

Statement of  
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before the  
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
House of Representatives  
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**National Security, Interagency Collaboration, and Lessons from  
AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM**

**Introduction**

Chairman Tierney, Ranking Member Flake, distinguished members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer some perspective on interagency collaboration within the combatant commands. This is a timely issue given the challenges we face in addressing current conflicts and potential contingencies. The incentives favoring interagency collaboration are substantial. We are simply more effective in promoting U.S. national security interests when we coordinate our capacities, resources, and efforts, and sustain these habits of cooperation. Our collaboration creates synergies that would not be available if a single organization operated alone. Working together creates a mutually beneficial interdependence and improves the prospect for successful outcomes.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, I assist my department's leadership on policy matters pertaining to our international, interagency and host-nation partnerships, as well as to security sector assistance, stability operations, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and associated issues. I work closely with my fellow witnesses on these issues to ensure an effective interagency approach.

I understand that two draft reports on U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) serve as a foundation for this hearing. I also understand your committee is particularly interested in discussing our U.S.

Government response to the January 12<sup>th</sup> earthquake in Haiti. With those priorities in mind, I'd like to begin by offering a Department of Defense perspective on the ways and means of forging greater interagency collaboration at the combatant command level. I will then focus more specifically on USSOUTHCOM, our U.S. Government response to the earthquake in Haiti, and USAFRICOM.

### **Forging Interagency Partnerships**

Interagency cooperation is essential for navigating a complex global landscape. Secretary Gates has summed it up very cogently: "In recent years the lines separating war, peace, diplomacy, and development have become more blurred, and no longer fit the neat organizational charts of the 20th century. All the various elements and stakeholders working in the international arena – military and civilian, government and private – have learned to stretch outside their comfort zone to work together and achieve results."<sup>1</sup> His observation captures the complexity of the factors underlying interagency coordination in terms of the resource disparities between our respective organizations, our complementary capacities, and the requirements that drive us to collaborate.

Given these challenges, how then do we forge more enduring partnerships at the combatant command level? I can't pretend to be able to give a definitive answer here, but I'd offer the following six guidelines for your consideration:

- First, interagency coordination at the combatant command level should be tailored to the distinctive needs of the geographical regions in question. There is no "one size fits all" formula for scripting whole-of-government presence and coordination, especially at the combatant command level. Different missions – from disaster relief to counter-terrorism to security force assistance – require different mixes of interagency participation. In other words, given the mission, which agencies have the relevant authorities, resources, and capabilities to complete that mission, and how should these be synchronized with the combatant command's capabilities? To cite one example, the interdiction of illicit trafficking requires a certain set of capabilities. USSOUTHCOM's Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South), established in 1989, remains a good model for effective synchronization of interagency law enforcement and interdiction capabilities. Likewise, USAFRICOM's emphasis on building partner capacity is enhanced through the coordination with DoD partners. For instance, the DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) draws on DoD funding to create a synchronized approach

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, remarks at the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign Tribute Dinner, July 15, 2008.

to HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment in foreign militaries. USAFRICOM, through close coordination with USAID at the country team level, is able to target program activity to critical needs.

- Second, cross-agency planning is a vital instrument for forging greater interagency coordination. Combatant commanders develop campaign and contingency plans, guided by our planning guidance, which places strong emphasis on incorporating interagency perspectives. Integrated planning efforts have included strengthened interagency involvement in the development of Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plans, USAID Regional Development Plans, and the State Department's country-level Mission Strategic and Resource Plans. We are in close dialogue with our interagency partners as we craft our planning guidance. We will not direct combatant commands to write an interagency plan if the other agencies do not agree to this effort. Nor can we execute activities such as civil support or security assistance in a given country without the approval of the U.S. Ambassador. The civilian agency representatives bring their subject matter expertise, as well as knowledge of their agencies, tools and authorities that can enable the military personnel at the COCOM to plan and execute our military mission more effectively. Likewise, the civilian agency representatives benefit from learning about potential civil-military opportunities for engagement. It is mutually beneficial to share perspective and knowledge of each others' capabilities to develop the best possible plan.
  
