SOCAFRICA: A Subunified Command

SOCAFRICA has a combination of authorities and responsibilities unique within USAFRICOM, and it requires support from other USAFRICOM components to execute its mission. SOCOM has COCOM of the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) and AFRICOM has OPCON of the TSOC.

OVERVIEW
SOCAFRICA's position as the subunified theater special operations command makes it unique within USAFRICOM. In accordance with joint doctrine, it requires significant support from other AFRICOM components to execute its mission. This brief primer on SOCAFRICA's authorities and the logistical support required from other USAFRICOM components is intended to avoid confusion regarding the command's functions and relationships with other USAFRICOM units. It is not comprehensive, but provides a framework for understanding how SOCAFRICA differs from Service components and other USAFRICOM subordinate units.

OPERATIONAL AUTHORITY
- As commander of a subunified command, CDRSOCAFRICA has functions and responsibilities similar to those of the commanders of unified commands. He exercises operational control of assigned commands and of all Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the USAFRICOM AOR unless otherwise directed.
- As commander of a theater special operations command, CDRSOCAFRICA oversees those broad, continuous missions that are uniquely suited to SOF capabilities.
- As a joint force commander, CDRSOCAFRICA may create subordinate joint task forces and organize forces under his operational control to accomplish assigned missions.
- As the CDRUSAFRICOM-designated supported commander for counter violent extremist organizations and associated operations, actions, and activities in the USAFRICOM AOR, CDRSOCAFRICA has primary responsibility for these tasks and exercises general direction of the supporting efforts.
- As the SOF coordinator, integrator, and synchronizer for all SOF in the USAFRICOM AOR, CDRSOCAFRICA is the responsible to CDRUSAFRICOM for the "one SOF team."

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT
- The Secretary of the Army, as the SECDEF-designated the combatant command support agent, provides administrative and logistical support to HQ SOCAFRICA on a non-reimbursable basis.
- The parent Service of a deployed SOF unit is responsible to provide its Service-common logistical support such as standard military items and base operating support, usually through the theater Service component.
  - When the responsible theater Service component cannot satisfy its Service SOF requirements, USAFRICOM may direct a common or joint servicing arrangement through another component.
  - When it is impractical for theater support infrastructure to support SOF, USAFRICOM may ask CDRUSAFRICOM to deploy organic USSOCOM combat service support assets to provide nonstandard support. This support is provided from funds appropriated for special operations-peculiar support. Using it for Service-common support is closely scrutinized by USSOCOM and Congress.
- USSOCOM provides SOF-peculiar logistical support using funds appropriated for that purpose.
LONG-TERM VISION

Our long-term vision is to enable and support our African partners to deter violent extremist organizations, achieve effective governance, promote future socio-economic development, and protect the populace to achieve peace and prosperity in Africa.

OUR MISSION

SOCAFRICA, as part of a global team of national and international partners, conducts persistent, networked and distributed special operations in direct support of the United States Africa Command to promote stability and prosperity in Africa.

OUR CORE TASKS

We will, without fail, deter and defeat transnational threats by:

- Countering violent extremism
- Strengthening the defense capabilities of African states and regional organizations
- Protecting U.S. interests in Africa
- Supporting crisis response
- Countering weapons of mass destruction

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

African Proverb

Approved by COMSOCAF, 161012
Commander's Narrative

Discussion on Special Operations in Africa

Introduction

Special Operations Command, Africa (SOCAFRICA), as part of a global team of national and international partners, conducts persistent, networked and distributed special operations supporting the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) to promote stability and prosperity in Africa. Our area of responsibility (AOR) is a challenging and dynamic operational environment consisting of positive and negative trends. With 53 African states, more than 800 ethnic groups, over 1,000 languages, vast natural resources and a land mass three and half times the size of the continental United States, Africa is complex.

