

## Change and Continuity in Africa's Security Environment

Dr. Chester Crocker

26 September 2007

**Moderator:** This session of our Air and Space Conference is one that I'm personally excited about. We have with us today probably the foremost expert on Africa in the country. Dr. Crocker wouldn't say that, but I've heard him speak many times. He was on my Board of Visitors at the National Defense University and he's got a broad background in African security issues. He is the James R. Schlesinger Professor of Strategic Studies at Georgetown's University. He's an author dealing with Africa regional security issues. And he served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Chester Crocker.

[Applause]

**Dr. Crocker:** Thank you very much, Mike. It's good to be with you. I understand that I'm following a rock star on cyber science issues and I'm going to bring us right back down to the earth of geopolitics, so it's going to be a shift of gears.

Mike made some very generous comments. I've been working on and off on African issues, and when I'm asked to speak about them, which I am occasionally even though I have got other interests as well, I am always reminded of the first time I mentioned my interest in African issues to my father, who was gainfully employed, and he said to me that's great son but what are you going to do for a living. So ever since then I've been trying to prove him wrong, and I think with a little bit of success here and there.

My view of the African continent is maybe best summed up by the memorable exchange between Henry Kissinger and Cho En Lai in 1971. Kissinger was making some small talk and he asked Cho En Lai what he thought about the French Revolution and what that meant from a Chinese perspective. Cho En Lai, without missing a beat, said well it's too soon to tell. [Laughter].

So that's kind of the way I look at the region. I am going to do three things in my talk with you this morning. I am going to give you the big picture of African geopolitics over time; I am going to outline, secondly, some major important changes, I believe Africa is on the cusp or the brink of very significant changes; and I will mention the significance of Asia's presence in Africa from that standpoint; finally, I will make a few remarks about American security interests in Africa, including the importance of rolling out the new AFRICOM the right way,

maybe as distinguished from the way we're doing it. So that's the thrust of my presentation.

Historically, Africa has played a very wide variety of roles in world politics. It was, of course, the birthplace of civilization, as we know. The number of African kingdoms and empires go back in history a very long time; Ghana, the Congo, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Morocco, and so forth. Some of Africa's empires developed during the great years of Islamic expansion across the African region and of course into Europe. The point I'm getting at is that I think sometimes we imagine that there's something new about Islam in Africa, but of course Islam in Africa goes back well over a thousand years and is nothing new at all.

Today there are perhaps 350 million Muslims in Africa, about 40 percent of the continent's population. The Europeans were latecomers; they began arriving in Africa in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the great scramble for Africa developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The appearance of European empires in Africa really transformed the geopolitics of the region because it focused all the trade groups toward the coasts, so Africa's development in the modern period has been a maritime development focused on export to other parts of the world. So the major lines of rail and road and river transport in Africa today go toward the coasts; that was not always the case. I think we imagine that Africa today is what it always has been, but of course that's not the case.

In general, and that's my next point on the background, African states emerged from colonial domination only really very recently; to be specific, in historical terms, in the late '50s and the early '60s. And the overwhelming majority of African states were defined geographically and administratively by European empires.

The point I'm making is that the African state system, unlike the European state system, for example, was not built from the ground up from the inside out. It was not the result of centuries of warfare and state building but resulted largely from European rivalries from European administrative convenience and European decisions in the late '50s and '60s to grant independence.

The Africa I am describing to you, and I'm going to see if this technique is working here, see if we can get, that's a conventional projection of Africa, courtesy of Rand McNally, and we often think of it kind of that way, looking sort of alongside Latin America as a place of medium size. But the Africa that I am describing to you in fact is four times the size of the United States, leaving aside Alaska, and extraordinarily diverse, with 53 states, 1,200 linguistic groups, a large number of micro- or mini-states with mini-economies. It does also include 8-10

larger and more significant states, some of which are individually larger than western Europe. Now, I'm not making this up, I'm not just trying to get your attention. I mean that is a fact.

So let's go to the next slide, and I will show you what Africa really looks like geographically. This is the real Africa in real size projection, and you can fit into it all of Europe up to the Urals, all of China, and all of the United States and have a little left over. We're talking about the world's second largest continent, with the world's second largest population. It is a vast and bulky continent containing the world's largest collection of landlocked countries, many of which are not viable on their own.