- Third, effective interagency coordination is human capital-intensive. Effective integration of non-DoD perspectives at the combatant command level through embedded personnel and participation in planning can both inform and influence the perspectives of our military professionals at all ranks, especially when it comes to the socio-cultural context of the countries within the Command's area of responsibility. However, the degree of effectiveness depends on a shared understanding of expectations among the organizations. We need to ensure that the interagency system rewards organizations for sending their best personnel, and that these assignments are career-enhancing. It goes without saying that even the best designed structure cannot overcome such basic factors such as competence and cooperativeness among the involved professionals. At the same time, DoD components must understand the very limited personnel resources of civilian agencies and be strategic about civilian staffing assignments – including participation in exercises and other training opportunities – so that both civilian and military agencies get the most benefit from these very limited resources.

- Fourth, interagency coordination at the combatant command level should be supportive of, and harmonized with, longstanding civil-military authorities and responsibilities. As Vice Admiral Robert Moeller, the former USAFRICOM deputy to the commander for military operations, emphasized in a recent article, USAFRICOM is a “military organization, we do not create policy.” USAFRICOM is a “test platform for helping the military as an institution to better understand its role in supporting diplomacy and development.”<sup>2</sup>
- Fifth, we must beware of unintended consequences. Interagency coordination at the combatant command level is not a substitute for coordination at the Washington or country team levels, but rather a complement to the overall process. We should not presume that the embedded representatives have decision-making authority, nor that just because coordination at the combatant command level exists, overall coordination has been achieved. As a corollary, it is incumbent upon the Combatant Commander to ensure that he or she has effective two-way communications with U.S. Ambassadors located in the combatant command’s area of responsibility (AOR), as well as with the regional bureaus in Washington in both the Departments of State and Defense.
- Sixth, we should encourage innovation, seeking new authorities and appropriations, as warranted, to support innovative approaches to engagement. For any new or hybrid type of organization with interagency participants, it’s a simple fact of life that DoD will not be in full control of all the factors (e.g., personnel, funding, authorities) that would determine success, nor may the U.S. Government despite its best whole-of-government efforts. We have a strong stake in encouraging our commands to experiment with new organizational models that better integrate our civilian partners, even if that means accepting a certain amount of friction as commands learn how to do this well. It would be unfortunate if the by-product of well-intentioned criticism was simply to pressure a command’s leadership back toward its comfort zone of strictly military-to-military relations – a step that would diminish its utility in some military-to-civilian engagements. .

These considerations are worth bearing in mind as I share some observations of USSOUTHCOM and our U.S. Government response to the Haiti crisis, as well as implications for USAFRICOM.

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<sup>2</sup> “The Truth About Africom,” Foreign Policy, July 21, 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/21/the\\_truth\\_about\\_africom](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/21/the_truth_about_africom)

## *USSOUTHCOM and Operation Unified Response*

Within DOD, USSOUTHCOM is considered the model for interagency partnering due to its innovative organizational approach, coordination mechanisms, and sustained leadership. Although often dubbed as an “economy of force” combatant command, it’s never been an “economy of ideas” organization. The command’s approach to partnerships has been a success story that continues to grow. USSOUTHCOM’s emphasis in this domain is epitomized by the creation of the partnering directorate and by having the interagency partners lead many of USSOUTHCOM’s goals with USSOUTHCOM appropriately in a supporting role.

The year-long GAO review positively identified these initiatives. However, the crisis following the earthquake on January 12<sup>th</sup> in Haiti revealed overall organizational deficiencies that USSOUTHCOM is already addressing.