At any given time, you will find SOCAFRICA conducting approximately 96 activities in 20 countries with 1700 personnel arrayed on three continents. SOF enables USAFRICOM to reduce strategic risk and achieve Campaign Objectives.

SOCAFRICA's continued focus for USAFRICOM is deterring and defeating transnational threats in Africa. We succeed in our mission by:

- Countering violent extremism destabilizing Africa
- Strengthening the Special Operations Force (SOF) capabilities of African partners
- Protecting U.S. interests in the Africa AOR.
- Provide time for civil administration to address root causes by promoting development, expanding good governance, and protecting the populace.

The Complex Operational Environment

The United States is not at war in Africa, but our African partners are. This shapes policy, guidance, missions and resources. Terrorist, insurgent and criminal groups are among those exploiting fragile, conflict-prone environments. Their goals are to expand illicit networks, establish safe havens, subvert legitimate authority, recruit and mobilize people and resources; all to fuel crises to their advantage.

In spite of tightening resources and constrained budgets, we can expect an increased demand on us to gain a better understanding about the threats, integrate with our coalition and interagency partners, and build African partner SOF capability to counter violent extremism.

All of this becomes increasingly important to us and requires our presence forward. I see SOF in more places, doing more with little increase in resources. Acceleration of SOF missions fills a strategic gap as the military adjusts force structure now and in the future. My concern is that as this is occurring, resources remain static or decrease. That forces us then to be creative and figure out how to squeeze more blood from the same stone and do more with the resources we have available. We will have to become comfortable, but not complacent or satisfied with resource challenges. This presents us with an opportunity to be creative, imaginative, and use initiative to solve resource problems while mitigating risk of continuing the mission.
An Ongoing Narrative discussing Special Operations in Africa.

**Assessment**

The problem we assist AFRICOM in solving is countering violent extremism in order to provide time for African partners to expand good governance and self-secure. This is by no means an easy task due to the extent of destabilization throughout Africa. Our first step in solving the problem is having situational awareness of Africa's complex operational environment. Knowing the external and internal destabilizing pressures across Africa and by region is critical to our mission success.

Endemic inside Africa are leadership challenges within government institutions, corruption and heavy-handed responses by autocratic regimes to real or perceived security threats. A state which increases the likelihood of internal conflict. Poor governance, ineffective government institutions and socio-economic inequality increase the risk of popular uprisings and permits violent extremism to expand their reach.

Outside pressure from terrorism and foreign fighter flows, illegal immigration and trafficking in narcotics, weapons and people not only destabilize Africa, but threaten our allies on Europe’s southern flank. Negative external influencers contribute to security shortfalls, human rights violations, corruption and government mismanagement producing an environment conducive to subversion, military coups, and mass atrocities.

Each region of Africa has its own set of additional problems. In North Africa political instability and threats from violent extremist organizations continue to drive security dynamics here. In Libya, ungoverned spaces allow al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Ansar al-Sharia elements, al-Murabitun and other violent extremist organizations to grow and gain negative influence. North Africa remains a significant source of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, some of which are returning with greater capabilities.

In western Africa, Boko Haram, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and criminal organizations strive to expand their networks. Ineffective governance promotes opportunity for socio-economic inequality to increase here. This produces conditions which encourage popular uprisings in this part of Africa, in turn creating new opportunities for violent extremist organizations to expand their reach.

Central Africa remains a volatile region characterized by security shortfalls, human rights violations, corruption and government mismanagement which create an environment conducive to insurgent activities, military coups and mass atrocities. In central Africa, the Lord’s Resistance Army and criminal organizations are factors to instability in the area.

East Africa will remain characterized by conflict for the foreseeable future. This dynamic provides opportunity for al-Shabaab, currently active in Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, and Ethiopia; and empowers new, ideologically motivated extremist groups seeking political change. Terrorism and foreign fighter flows; trafficking of persons, narcotics and illicit goods; and piracy is the chief transnational concerns in East Africa.
An Ongoing Narrative discussing Special Operations in Africa.

