

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 6, 2008

Dear Chairman Skelton and Ranking Minority Member Hunter,

As organizations and individuals committed to responsible U.S. policies toward the nations and peoples of Africa, we write to express our concerns about further militarization of the African continent via the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2009.

We are alarmed at the prospect of an expanded U.S. military footprint in Africa. Key African governments and civil society leaders have voiced opposition to AFRICOM and its potential for new U.S. basing structures in Africa. Concerns have also been raised about the Pentagon's lack of transparency and consultation with African governments, African regional bodies, and African civil society prior to the announcement of AFRICOM's establishment a year ago. In addition, civil society here and on the African continent have deep concerns about the implications of placing missions and functions that are inherently civilian under the lead of the U.S. military. Our fear is that this change of policy may lead to a militarization of U.S. funded programs in Africa and hinder democratic development.

For decades, the U.S. government has engaged in military activities in Africa that have been detrimental to African societies. Throughout the Cold War, driven by short-term exigencies similar to those of today, the United States armed and supported dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and rogue political movements such as UNITA in Angola. These policies of military support contributed to enduring instability and armed violence in broad swathes of Africa.

In your bill, we encourage you to recognize the needs and desires of our African partners as paramount to our own objectives on the continent. Before Congress allocates funding for military programs in Africa through the "Building Partner Capacity of Foreign Military and Other Security Forces" or other military programs under the new AFRICOM, it is imperative that serious consideration be given to the negative effect such initiatives might have on the development of stable—or even fragile—democratic governance on the African continent.

While we appreciate the hearing that the committee held on April 15 on new DOD military aid programs, we encourage you to gather testimony from credible representatives of African civil society to hear their views on increasing support to local militaries.

At a minimum, we **encourage the Committee to consider developing benchmarks that countries must meet before they can receive military assistance under DOD programs—similar to indicators the Millennium Challenge Corporation uses** to measure good governance before providing development funds. Doing so would ensure that U.S. taxpayer funds are not misspent on corrupt or non-democratic governments that might use the equipment and training to suppress democratic development and retain autocratic rule.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

3D Security Initiative
Africa Action
Africa Faith and Justice Network
African Security Research Project
Association of Concerned Africa Scholars
The Community for Human Development
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Hip Hop Caucus
Institute for Policy Studies, Foreign Policy in Focus
Jesuit Conference USA
Missionaries of Africa
Missionary Oblates Justice and Peace Office
Peace Action
Resolve Uganda
TransAfrica Forum
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United for Peace and Justice

(Per the signatories listed below, affiliation is for identification purposes only.)

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