Historically, and just to make a brief point about military history, I think the European empires and the U.S. looked at Africa as a place to get around -- let me go back to the previous slide for a second, that's in the wrong direction; there we go -- or as a place to get over if you're an airman rather than a place to get to. And so you saw with few exceptions, Africa was looked at just from the standpoint of navies and very small military ground forces and a few bases here and there for the convenience of European empires.

The French were an exception. The French mobilized hundreds of thousands of African ground troops to support their effort against the Germans in World War I. And again, hundreds of thousands served with the British and the Free French forces in World War II. Like South Asia, Africa has often served as an exporter of military manpower and I think that's interesting to bear in mind for historical purposes.

During the Cold War, the U.S. maintained a limited number of Strategic Air Command bases in North Africa and a few other intelligence and communications facilities scattered here and there in places like Ethiopia and elsewhere. But we had no major military bases and we viewed Africa largely as a zone of low-level competition with the Soviets. The Soviets, on their side, saw Africa as a place to exercise a strategy of denial against us, to undermine pro-Western governments, to use the presence of white minority rule in southern Africa as a way to get at the West. But the British largely removed their forces from Africa during the 1960s, leaving only the French who sustained as many as 40,000 troops in Africa during the '60s and '70's before winding down their ground, air, and naval presence to around 10,000 in bases scattered around Africa today. If you look at the French presence, obviously you know it's in Djibouti and it's in Senegal over here; it's in Côte d'Ivoire and in a few of the Indian Ocean islands and in Gabon and Chad.

The end of the Cold War transformed Africa's importance in the eyes of the U.S. and, of course in the eyes of the former Soviet Union and the Europeans, and we began redefining our relationships with African states, caring much less about privileged state-to-state relations and much more about issues of governance, issues of transparency, of human rights, humanitarian disasters and so forth. Almost overnight, we began to redefine our interests there.

But meanwhile, there were many major things going on. As we pulled back, there were failed states, there were humanitarian emergencies, and there were factional struggles, ethnic struggles over resources and control of power.

In a sense, what I'm saying in the '90s is there was a disconnect between Africa's real security problems and Western policy fashions -- not to put too fine a point on it.

Since the beginning of the millennium in 2000, there is an important emerging change in the African geopolitical situation. Let me outline quickly some of those changes. First of all, Africa is no longer a partisan subject in the United States. It's no longer the object of a partisan debate, as it used to be during many of the Cold War decades. You see trade legislation supported in Congress for Africa by overwhelming majorities, very large assistance programs for combating HIV and AIDS, strong bipartisan support for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is largely focused on Africa.

American attitudes are changing in another way that's very important. We traditionally have thought of Africa either in ideological terms in the Cold War or as a place of focus for humanitarian concerns, if you like. That's changing. That's changing quite dramatically.

African states and African peoples have created and are entering a new era, a new strategic environment, and Africans themselves are shaping it as well as a lot of other people. Far from being a sleepy strategic hinterland for European empires, Africa is, in a sense, the soft underbelly of Europe from the standpoint of the global deal that we have in facing against the threat of terrorism. It is also a region that contributes mightily to the challenge of refugees and migrants as waves of Africans seek a better life and empty out hinterlands and rural areas.

A quick reading of the European press will tell you why Europeans, European leaders, European governments take Africa very seriously indeed. They cannot afford to have a failing strategic slum on their doorstep. They don't intend to have that happen.

As I said, another major change is that Africans are stepping forward to shape their own destiny in ways that was not so much the case when I was in public life, which Mike kindly referred to, during the 1980s. I spent eight and a half years running the African Bureau of our State Department in that period of time, and it was a time when Africans were less in charge of their own destiny, I guess I would say, than is the case today.

The old Organization of African Unity has been replaced by the African Union, itself modeled to some extent on the European Union, and stepping up to play some new roles in the areas of governance, of peacekeeping, and of peacemaking. The record for this new entity, the African Union, as you would expect, is spotty. It is really quite new. People are learning not just to talk the talk but to walk the walk. But I think it's an interesting work in progress. The African Union will be a partner of ours, especially as we get more actively involved ourselves militarily.