Road Map

SOF’s ability to conduct effective, full spectrum SOF operations in remote areas is the cornerstone of our success. Our ability to master the human domain is unparalleled. Our achievements are based on organizing into small teams which are scalable, have a high impact, are low cost, value added to the overall objective, in the right places, working through, with, and by our partners to achieve tangible results at all levels.

To succeed, we must:

- Be regionally aligned, threat-focused, and build sustainable SOF capabilities in our SOF focus African partner countries.
- Operate in the Gray Zone, between traditional war and peace.
- Enable friendly networks; disrupt enemy connective networks.
- Become transparent, write to release, integrate, coordinate, and synchronize with AFRICOM, SOCOM, other COCOMs, the IA and IC, Embassies, & Partner Nations.
- Operate through mission command: flat communications (responsible / appropriate), decentralized (authorities / permissions), distributed ops (small team / high impact).
- Be one SOF team: the SOF coordinator, integrator, & synchronizer for AFRICOM & SOCOM & components.
- Conduct full spectrum SOF operations. We work through, with, and by our partners to ensure we do not replace their will with capability and capacity. We want to ensure it is clear that they own the problem and the solution.
- Link our tactical successes to strategic objectives in the AFRICOM TCP, the SOCOM CP-GSO, and U.S. Embassy Integrated Country Strategies

We must show how this is all being done and the benefits we bring. We will do so through our operations cost analysis, assessments and lessons learned, which become critical in demonstrating our effectiveness, especially as we advocate for resources.

Outlook for the Future

We will continue to move forward on a logical evolutionary glide path by leveraging the past, understanding the present, and shaping the future to continue to take SOCAFRICA to the next level. Speed, flexibility, and performance will remain important to our credibility. We must guard against complacency unquestioned assumptions, unchallenged beliefs, and inflexible behaviors and methods. Do your job and know your job, keep it simple, and be part of the team. I encourage you to try new things and do not worry about failing. I will underwrite mistakes. Get caught doing something, fight the right fight, keep the faith, and keep moving forward. The end does not justify the means. You must acquit yourself with honor and do

Donald C. Bolduc, Commanding General
Special Operations Command, Africa
Commander's Narrative (Part II)

Ongoing Discussion on Special Operations in Africa

Introduction

In 2012, President Obama, in his U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa, said that “Africa’s economies are among the fastest growing in the world, with technological change sweeping across the continent and offering tremendous opportunities in banking, medicine, politics, and business.” Those opportunities, however, have been hampered by several threats ranging from poor governance to violent conflict. To address the more violent threats, U.S. Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA) conducts a full spectrum of special operations activities in 20 countries through 96 mission sets and seven named operations as a component of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). SOCAFIRAICA is threat-focused and we support partners who have limited capability and capacity to fight some of the world’s deadliest violent extremist organizations (VEOs). We believe the situation in Africa will get worse without our assistance.

Why Our Assistance to Africa Matters Now

From 2010 to the present, VEOs in Africa have been some of the most lethal on the planet. In eastern Africa, al-Shabaab has exploited the weak governance in Somalia and waged 2,349 terrorist attacks in Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab has not only contributed to foreign fighter flows elsewhere, but also to trafficking in persons, narcotics and illicit goods, as well as piracy. Central Africa is the most volatile and remote region in the world, characterized by scant security forces, human rights violations, corruption and government mismanagement, which create an environment conducive to insurgent activities, coups and mass atrocities. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) was responsible for approximately 1,862 attacks during this same six-year period. In western Africa, ineffective governance and socio-economic disparity created the environment that gave rise to Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Boko Haram launched 1,424 terrorist attacks in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, while in Mali, AQIM pulled off 324 attacks during the period. In northern Africa, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gained a foothold in post-civil war Libya and achieved 294 attacks there and in the nascent democratic Tunisia over the past year alone (2015-2016). Clearly, VEOs represent a serious political, economic and social threat to our African partners now. But what of the future?