The U.S. Government response in Haiti, *Operation Unified Response*, was a major operation with great complexity. Our focus was on stabilizing a dire humanitarian situation. It included a wide range of traditional disaster relief activities – such as support for search and rescue operations, emergency medical care, and distribution of life-saving assistance – as well as the evacuation of U.S. citizens prior to the resumption of commercial flights; the processing of orphans for transport to the United States; the strengthening of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH); and support to rebuilding the capacity of Haitian government ministries badly damaged by the earthquake.

One of the great characteristics of the U.S. Government response to Haiti was partnership. DoD has long partnered with USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). This formed the backbone of the U.S. Government response. Haiti also provided an opportunity to expand partnerships and create new ones. In addition to OFDA, DoD partnered with the whole of USAID across the relief and development spectrum. DoD also partnered with several critical offices in the State Department and with our partners at the United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN), who are not traditionally players in disaster response. Additionally, the magnitude of the disaster in Haiti enabled the mobilization of traditionally domestic U.S. Government partners, such as the Department of Homeland Security, including Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); the Department of Health and Human Services; as well as U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) within the Department of Defense. Partnership with non-governmental organizations and the private sector was also critical to our successes in Haiti.

From the information management standpoint, the decision to keep our Haiti operations within the unclassified domain enabled unprecedented information sharing across agencies. DoD and other organizations have to resist the default inclination to over-classify documents. As emphasized in our guidance, we are working to foster a “need to share” over a “need to know” information sharing ethic whenever possible in order to facilitate access by non-DoD partners.

On the ground, the manifestations of partnership played out in many different ways. In the Pétienville internally displaced persons (IDP) camp, for example, a contingent of Navy Seabees and military police (MPs) were collaborating with USAID and NGO partners to operationalize a drainage improvement program through cash-for-work programs. Camp residents were paid to perform work (guided by the military engineering plans) to prepare for the rainy season (digging drainage canals, stacking sandbags to stabilize hillsides, etc.).

After the drawdown of *Operation Unified Response*, Lieutenant General Keen indicated that the success of the operation could not have been achieved “without the strong partnerships that were shared and developed with the Government of Haiti, United Nations, United States Agency for International Development and nongovernmental organization counterparts.” The mutually reinforcing relationship between USSOUTHCOM and MINUSTAH enabled the Joint Task Force (JTF) to support the delivery of food, water, and emergency medical care, with MINUSTAH ensuring the necessary security for these activities.

Partnering and burden sharing across the U.S. Government did not prevent the critical gaps that inevitably emerge in an operation on the scale of Haiti. For example, responsibility for the handling of the remains of U.S. citizens who died in the earthquake, including the repatriation of the remains and DNA identification, was an issue that did not have a distinct home in the U.S. Government. Ultimately, at the request of the President, DoD used its authorities and resources, in addition to those of other Federal departments and agencies, to accomplish this important work. Likewise, the destruction of the primary port in Haiti, coupled with the damage to the airport (as well as the airport’s limited capacity to accept flights once restored), created tension as the U.S. Government devised a system from scratch to allocate landing time slots to enable the delivery of aid. The tremendous work done by the Joint Task Force to restore capacity to the transportation infrastructure is commendable. That said, in the early days of the response there was much confusion regarding the processes governing landing time slots. DoD could have done a better job in communicating these processes to the public, to the NGOs, within the U.S. Government, and to the media.

I would like to place USSOUTHCOM's re-organization during the response to the earthquake in Haiti in context. Prior to the Haiti crisis, USSOUTHCOM had three mission directorates (e.g., Partnering) and three functional directorates (e.g., Policy and Strategy) instead of the traditional, military staff J-code approach. Coupled with having a civilian deputy to the Commander, this organizational approach was designed to optimize USSOUTHCOM's approach to planning and executing partnering activities in close coordination with civilian agencies and other partners.