Let me mention just for a moment here the war and peace trends in Africa. The greatest challenge African states face is coming to grips with and reducing civil war. Kofi Annan, back in 2004, made some rather dramatic pronouncements about how the level of conflict in Africa had declined from some 15-18 during the height of the Cold War down to, as he put it at the time, 6-8. Of course, it depends on how you count.

The African Union today cites the existence of only five unresolved conflicts in Africa. The ones they identify are in, where are we here, in Darfur in western Sudan, the western Sahara over here, the Eritrea-Ethiopia dispute that's unresolved here, the remaining tensions and conflicts cross-border and within the eastern part of the DRC, and, of course, Somalia, which we know is an ongoing hot conflict situation.

I would add the cross-border conflicts between Chad and the Central African Republic here and between Chad and western Sudan there, as well as the ongoing civil strife in the Niger delta area of Nigeria which is extremely important from our interest standpoint because that's, of course, the center place of the oil industry in Nigeria. There also are some very fragile peace agreements in places like Uganda and the Côte d'Ivoire; we don't know how they're going to come out.

But the basic point is, and I think I have a slide on this, which is kind of dramatic, I think it must be slide number four, if somebody can help me with slide number four I will, there we go. Those are the trend lines and, as you can see, the overwhelming majority of African conflicts are societal or internal or civil, if you like. There is a very limited number of interstate conflicts in Africa and they're really confined, in

a sense, to two. But the basic trend lines are down, and that's the point that I'm making.

It's also instructive, I think, to look at the African peacekeeping trends. Think about the blue helmets of the United Nations. I know it's sometimes a joke in this country; it may be more of a joke than it ought to be. The United Nations blue helmets are the second largest overseas-deployed army in the world after ours. And 70 percent of them serve in Africa, in African conflict zones. So that's interesting. It tells you something about Africa as an importer of security, if you like.

The other interesting thing is that today about 25 percent of the UN's blue helmets are African, and 33 percent of those serving in Africa are African. So this is a very important message for we Americans as we think about our own security role in Africa. We should be thinking about capacity building and helping Africans step forward, as they want to do, to play a larger and larger role in their own security affairs.

It's true that the AU is just getting its feet wet, the African Union. It faces enormous capacity constraints and is almost completely dependent on European and American finance as well as some external partners like us and the Europeans and others for logistics and support and administration, intelligence, engineering, and other things. Here is a massive opportunity for Africa's external partners, and I'm happy to say that those external partners are not only in the West. I think it's interesting that the Chinese have committed to deploy an engineering unit in Darfur in western Sudan.

There has been political movement to go along with the other trends that I have been talking about. I think it's probably fair to say that roughly half of Africa today is either democratic or quasi-democratic or would want you to believe that it's democratic. [Laughter]. That's a far cry from what things were like 10 or 15 years ago, let me tell you. But we must avoid euphoria; Africa is still, as I indicated, a place where a heavy percentage of the world's ongoing civil conflicts are based. During the '90s more people were killed in African civil conflicts than in all the rest of the world put together. So that's sobering, and we have to keep it in mind.

As I also would emphasize, many of Africa's largest states -- can we go back maybe to the main political map that I have up here for us. There. If you look at Africa's largest states, many of them are the most troubled and the most at risk of conflict or political violence that might escalate into some form of warfare; the DRC (Congo), Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria-Zimbabwe. It's unfortunate, but big countries are maybe harder to run than smaller countries, more complex to run, and so the problems of governance are maybe a little bit more severe.

It's also true that if you look at the oil producers, largely concentrated in the Gulf of Guinea, in this stretch of real estate along this coast down to Angola and all these oil producers here, those are also countries in which the average tenure of leaders is something over 20 years, which tells you a little something about the resource curse being a bit of a problem.

Another change that I think I do need to stress, at least briefly in passing here, is the importance of Africa's participation in the global economic boom, and particularly the global commodity boom. The resources, the output, and the reserves, in energy terms, of Africa rival those of the Persian Gulf in terms of being still, in many areas, unexplored or under explored, and we're seeing a dramatic expansion of production coming out of Africa.