Why Our Assistance to Africa Matters in the Next 30 Years

Many of Africa’s indicators are trending downward, portending more conflict. Helping our partners now is vital because prevention is less costly than mitigation; because developing our partners’ capacities to face security threats – particularly long-term ones – is more sustainable than deploying U.S. or international conventional forces to do so; and because the positive example U.S. Special Operations Forces demonstrate, e.g. in obedience to civilian authority and respect for human rights, lays the groundwork for more professional partners in the future. Moreover, the added capability and capacity we give our partners helps them achieve the stability they need to allow them to further develop their economies and governance – which will in turn contribute to even more robust stability.
Africa is undergoing tremendous demographic, economic, and political changes. Representing one-fourth of the world’s landmass – 3 1/2 times that of the United States – its 54 countries host 1.2 billion people from more than 800 ethnic groups speaking over 1,000 languages. 41% of the population is below the age of 15, according to the United Nations. Some experts project that even with relatively high mortality rates and assuming increased use of birth control, the population will reach 2.4 billion by 2050. Africa’s strong economic growth, where the continent’s 11 biggest economies have tripled since 2000, has peaked. Africa faces significant revenue shortfalls due to falling commodity prices at a time when African governments must not only prepare for significant population growth, but also face more immediate concerns ranging from resource competition, climate change and pandemic disease, to violent conflict and terrorism. Moreover, governments are failing to keep pace with these challenges – even the most economically powerful find it difficult to provide public safety, education, goods and services to its people. Some governments have begun to backtrack on their transparency, democratic development and respect for human rights. Meanwhile, VEOs have exploited poor (or lacking) governance – and the resulting popular discontent – to propagate their ideology and commit violence across the continent. All of these challenges are likely to cause increasing instability that pose a threat to U.S. national interests in Africa.

How? First, instability often gives rise to violent extremism, which feeds gives more impetus to the cycle of instability. Al-Qaeda, ISIL and other VEOs grew out of wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Similarly, conflicts in Somalia, Libya, Nigeria, Mali and central Africa have spawned al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and AQIM, ISIL -West Africa, the Lord’s Resistance Army and other VEOs, all of whom have branched out and morphed into neighboring countries and further abroad. ISIL’s spread into Libya, Boko Haram’s pledge of fealty to ISIL and AQIM’s launching of attacks in Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire have caused many governments well outside centers of conflict to fear the spread of transnational terrorism – not to mention the spread of terrorist tactics, techniques and procedures – forcing them to turn more of their limited resources away from developing their economies to bolstering security, even though it is clear that development and security go hand in hand to counter violent extremism. Moreover, VEOs are becoming increasingly transnational.

Second, instability displaces vast numbers of people who further tax what little infrastructure already exists. UNHCR estimates that sub-Saharan Africa hosts 26% of the world’s refugee population – about 18 million people – causing the UN to open 12 new camps and expand seven others in 2015 alone. These refugees not only burden African countries and their neighbors, but also countries further abroad. Approximately 50,000 Africans sought refuge crossing the Mediterranean in 2015, representing one of the most important security concerns of Europe’s southern flank. Furthermore, refugee camps have been fertile recruiting grounds for VEOs, whose activities perpetuate the cycle of conflict and displacement.

Mitigation, not Consequence Management

Indeed, Africa’s challenges could create a threat that surpasses the threat that the United States currently faces from conflict in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The emergence of that threat, however, is not inevitable. In 2012, President Obama, in his U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa, said that “Africa’s economies are among the fastest growing in the world, with technological change sweeping across the continent and offering tremendous opportunities in banking, medicine, politics, and business.” He outlined several mutually reinforcing objectives to support Africa: (1) strengthen
democratic institutions; (2) spur economic growth, trade, and investment; (3) advance peace and security; and (4) promote opportunity and development. It emphasized that our success will rely on our engagement with Africa’s young leaders, addressing the unique needs of fragile and post-conflict states, and working closely with the U.N. and other multilateral actors such as the African Union to achieve our objectives on the continent.