When the earthquake struck, USSOUTHCOM leadership determined that staff needed to be rapidly augmented to respond to the crisis. More than 500 augmentees descended upon USSOUTHCOM Headquarters to provide support, increasing the staff to about 1,300. These personnel came from USNORTHCOM, U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), and the Pentagon, all pulled from their normal assignments to provide surge capability to USSOUTHCOM. Within days of the earthquake, the Commander at USSOUTHCOM changed USSOUTHCOM to a traditional J-code organization so that surge staff could better function in a structure with which they were familiar. However, USSOUTHCOM's emphasis on partnering and related functions was not eliminated, it was just re-organized. USSOUTHCOM made adjustments during the response to the earthquake in Haiti to streamline operational capacity and continue its effective work in partnering.

### **AFRICOM: A Work in Progress**

USAFRICOM is a relatively new organization – established in 2008 – that features an ambitious mission and an innovative organizational structure. USAFRICOM was designed as a command to achieve objectives focused on developing African military security capacity. The USAFRICOM staff is organized along thematic lines, much as USSOUTHCOM is organized, and features two deputy commanders. The Deputy Commander for Military Operations (DCMO) is a General or Flag officer of three-star rank. The Deputy Commander for Civil-Military Affairs (DCMA) is a senior Foreign Service Officer at the ambassadorial level.

The DCMA directs the command's plans and programs associated with health, humanitarian assistance and de-mining action, disaster response, security sector reform, and Peace Support Operations. He also directs outreach, strategic communications, and USAFRICOM's partner-building functions. Finally, the DCMA ensures that policy and program development and implementation include interagency perspectives and are consistent with U.S. foreign policy. All sections of the command report through a chief of staff and through both deputy

commanders, which ensures an integrated approach. The deputy commanders have spheres of influence with some constructive and deliberate ambiguity to avoid stove-piping perspectives.

The GAO report raises valid concerns about USAFRICOM during a particular period of the command's development. USAFRICOM has already undertaken a number of actions that address shortcomings raised in the GAO report. USAFRICOM is already providing additional training to USAFRICOM staff to help them better understand the dynamics of Africa, the security cooperation tools available to them, and the role of interagency personnel assigned to the command. The DCMA and DCMO ensure that interagency perspectives are included at the inception of the planning process. USAFRICOM is developing innovative ways to measure the long-term effectiveness of its activities in Africa. I'm pleased to say that USAFRICOM continues to explore innovative approaches with interagency colleagues to support U.S. Government objectives in Africa.

Given USSOUTHCOM's experience responding to the earthquake in Haiti, one might ask about the implications for USAFRICOM, particularly in its staff organization. In general, Combatant Commanders have the prerogative to organize their staffs as they deem necessary to carry out their responsibilities. This must be balanced with an understanding of risk in planning for potential contingencies. USSOUTHCOM's lessons are not necessarily directly transferrable. Given potential threats USAFRICOM faces and contingencies that it must be prepared to address, USAFRICOM is best positioned to review and apply relevant lessons, which we know they are doing.

Interagency coordination takes time and work to develop the appropriate habits of cooperation. The GAO reported that USSOUTHCOM Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) officials said it took twenty years for the organization to evolve to become the model of interagency collaboration. I am highly confident that USAFRICOM has the right leadership, motivation, and orientation to become a model of effective collaboration in its own right.

### **Concluding Observations**

Mr. Chairman, to conclude, USSOUTHCOM and USAFRICOM's innovative approaches to partnering epitomize DoD's commitment to improve our effectiveness in working together with interagency partners. Yes, experiments may lead to disappointments as well as surprises, and we always need to be ready to absorb hard lessons and rectify shortfalls when they occur. We also need to remember, as Secretary Gates once counseled, that everything we do must be

“suffused with strong doses of modesty and realism.”<sup>3</sup> Bureaucratic myopia and stove-piping don’t suddenly disappear. What we must do is find practical ways for working together on issues that span traditional civilian and military portfolios, while striving to optimize those factors that are within our control so as to improve our collective approach to national security.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak. I welcome your questions.

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<sup>3</sup> Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, The Nixon Center, Washington, D.C., Wednesday, February 24, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1425>