Today, the Gulf of Guinea, which I just pointed to, provides about 15 percent of America's imported oil supply, so that figure could swell to 25 percent within another 5-10 years. That's some 50 billion in US energy infrastructure projects backed up behind African projects, and that's just American-led projects; I'm not speaking of Chinese and European and other.

A central factor in the shift and the changes that I'm talking about in Africa has been the growing importance of China, India, Korea, and other Asian economies, as well as Brazil, in the worldwide market for natural resources. While China has a long history with Africa, what has changed is China's emergence as the global dynamo that we know and its thirst and its hunger for African energy, for timber, for non-fuel minerals for other natural resources is just enormous. China now obtains one-third of its imported oil from Africa. Angola, just Angola by itself, has displaced Saudi Arabia as the largest single source of imported Chinese crude.

So China comes into Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but not only with a thirst for resources but with many other things in what you might call its policy arsenal; with diplomatic acumen, with hundreds of skilled diplomats who speak indigenous African languages, with skilled technicians and eager entrepreneurs, with a large labor force. There are reports of Chinese workers numbering between half a million and a million in African projects. That's a significance presence. This new thrust in Africa is primarily economic. Two-way trade between China and Africa rose 40 percent to 55 billion this past year, bringing China up to the level of France and just behind the United States as Africa's prime trading partner.

In many ways, Africans are profiting from this. From the African perspective, China brings long-term export contracts and

major infrastructure loans. Just last week the DRC (Congo), signed a 5 billion dollar assistance and infrastructure and mining program with the Chinese; a lot of Chinese support for African infrastructure projects, and that's the biggest bottleneck in many ways to African development is it's relatively underdeveloped infrastructure.

The demand for iron ore, nickel, copper, manganese, and many other commodities is reversing Africa's long-term decline in its terms of trade. And the Chinese are not alone. There are other Asians who are playing a very important role in the African economy, as are the Russians who, as we know, are the other major source of production of non-fuel strategic metals and minerals. So that's having a difference. It's having an impact.

The story of Africa today is not what you would believe when you hear the usual talking heads on your usual TV and radio shows. I just happened to listen the other night to NPR on the way back from work; I sometimes do that. I kick myself for it, but I sometimes do it. [Laughter]. And here was this talking head who said that the world was booming and every place in the world, and the only place where it wasn't booming was sub-Saharan Africa. I'm sorry; that's wrong. That's just not true. There are double-digit growers in Africa today, in places like Mozambique, Tanzania, and some years Ghana is up there close to double digits. So it's just a false impression that's created and repeated and repeated. We're used to thinking of Africa as a basket case, and so we repeat it, but we're repeating erroneously. The average African economic growth rates in recent years are about 5-6 percent GDP growth a year. That's not great; it's a whole lot better than it was.

FDI, Foreign Direct Investment, into Africa last year totaled about 38 billion. Again, that's not great, but it's better. The drivers of African economic growth include such diverse things as textiles, motor vehicles and parts, telecommunications, financial services, the consolidation of the financial sector in a place like Nigeria, where telecoms across west Africa is a growth story, an important growth story. Agribusiness. Outsource business outsourcing. Ecotourism and so forth, as well as mining and energy.

In sum, I think what we're seeing in Africa, and I'm going to leave it here and move on to the security side in a minute, is the most competitive arena since the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, where there are more global players in the African space than ever before and where African ownership of the rules of the game is clearer than it was before. China has changed that strategic context to some degree, and so have some other Asian and other external powers; Brazil, for example, and Russia, as I have mentioned.

On balance, I am not a member of the alarmist school about China's arrival in Africa. I think there is no reason for an inherent zero sum game. We and the Chinese share an interest in the expansion, diversification, and stability of supply of African energy resources. Africans themselves will want to balance their relations between outsiders. They don't appreciate being dominated by anybody. They've had enough of that historically. And if the Chinese overplay their hand, as they probably will here and there, there'll be a backlash and they will learn a lesson or two. They've already learned a few lessons in places like Darfur, where they almost generated a Western protest movement against the Beijing Olympics, as you know.