In order to implement the President’s strategy, we ensure that we are well-coordinated with the different agencies of the U.S. government. We tailor our activities on the continent in close collaboration with AFRICOM and its components, the Department of State, USAID and U.S. embassies abroad to ensure that we work synergistically to support our African partners, so that they have the time and space to develop their own ability to secure their own countries and to create conditions conducive to good governance and economic growth. We are further guided by the National Defense Strategy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Risk Assessment to the U.S. Special Operations Command Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Theater Campaign Plan of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), as well as by the interagency priorities defined by U.S. Ambassadors in their Integrated Country Strategies. We also rely on the guidance of our African partners, who have an existential interest in our assistance.

While SOCAFRICA’s primary focus is on helping our partners disrupt, degrade and defeat VEOs, our activities are not limited to supporting direct action, but also indirect action. We develop relationships not only with national forces, but also with local communities, ensuring that we balance our support and have a comprehensive awareness of the areas where we operate. Through civil-military operations, we partner with USAID to support development and assist NGOs and local government re-establish themselves in post-conflict environments. Through military information operations, we ensure that our partners not only counter the propaganda of their enemies, but inform the populace about what they are doing. Recognizing the resource constraints of our partners as well as that of our own, SOCAFRICA ensures that all of its activities expand and leverage the capabilities of our African partners, as well as that of our allies.

To summarize, SOCAFRICA works as part of a global team of national and international partners to conduct persistent, networked and distributed special operations in direct support of AFRICOM to promote regional stability and prosperity in Africa. We also protect U.S. interests in Africa, including our diplomatic facilities abroad, to ensure that all elements of our national power – diplomacy, development and defense – can continue to support our African partners. I assess that continued support will be vital in helping Africans confront the many political, social and economic challenges it will face over the next several decades, and in ensuring that those challenges do not develop into greater threats to our allies – particularly Europe’s southern flank – and to the United States and its interests.

Donald C. Bolduc, Commanding General
Special Operations Command, Africa
Guidance on Advise and Assist and Build Partner Capability and Capacity

SOCAFRICA’s core tasks are to deter and defeat transnational threats by countering violent extremism, strengthening African states’ and regional organizations’ defense capabilities, and protecting U.S. interests in Africa. The goal of our programs is to disable enemy networks by enabling partner nation effectiveness and their interoperability, to conduct operations within a larger partner nation security structure. Providing training and equipment to our partners, helps us improve their ability to organize, sustain, and employ a counter violent extremist force against mutual threats.

Our efforts must support U.S. objectives, be consistent with AFRICOM objectives, and aligned with the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS), while at the same time support our partners’ operations. This balance ensures an overlap in our and the African partners’ goals by setting conditions in the security environment that will improve governance and promote development.

Our efforts must be coordinated with stakeholders to include the partner nation, country team, AFRICOM Staff, AFRICOM components, and SOCOM. We determine program requirements by leveraging top-down guidance and bottom-up development process. Headquarters SOCAFRICA staff, based on guidance from Congress, OSD, AFRICOM, SOCOM and the DoS will deliver top-down guidance to inform successful program development. We will also rely on SOCFWD Commanders, as the primary SOF operational integrators, to identify specific partner needs and execute the approved program for our partner units. SOCAFRICA staff will ensure the programs are staffed properly for approval, monitored during execution, and assessed to influence future programs.

We must develop comprehensive Train and Equip programs that are useful and necessary and consistent with how our partners operate and are sustainable within their capability and capacity. Any program proposal must carefully consider the current and future technology and sustainment requirements, to ensure partner nation capability to be an effective countering violent extremism (CVE) force. The partner force must be able to be absorb, afford, and sustain the equipment and training provided. The training and equipping must correlate to an effective step in the operational level of the Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze, and Disseminate (F3EAD) Process, a logistics capability to sustain operations, an effective communications capability, or an appropriate mobility capability.

