establishing the command, and challenges that have been encountered. To gain an understanding of African perspectives, we interviewed U.S. government agencies that worked with representatives of African governments on issues related to AFRICOM. Finally, we interviewed InterAction, an organization that represents U.S.-based international governmental organizations on these organizations perspectives on AFRICOM's mission and goals.

To assess the extent to which AFRICOM has taken steps to improve interagency collaboration, we obtained information on its plans and goals for integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies and on its efforts to align its plans and activities with other federal agencies. We interviewed officials from DOD, the Department of State, and USAID. Within DOD, we spoke with officials from the AFRICOM transition team, the U.S. Africa and Joint Forces Command, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the Joint Staff. During these interviews, we obtained information on AFRICOM's initial and current interagency personnel targets; the process for identifying positions and

requesting personnel from other agencies, including memorandums of agreement and position descriptions; personnel systems; and host nation agreements. We also received documentation on Joint Forces Command's interagency mission analysis, including preliminary reports, and on AFRICOM's Theater Campaign Plan, including briefings, guidance, and workshop proceedings. During interviews with the Department of State and USAID, we discussed their personnel resource shortfalls and their roles in providing input to AFRICOM's interagency personnel goals, its plans and activities, and Joint Forces Command's interagency mission analysis.

To assess DOD's plans to establish a permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa, we obtained information related to the initial and current plans for AFRICOM's presence in Africa, including DOD implementation guidance, planning documents, budget proposals, and facility renovation plans. We also interviewed officials from DOD, the Department of State, and InterAction, an organization representing U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations. Within DOD, we interviewed officials from the AFRICOM transition team; the U.S. European and Africa Commands; the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation, Undersecretary of Defense Comptroller, and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; the Joint Staff; and the U.S. Army Installation Management Command. During these interviews, we received information on the status of DOD's determination of an initial and future command headquarters location, locations for its components' headquarters and its determination of a presence in Africa. We also discussed its process for making these determinations, its plans for their implementation, their anticipated budget implications, and feedback DOD has received from stakeholders. During interviews with the Department of State officials we discussed the agency's involvement in the determination of AFRICOM's command locations, its role in negotiating an AFRICOM presence outside of the United States, and its views on various alternatives for AFRICOM's command presence. Finally, we interviewed InterAction, and during those interviews we discussed the positions of nongovernmental organizations on AFRICOM's presence in Africa and relevant feedback these organizations have received from representatives of African nations. We did not, however, consult directly with representatives of African nations to elicit their views on AFRICOM's command presence in Africa.

# Appendix II: DOD's Initial Concept for Headquarters Location and Command Locations in Africa



Source: GAO presentation of DOD data; map©Corel Corp., all rights reserved.

# Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense



INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY  
AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400

Mr. John H. Pendleton  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

JAN 21 2009

Dear Mr. Pendleton:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report GAO-09-181, "DEFENSE MANAGEMENT: Actions Needed to Address Stakeholder Concerns, Improve Interagency Collaboration, and Determine Full Costs Associated with the U.S. Africa Command," (GAO Code 351071/GAO-09-181).

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you the information you requested. Our detailed response is attached.

Please contact us if we can provide any additional information.

My point of contact on this issue is Mr. Dan Pike at (703) 614-0421 or electronic mail address: [dan.pike@osd.mil](mailto:dan.pike@osd.mil).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Theresa Whelan".

Theresa Whelan  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
for African Affairs

Attachment:  
As stated





GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED DECEMBER 23, 2008  
GAO CODE 351071/GAO-09-181

“DEFENSE MANAGEMENT: Actions Needed to Address Stakeholder  
Concerns, Improve Interagency Collaboration, and Determine Full Costs  
Associated with the U.S. Africa Command”

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) to develop a comprehensive communications strategy that includes all appropriate audiences, encourages two-way communication, and ensures consistency of message related to AFRICOM’s mission and goals.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Partially concur – The Secretary of Defense directed USAFRICOM in the Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF, Page 37) dated May 1, 2008 to develop a comprehensive communications strategy. Therefore, this recommendation for the Secretary of Defense to re-direct the commander is not necessary. Subsequent to the GAO request for information, USAFRICOM has developed a Strategic Communications (SC) Roadmap and Instruction guidance as well as appropriate SC annexes for USAFRICOM’s Theater Campaign Plan, which is currently being staffed and will be released upon the commander’s approval.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** As U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) develops its interagency personnel requirements, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct USAFRICOM to also develop an action plan with contributing agencies to fill agreed-upon interagency positions and, as necessary, develop alternative approaches to obtain perspectives and expertise from other U.S. government stakeholders to mitigate any interagency personnel shortfalls.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Partially concur - USAFRICOM, in line with OSD guidance, has been working with all potential contributing agencies to continue plan development to fill those positions as stated in the recommendation. Therefore there is no need for the Secretary of Defense to direct USAFRICOM to develop an action plan. As for developing alternative approaches to mitigate agency shortfalls, USAFRICOM has directed two of its directorates (Outreach and Resource) to work such issues as they arise. This includes working with interagency partners when identifying personnel shortfalls.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State, conduct an assessment of possible locations for U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) permanent headquarters and any supporting offices in Africa that:

- is based on transparent criteria, methodology, and assumptions;

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**Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense**

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- includes the full cost and timeframes to construct and support proposed locations;
- evaluates how each location will contribute to USAFRICOM's mission consistent with the criteria and methodology of the study;
- considers geopolitical and operational risks and barriers in implementing each alternative, and;
- limits expenditures on temporary USAFRICOM infrastructure until decisions are made on the long-term locations for the Command.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Partially concur – DoD has been in consultations with the Department of State on potential USAFRICOM locations in Africa since November 2006 using similar criteria. When DoD takes up this issue for re-evaluation in 2011, DOD should, in collaboration with the Department of State, use this broader criteria to identify possible overseas locations as the permanent headquarters location in Africa. The decision, however, on USAFRICOM's permanent headquarters location resides with the Secretary of Defense.

# Appendix IV: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

JAN 27 2009

John Pendleton  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Pendleton:

I am pleased to provide the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) formal response on the draft GAO report entitled DEFENSE MANAGEMENT: Actions Needed to Address Stakeholder Concerns, Improve Interagency Collaboration, and Determine Full Costs Associated with the U.S. Africa Command (GAO-09-181).

USAID has been supportive of Africa Command from its inception by providing initial and sustained planning assistance in determining the Command's mission and development personnel requirements. We are also pleased to report that USAID has met its personnel requirement for Africa Command. We look forward to a continued partnership with Africa Command as it addresses military to military requirements for a more secure Africa.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Drew Luten".

Drew Luten  
Acting Assistant Administrator  
Bureau for Management

U.S. Agency for International Development  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20523  
[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

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# Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

John H. Pendleton, (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov)

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## Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Robert L. Repasky, Assistant Director; Tim Burke; Leigh Caraher; Taylor Matheson; Amber Simco; Grace Coleman; Ron La Due Lake and Lonnie McAllister made key contributions to this report.

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# Related GAO Products

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*Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.* [GAO-08-860](#). Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2008.

*Force Structure: Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command.* [GAO-08-947T](#). Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2008.

*Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps.* [GAO-08-39](#). Washington, D.C.: November 6, 2007.

*Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions Needed to Improve Governmentwide Planning and Capabilities for Future Operations.* [GAO-08-228T](#). Washington, D.C.: October 30, 2007.

*Military Operations: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning.* [GAO-07-549](#). Washington, D.C.: May 31, 2007.

*Combating Terrorism: Improved Training and Guidance Needed to More Effectively Address Host Nation Support and Enhance DOD's Force Protection Efforts.* [GAO-07-200NI](#). Washington, D.C.: January 31, 2007.

*Defense Management: Comprehensive Strategy and Annual Reporting Are Needed to Measure Progress and Costs of DOD's Global Posture Restructuring.* [GAO-06-852](#). Washington, D.C.: September 13, 2006.

*Military Transformation: Additional Actions Needed by U.S. Strategic Command to Strengthen Implementation of Its Many Missions and Organization.* [GAO-06-847](#). Washington, D.C.: September 8, 2006.

*Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies.* [GAO-06-15](#). Washington, D.C.: October 21, 2005.

*21st Century Challenges: Transforming Government to Meet Current and Emerging Challenges.* [GAO-05-830T](#). Washington, D.C.: July 13, 2005.

*Military Transformation: Clear Leadership, Accountability, and Management Tools Are Needed to Enhance DOD's Efforts to Transform Military Capabilities.* [GAO-05-70](#). Washington, D.C.: December 16, 2004.

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*Human Capital: Key Principles for Effective Strategic Workforce Planning.* [GAO-04-39](#). Washington, D.C.: December 11, 2003.

*Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations.* [GAO-03-669](#). Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003.

*Overseas Presence: More Data and Analysis Needed to Determine Whether Cost-Effective Alternatives Exist.* [GAO/NSIAD-97-133](#). Washington, D.C.: June 3, 1997.

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