Finally, there is going to be a need for a lot of partners to help Africans in a lot of fields and to work as equal partners with Africans in a lot of sectors. I don't want to see my country, the United States, asked to play all of those roles. [Laughter]. There's enough work to go around, and I think China can be part of the solution as well as being, on occasion, part of the problem.

Africa remains a troubled continent when it comes to security issues. The African state system, in some respects, reminds me when I look at it, of the things I read about 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, and I say that without meaning to offend anyone. The fact is we need a little humility here. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it was the advanced Western industrialized world that visited upon the entire globe a century of total war. Only now have tyrants and ideologies disappeared from the scene and the gun brought under control on the Eurasian land mass.

In our history, we've had civil war, so I think we have to have a little sense of history. But against this background, what are the primary security challenges that Africans face and what do they mean for us.

First, we see often weak public institutions. I'm talking about ministries and regulatory bodies.

We see, second, weak states and when you see weak states there are a lot of things that go along with weak states or failing states, as they're sometimes called. You see massive migration from rural areas to cities and to overseas places of economic migration. You see a loss of government authority in remote ungoverned spaces. You find governments which are either incapable or unwilling to enforce their own laws; surveil their own coast lines; protect their own fishery resource; patrol their borders, their airspace, to monitor their ports and their air fields. Now that's a sweeping generalization about a place that has 53 countries that differ from each other. But that is what you see when you have weak states, and I just think it's worth

spelling it out. You see the rising influence of armed factions and often local initiatives to take control of different sectors. If the government can't do it, we'll do it; that's the kind of phenomenon that one sees.

Thirdly we see, as I mentioned, a few continuing traditional conflicts, interstate conflicts, like in the Horn of Africa, where you have Ethiopia and Eritrea still going at it; Ethiopia intervening at our invitation, I might say, to go into Somalia and try to stabilize that place. And of course, as soon as they go in the Eritreans try to hit them in the back. That's a regional war across states. It's not either interstate or intrastate; it's really a regional war. There's a similar pattern, sadly, in the western fringes of Sudan and the eastern areas of Chad and the CAR, and even northern DRC. Those kinds of wars across states are still there.

And then fourthly, when you see this kind of a pattern that I'm describing, we have to recognize that are bad guys out there who take advantage of that. Now I would break the bad guys for you down into two categories; the first, and perhaps the most important -- organized criminal networks that fuel violence and conflict and generate revenue. How? By arms trafficking, by money laundering, by smuggling. Smuggling what? Smuggling migrants in large numbers from the Atlantic coast of Africa up into Europe; trafficking in looted commodities such as timber or diamonds, gold, and other things; wild animal products; and, of course, narcotics trafficking. Africa has become a major transshipment point for Latin American narcotics going up into Europe. So these kinds of bad guys find Africa a pretty accessible place, a place in which it's possible to recruit mules and also to organize networks and to corrupt local officials. There's lots of examples of it, and I don't have the time to spell it out but it's a worrisome trend.

In particular geographies, of course there's also the phenomenon of extremist Islamic militancy that may feed into terrorism, and one needs to remember that there are many varieties of Islam in Africa. I'll say a word further about that in a moment.

In some places, political Islam in Africa is very conservative. It bolsters the status quo. It is deeply rooted. It goes back hundreds of years. In other places, Islam has become more politically mobilized in civil conflicts in places such as Sudan and Nigeria. There are a few places where there are local Islamists who have decided to try and get attention from al-Qaida, and they've reached out to try and become the local franchisees, like setting up their own McDonalds. They want to be the franchisee of al-Qaida.

Finally, there are a very few examples of al-Qaida itself trying to operate in African space. When our embassies in East Africa blew up in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, we saw a case of that. Some of the recent violence based in Morocco and projected from Morocco into Europe is also of that kind.

Now as we define our future in the African region, we have to bear this background, I think very carefully, in mind. As I have said, Africa is no longer controlled by anyone from the outside. It is a more competitive playing field. But here are the guidelines that I would urge that we follow.