At the tactical level our programs must follow a simple paradigm that provides appropriate shoot, move, communicate, survive, and sustain capabilities in our partner nation counterterrorism unit. Our approach at the operational level will seek to link this lethal tactical capability to those that provide a functional operations and intelligence fusion to enable an F3EAD capability. At the strategic level, we must foster institutions and leaders that will influence the manner in which partner nation counterterrorism forces will be manned, trained, equipped, deployed, and resourced. We will contribute to AFRICOM’s effort to facilitate select Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Personnel, Facilities and Policies (DOTMLPF-P) solutions and joint functions, such as Command and Control, Intelligence, Fires, Movement and Maneuver, Protection and Sustainment for our partners. At all levels, we will serve as the primary synchronizer of CVE programs for all of the AFRICOM components. Where we identify a lack in these higher level capabilities, we will leverage the appropriate AFRICOM component.
SOCAFRICA Gray Zone Defined

SOCAFRICA's operational environment is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. The threat operates in a non-state, trans-regional and trans-national, decentralized, and dispersed operational construct. The threat survives in ungoverned and under-governed safe havens and sanctuaries created by a populace that has lost hope due to ineffective governance exacerbated by ineffective civil administration at all levels. The threat usually has outside support, dominates the populace, utilizes asymmetric approaches, and leverages information, communications, and available technology to promulgate its ideology and exercise its will. The threat is a trans-regional, trans-national, and regional one which we assess our African partners can defeat with effective commitment, cooperation, and coordination of their military operations in support of a broader political strategy that recognizes that regional problems require regional solutions. Transnational threats and VEOs endanger the safety and stability of Africa. Countering these threats is in the common interest of U.S. policy objectives and those of our African partners. We assess it is Africans who are best able to address African security challenges.

In addition to governance issues, the root causes to the instability are inadequate security, economic and development challenges, and a disenfranchised populace that provides violent extremist organizations opportunities to threaten the national interest of our partners and of the United States. We operate in a politically sensitive and challenging Area of Responsibility (AOR) that simultaneously crosses multiple instruments of power (diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and legal). Recognizing we operate in an environment where diplomacy is key to attaining U.S. policy objectives, the country teams' Integrated Country Strategy must drive a synchronized comprehensive approach across the regions. This places military efforts in a supporting role (where they should be). We are part of the solution, and not the solution.

SOCAFRICA's operational environment and the programs, missions, operations, exercises, activities, and actions we are tasked to do address the security challenges and compliment other stability efforts that fall between war and peace. The Gray Zone environment in Africa is characterized by both clear policy guidance in West Africa and the Sahel and unclear policy in North Africa and East Africa. Further complicating this environment is the fact that the United States is not at war in Africa, but the partners we support are at war. In addition, the political, economic, military, and informational interests of China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran complicate competition for strategic influence and relationships. Everything we do for our partners today must prepare them for tomorrow's threats and support strong political and military relationships. Operating in this environment requires consensus from all stakeholders and their perspectives drive the pace of activities.

Adding to the complexity of military operations in Africa is that there are too many conflicting perspectives when it comes to what the USG policy should be for Africa. The problems in Africa defy solution within a single fiscal year, or the two to four-year tour of a GCC commander; such change will require at least a generation for a policy to become effective. The USG has not built a strategy to address the root causes of instability in Africa. We must use a strategy based on a goal of SUCCESSFUL GOVERNANCE as a baseline and building to GOOD GOVERNANCE as a solution. Our approach must be small and focused on connecting the local with the national. Understand there is no "quick win". This will be long-term.
SOCAFRICA is organized around a regional approach and exercises mission command through three Special Operations Commands-Forward (SOCFWDs) and a Joint Special Operations Air Component (JSOAC), all led by O-6 level commanders. SOCAFRICA’s Regional SOF Framework utilizes a “One SOF Team” mission command through a flat, decentralized, and distributed command and control construct that is underpinned by a responsive logistics, air, and communications support construct. A key component to this framework is nested key leader engagements and relationships conducted at all levels. This supports transparency with all stakeholders and a regional comprehensive approach with a focus on understanding that our partners and the threat connect us, and leverages the SOF-Conventional force integration, our allies, and coalition partners to compliment and expand capacity. This SOCAFRICA framework is designed to operate effectively in the gray zone to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan (TCP) and conduct appropriate and responsible missions to support the SOCOM Campaign Plan – Global Special Operations (CP-GSO).

In order to be effective in operating in the gray zone environment we must ensure we are responsive, integrated, and flexible. You will find this in our tenets of operations. However, it is how we are organized, our intellectual approach, and our mission command construct consisting of Regional SOCFWDs (integrators), SOF teams (executors), and SOFLEs (synchronizers), logistics teams, JSOAC, and communications architecture that sets us up to operate effectively.

![SOCAFRICA Commander's Visualization of the Environment](image-url)

Picture 1: SOCAFRICA Commander’s Visualization of the Environment
SOCAFRICA Gray Zone Themes Defined

Everything we do is intended to build the right capability and capacity, trust and interoperability of SOF in order to build effective teams and long-lasting partnerships. Our engagements support bilateral and regional relationships to address regional security problems. U.S. Chiefs of Mission manage these relationships and play a critical role in strengthening military-to-military relationships. This allows us to work effectively in a Title 22 led environment as a member of a larger team that is led and directed by the Department of State through the country teams as directed in National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD 44).

We must not replace our partner’s will with U.S. capability and capacity. Instead, we must enable our partners to conduct responsible and appropriate military objectives. Our approach must be small and focused on connecting the local with the national. Understand there is no “quick win”. This will be long-term.

This approach enables and builds capability and capacity in our partners without the United States encumbering responsibility for the fight, allowing us to be in the position to better support them so that they own the problem, own the fight, and own the solution. All too often, civil administration lags behind military successes and creates a gap that exceeds military capability and capacity, negatively affecting the populace, local government and development. We need to figure this out as an international community; the solution is neither military nor unilateral. If people have no hope for the future, no job, no education, and poor government, they will find something to do (i.e., be subject to extremism/crime).

Human Rights:

The United States must approach this subject with humility, because we have had our own problems respecting human rights; nonetheless, we must deliver a strong message on respecting human rights, holding violators accountable, and conducting appropriate and responsible military operations. Human rights is an operational necessity and could be a strategic game changer. A few can ruin the reputation of many.

Managing Risk:

Distance, lack of infrastructure, limited resources, and remote operational areas all affect our ability to do our mission. Risk is managed at the SOF Team level and is underwritten at the higher HQ level. As you would expect our ability to manage risk to support the broad range of SOF operations depends heavily on logistical, personnel recovery (PR), rotary wing (RW), fixed wing (FW) asset, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) requirements. SOF in Africa work day-to-day to make the best of these limitations and perform our prescribed and directed duties. Risk assessments weigh heavy in the full range of all SOF is doing across the trans-regional, multi-domain, and multi-functional environment. Experienced SOF operators and supporters will continue to do their assigned missions as directed until they assess the risk is too high. Subordinate commands will be given full latitude to make these determinations of risk to mission, risk to force, and risk of doing nothing with full support of SOCAFRICA headquarters.
SOCAFRICA Gray Zone Operational Construct Defined

The conventional operational phases (shape, deter, seize the initiative, dominate, stabilize, and enable civil authority) are not the optimal approach in the Africa Gray Zone and mislead us as we visualize, describe, and direct what we are doing, who we are, where we are doing it, and for what reasons. There exists confusion about our role in this environment. In Africa, we are not the kinetic solution. If required, our partner should do that. We do however, build this capability, share information, provide advice, assistance, accompany, and support with enablers. We do SOF operations in support of our partners. What we are asked to do by the AFRICOM commander is to plan and execute responsible and appropriate SOF missions, exercises, programs, activities, and actions to accomplish AFRICOM’s objectives. We require non-SOF support and we stay true to our SOF truths.