First, our security policies have to mesh with African security policies if they're to work. African leaders and security officials have their priorities. They focus on trying to manage internal conflict and prevent instability from escalating. They focus on trying to manage the war-to-peace transition where peace is made, where peace agreements are reached.

Once the guns are silenced, you've got to find a way to move from war to peace, and that's a very important challenge that many states face.

Thirdly, there is the challenge of building up the capacity so that the African Union will have, as it has promised, an African standby force based on regional brigades in Africa's five major subregions, those regions being southern, eastern, central, west, and north, as you would expect. And these standby brigades are still largely on paper in some regions, but they're much closer to reality in other regions. So building up that capacity to have Africans solving their own security problems is a major priority.

I haven't mentioned terrorism as being a major African priority. Why not? Well I think the reason is that while it is a priority, I think our African partners and friends think about it a little bit differently sometimes than we do. They welcome our assistance and training. They welcome our intelligence sharing. They are very careful about identifying themselves too closely with something that we have, unfortunately, called the Global War on Terrorism. For one thing, they don't want their problems, which are largely political, to be overly militarized. For another, they do not want them to be overly Americanized or, to put it maybe in a little different way, they don't want to be over identified with policies and actions, which could be in some contexts a little polarizing.

We need to recall that Africa's 350 million Muslims -- I think I need to go to slide six at this point; let's see if we can get there. There we are.

That's a Muslim map of Africa, and it tells you something. It tells you that as far south as Zambia, which is pretty far south, you have a very substantial presence of Muslim citizens in Zambia. That is a very telling map. And the point I'd like to emphasize about it is that every one of those countries has a different ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and religious mix. Every one of those countries has its own unique way of thinking about what Islam means. Every one of those countries is going to think once, twice, and three times before it joins in something, which unfortunately that word crusade was once used and should never have been, so we've got to be aware of that. We have got to be very aware of that as we reach out and build partnerships with these countries.

A good example of what I'm talking about is right here, if you'll bear with me. That should be Niger. Is that Niger? Yeah, and that should be Mali. In the northern reaches of those two countries, sometimes called the northern Sahell or the southern Sahara, there are people who call themselves the Twareg. The Twareg are indigenous citizens of very rough neighborhoods. These are the badlands of the south Sahara. And these folks are dependent on a number of critical resources. They live on trade. They've been trading between north and south for 1,200 years. They depend on access to salt, water, fuel for their vehicles, pasturage for their livestock, and occasionally a government-funded health clinic. These folks know how to fight and maneuver. They know how to survive in a very rough area.

Now it may be true that extremists from al-Qaida and the northern Magreb or from Pakistan or from Saudi will reach out to these Twareg armed elements and say gosh, why don't you join us; but those Twareg are very unlikely to say yes to that proposition unless the governments of Mali and Niger and their friends, the U.S. and France, are really, really stupid. I'm proud to say that so far we haven't fallen into that trap. The answer to those rebel movements, those Twareg rebel movements, is development assistance and the right kind of military-to-military cooperation between us and the armed forces of those countries, such that the problem is dampened down and not stirred up. The last thing we need is to have al-Qaida running around in this across the Sahara.

But the important point here is that that's the last thing the Twareg themselves would want. They are fiercely independent folks. They don't like anybody coming to dominate them. Their Islam has nothing to do with Wahabism, and so they are unlikely recruits to that cause. If we handle things right, it'll work.

Thirdly, we need to develop enough self-awareness to realize that as we come in more openly and more assertively and perhaps, on a larger scale, to the African security space, we are changing that space. Whether it's for the Global War on Terrorism through

the creation of the trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, which is operating in the places I just mentioned a moment ago, all these states here. Whether it's through the presence of the combined joint task force HOA in the Horn of Africa and Djibouti; all these things have an impact on African perceptions. Now let me just run through you what that means quickly, and then I'll wind up.

Some African leaders and officials will look at this heightened American activity, and they will say well isn't that wonderful. Isn't that just wonderful? The United States has created a sellers' market, and we, the U.S., are the biggest buyers. So we need to remember that saying about caveat emptor, because there may be some leaders in some governments that would be only too happy to sell to us their local dissident problem, which has nothing to do with U.S. interests or with the Global War on Terrorism. So we've got to be careful there and make sure that we're looking, as I think we are on the whole, carefully at whom we're partnering with and for what purposes.

Secondly, I think we need to remember that we are doing this, setting up AFRICOM, which will be announced formally on Monday; it will be inaugurated on Monday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, at the very same time that we are fighting this high-profile war against Islamofascism, as the President has called it, and at the same time that we're more conscious than we used to be of our interest in African energy and our interest in perhaps competing with China as China spreads its wings into Africa.

So I think African leaders are asking questions, which if I were them I would ask too. Like does this mean more military presence? Does it mean more targets to attract terrorist attacks? Does it mean more identification with U.S. global policies? Or does it mean something much more positive? Does it mean lots of resources? As we roll out AFRICOM, what do we have in our pockets? [Laughter]. We had better be sure we know the answer to those questions before we do a whole lot more rolling out. Are we going to come with more exchange programs, more training programs, more naval visits, more help against local adversaries, more likelihood of intervention and local conflicts to combat warlords, pirates, thugs, and rebels? We have an expectations management issue here.

I want to be very clear about this and very direct with you. I think the creation of AFRICOM is overdue. I wish it had been created in the 1980s when I was Assistant Secretary. Having AFRICOM will mean greater policy coherence and focus on this region, expanded coverage, and more people who are literate about Africa, its cultures, its peoples, and its problems -- a clearer voice on Africa within the Executive and on the Hill; these are all positives. Having a four-star pay attention to Africa is a good thing. I'm all for it. There's no earthly reason why we

shouldn't have a combatant command for every region in the world. And the previous pattern of having three commands in Africa was confusing to everybody; certainly it was to Executive Branch officials.

That said, I can seldom recall a U.S. policy initiative toward Africa, and I have seen a bunch of them in the past 40 years, that has been managed more incompetently than this one. Our messages have been mixed. U.S. and African audiences are confused, and there has been an awful lot of talk about how what we're really doing is capacity building and that's it; what we're really doing is, the phrase of art that the Pentagon is using now is "theatre security cooperation". I'm not sure how well that translates into Arabic or into other languages -- whether it's really understood what theatre security cooperation really means.

There's a lot of skepticism, and this is unfortunate; some African leaders, like some American leaders, never met a microphone they didn't like and they're going after us on this thing, this new initiative. They're criticizing it. They're having a field day condemning AFRICOM and threatening any African regime or government that cooperates with Washington in setting up AFRICOM and putting the base infrastructure or the headquarters infrastructure in place. That sort of anti-American rhetorical posturing simply reflects the poor job we've done in rolling out the new command. Basically, Africa is one of the friendliest places you'll ever find.

I'm going to go to my last slide here, with a little help from the technology. That is a very eloquent slide. Look at those numbers of approval ratings for the good old U.S. of A. And look where they come from; from South Africa, from Nigeria, from Ghana, from Ivory Coast; 95 to 5. Now you don't get those kinds of number in San Francisco. [Laughter]. You don't get those kinds of numbers in Russia or in Turkey or in Jordan. If we play our cards right, we can make a great success of all the things that we're doing diplomatically, politically, in the humanitarian field, in the security field, as we move forward and roll out AFRICOM.

I don't think we should be having a debate about AFRICOM; where to put it, what its missions are, whether or not it will militarize our African policies, and so forth. Maybe we should talk less, consult quietly, avoid asking anyone's permission to do something which is really our business, and have a clearly defined internal charter for parameters for the new command, and let's get American officials on the same page as to why we're doing it. Now that would be a real innovation.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

[Applause].

**Moderator:** Let me ask, we've only got time for perhaps one or two questions, let me ask, if someone from USAFE or someone from the international community would like to start us off. Is there any international community officers that would like to start us off?

**Qq:** Yes, just two quick things. The most public thing that is in the US eyes is the AIDS pandemic in Africa. What extent is that going to affect the way Africa grows in its security? Because we're losing people at an incredible rate, and it's particularly young people in that regard. And the second question is if you were to draw a map of the movement of Islam from the north to the south across the Sahell, you know, over a period of five-year increments, you'd see quite a move. And with the move to actually have an Islamic government in many of those countries if at all possible as it moves on south, how important is that to us and to our security? Thank you.