The operational phases that are more appropriate in the SOCAFRICA Gray Zone are shape, clear, hold, build, enable civil authority, and transition phases. These phases appropriately focus us on the threat and how to correctly support our partners across all lines of effort in the gray zone (see slide attached and inserted below). Unique to the Africa Gray Zone is that we must seek to enable civil authority throughout all the phases, as good governance is the objective. Additionally, we are focused on developing a capability in our partners to disrupt, degrade, contain, neutralize, and defeat the threat. This is only a small part of the comprehensive solution and therefore we must view how we do this through a more appropriate lens to operate fully and effectively in the gray zone. SOF units are the force of choice on the African continent to support our partner’s development of C-VEO capabilities. This is due to the nature of the threats, the small force posture, limited resources, limited infrastructure, indirect approaches, and remote areas our country teams and partner nations prefer to accomplish support to security challenges against VEOs. SOF is only part of the solution as there are defense institution, development, humanitarian, air, naval, and conventional capabilities that our African partners require as well.

We work through, with, and by our partners in all phases building their capability and capacity to conduct appropriate and responsible military operations to shape, clear, hold, build, and transition to civil control, while simultaneously enabling civil authority. This approach will facilitate the way we observe, orient, decide, and act in our threat-focused approach in addressing the challenges in our operational environment.

Operating in the African operational environment requires creativity and imagination to overcome limited resources, limited infrastructure, and a large geographical area. The challenges the threat presents with its regional connectedness, living among the populace, and asymmetrical approach. The challenges of operating in remote areas, the challenges of distance, the challenges of limited resources, the challenges of ineffective governance, poor infrastructure, struggling economies, and ungoverned spaces adds significantly to the challenges of our partners.

Six SOCAFRICA concepts that apply to the gray zone are:

1. **Character-based leadership**: Common sense, professionally educated, physically fit and energetic, optimistic and resourceful, aggressive but not reckless, able to see the big picture, work well with others, and build effective teams.

2. **Shaping the environment**: We are regionally-aligned, threat-focused, and we build sustainable SOF capabilities in our SOF focus African partner countries. We operate in the **Gray Zone**.
between traditional war and peace, we enable friendly networks; disrupt enemy connective networks. We are transparent, write to release, collect to release, and develop policy to release information to our partners.

3. Preparation, and assessments: Messaging, stance, execution, c2 (command and control and collaboration and coordination) -- We are the sum of our preparations and our assessments, Understanding, Planning, Execution, and Reflection.

4. Winning the information War: Supporting our partners through institutional support with CMSE and MISO efforts to counter ideology, deliver effective messages, and teach our partners to operate appropriately and responsibly among the populace.

5. Achieve the objective without destroying everything in our path: Comprehensive population-centric approach where civil administration is the main effort and the military supports through an indirect approach that blends both kinetic and non-kinetic tactics, techniques, and procedures to operate effectively amongst the populace and infrastructure. Goal is to operate in and among the populace without creating collateral damage, destroying infrastructure, avoid creating a humanitarian crisis, and set conditions to support a civil administration recovery plan.

6. Target VEO strength to Positionally and Functionally dislocate to degrade their capabilities: The population is the center of gravity. Effective governance brings stability and denies the threat access and influence to the populace. The denial of ungoverned spaces and safe havens positionally and functionally disrupts the threat. Improving ineffective governance, and disrupting and degrading the threat will enable local police to maintain security.