**Dr. Crocker:** Of course, HIV and AIDS is a tragedy of a massive proportion. It hits countries like South Africa and Botswana very, very severely. I think we're gradually turning the corner and getting antiretroviral therapies into some of these places. There has been cultural resistance in some quarters in Africa, and that's unfortunate; particularly in South Africa, which is a leader in some other respects but has not been a leader on this issue.

The politics of response to the HIV and AIDS crisis has sometimes gotten in the way of the real response, I'm afraid. So it's a slower response than it ought to be but the corner, I think, is being turned and a number of countries have managed to get very impressive programs of education as well as treatment in place.

There has also been some recent data suggesting that there have been exaggerations of the scale of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, but it still is horrendous. It's horrendous. Millions of people are being lost every year. It's going to affect the work force.

It affects the rate of creating orphans, and you have a huge orphan problem in many areas of agricultural Africa where the parents simply can no longer work so the children go to be with the uncles, the aunts, the grandparents, and so forth. Very sad.

When it comes to Islam, the map I showed you of Islam is not a new map. That distribution of Islam in African societies has been like that for a long, long time. The fastest growing religion in Africa is not Islam; it's evangelical Christians. And there's also a very substantial percentage of African

Catholics and African Anglicans, as they're called there -- we would call them Episcopalians, as well as a lot of people practicing African traditional religions. So I don't see this as a battle that we are losing or that Islam is winning in a broad sense. I also think that it needs to be pointed out, as I've tried to stress, that Islam comes in many varieties, many shapes. It's not one church; it's a lot of different elements.

**Moderator:** Another question. Yes, Sir.

**Qq:** Good morning, Sir. Thank you very much for this briefing. I learned a lot. My question is, as far as AFRICOM is concerned and taking into account the fact that you pointed out that there is not one of [inaudible], I would like to know what is the return that you have and the support that you have from African countries and leaders and maybe armed forces as far as AFRICOM is concerned, and how is this return going to shape what AFRICOM will be like. Thank you.

**Dr. Crocker:** If I understood the question correctly, I think the issue is one, from our standpoint, of figuring out how to deploy the presence of headquarters elements. We're not going to be moving large numbers of what you might call warfighters into the African region. There are very limited numbers at present, as you know very well. I mean, France far outnumbers us in Africa when it comes to warfighters today, and I suspect it'll stay that way for some time. Our warfighters are really concentrated up in Djibouti with yours. And we do also have Special Operations forces moving in and out of some of the Sahellian countries that I referred to in the trans-Sahell counterterrorism partnership, but they're not staying there; they're moving in and out, they're conducting operations, they're delivering stuff, they're doing some joint training missions and that sort of thing.

I think, again bearing in mind the great diversity of Africa, that what we need to do is quietly consult with different regions; first of all with individual countries, secondly with sub regional organizations like ECOWAS or like SEDAC or the east African community; thirdly, of course, with the AU itself, and then make our own decisions based on what we find in terms of the right kind of "distributed headquarters" is the term that we're using. I for one would not be unhappy if we were to decide to leave AFRICOM in Europe or to put it in Atlanta or in Detroit. You don't have to have the headquarters of a combatant command in that region. I don't believe CENTCOM has moved yet. Has it, Mike? Has CENTCOM moved?

**Moderator:** No, Sir.

**Dr. Crocker:** I don't think so. So I mean maybe it was a mistake to start out by saying we're going to have an AFRICOM,

and we're going to put it right in your face in Africa. Maybe it would have been better to come up to this a little bit more slowly and step by step. But in any event, I'm sure we'll eventually get it right, having exhausted all the other alternatives. [Laughter].

**Moderator:** I am very seldom at a loss for words, but this presentation today was absolutely outstanding, and Ambassador Crocker, on behalf of the Air Force Association and all of us here at the Air and Space Conference, I want to thank you for your time, your energy, and your leadership in African issues.

**Dr. Crocker:** Thank you.

[Applause].

# # # #