



Resist AFRICOM

Action Kit!

*Join the movement against the
militarization of the African continent*

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This guide is designed to help you advocate effectively and mobilize members of your community to join the movement against the militarization of the African continent.

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Overview

For decades (one could argue centuries), Africa has played host to a number of Western militaries. Throughout the Cold War, the United States and Russia both armed proxy African militaries, bringing the Communism/Anti-Communism battle to play out on African soil. When the war ended, the two powers withdrew from the continent with little attention to what might happen as a result of their military vacuum. The weapons given to Africa during that era are still in use today, often by rebel forces who brutalize and destabilize local populations.

Although the Clinton Administration is more often known for what it *didn't* do to intervene in Africa, programs such as the African Crisis Response Initiative were established during his presidency to train and equip African forces. It was also during the 1990's that resources for the non-military branches of our government were cut in favor of bolstering the Defense Department's capacity. Then, the 1998 terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania served as the bridge between old and new U.S. military relations with Africa. Since then, Africa's geopolitical importance to the War on Terrorism has dictated U.S. policy toward the region, particularly under President George W. Bush.

In February 2007, President Bush announced that the United States would create a new military command for Africa, to be known as the Africa Command or **AFRICOM**, to protect U.S. national security interests on the African continent. Previously, control over U.S. military operations in Africa was divided between three different commands: European Command, which oversaw North Africa and most of sub-Saharan Africa; Central Command, which had responsibility for Egypt and the Horn of Africa; and Pacific Command, which administered the Indian Ocean and Madagascar.

The new command set up shop in Stuttgart, Germany in October 2007, as a sub-command of the European Command, and became a fully independent command in October 2008. Initially, the Pentagon had intended to establish a headquarters on the continent, but due to strong public outcry from African governments and civil society, the command will remain in Europe for the time being.

The Pentagon claims that AFRICOM is all about integrating coordination and “building partner capacity.” But as you saw in the “Resist AFRICOM” film, the new structure is really about securing oil resources, countering terrorism, and rolling back Chinese economic influence on the continent. U.S. oil imports from Africa have already reached 24% - more than what the U.S. currently imports from the Middle East.

Furthermore, AFRICOM places many civilian duties under the jurisdiction of U.S. soldiers and provides a structure under which the U.S. government can continue to provide training and equipping to African militaries, regardless of their human rights record. Without good governance and strong national institutions, who will provide that military support when the U.S. decides to leave? Too often, such training only results in better-armed rebel groups and future instability – in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), U.S.-trained soldiers are raping civilians; in Chad, U.S.-trained soldiers have defected and joined rebel groups; in Nigeria, U.S.-funded and trained soldiers enact terrible violence

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against the people of the Niger Delta.

Yet, rather than strengthening the African Union, enacting fair trade policies, or working multilaterally to support grassroots development, the U.S. has chosen to invest in military training, equipping, and intelligence in Africa. In President Barack Obama's fiscal year 2010 budget request, approximately \$4.3 billion is allocated toward military programs and hardware in Africa. If you had \$4.3 billion to spend in Africa, what would *you* do with it?

Most importantly, Africans are not asking for AFRICOM. In fact, a majority of African civilians, governments, and many regional bodies have voiced a vehement "no" to the presence of an American military force in their backyard.

Ultimately, true security in Africa can be attained if the United States is willing to work in concert with Africans to determine their needs and desires. Washington can assist in boosting education, jobs, and health care on the continent. It can offer debt relief and an elimination of unjust trade policies. But not under a military command.

Unfortunately, AFRICOM has only gotten worse since the election of President Obama, so it will take strong citizen pressure to reverse the trend toward militarization. Pushing a diplomatic strategy that relies on true partnership with African governments, the African Union (AU), and African Civil Society is the only approach that is truly in the mutual, long-term interests of the American people and the citizens of Africa's many nations.

Resistance to AFRICOM is possible from many angles: anti-war activists can see AFRICOM as an extension of the flawed Global War on Terror, environmentalists can see AFRICOM as an attempt to maintain our dependence on foreign oil, peace activists can see AFRICOM as the next step in militarizing U.S. foreign policy, people of faith can see AFRICOM as a structure that marginalizes the poor and sacrifices our common humanity, and progressive activists can see AFRICOM as an incursion upon the values we seek to uphold as members of our global human society.

Ultimately, the broader militarization of Africa must end. Simply getting rid of AFRICOM as a U.S. regional command does not mean that military programs will stop. Therefore, as we continue to discuss AFRICOM throughout this Action Kit, it is important to remember the broader context, and the need to eliminate all forms of military domination on the African continent.

Thanks for reading!

Africa Faith and Justice Network & the Resist AFRICOM Group

Useful Articles and Resources

For up-to-date news and resources, including a copy of the film, visit the Resist AFRICOM website at www.resistafricom.org!

“Nana Akyea Mensah’s Corner,” a Ghanaian blog on AFRICOM
Nana Akyea Mensah
nanaakyeamen-sah.blogspot.com/2009/07/ghanaians-discuss-africom-obamas-visit.html?zx=2d8cd81983b751b5

“Making Peace or Fueling War in Africa,”
Daniel Volman and William Minter.
Foreign Policy in Focus, 13 March 2009.
<http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/5960>

“Critics Target U.S. Africa Command,”
Lawrence Delevingne.
Inter Press News Service, 2 June 2008.
<http://ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=42623>

“African Voices on AFRICOM,”
Brooks Harris and Matt Levy.
Africa Action, 22 February 2008. <http://www.africaaction.org/resources/page.php?op=read&documentid=2826&type=6>

“Militarizing Africa (Again),”
Daniel Volman and Beth Tuckey.
Foreign Policy in Focus, 21 February 2008. <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/4997>

“Bush’s Africa Burden,”
Rosa Brooks
LA Times, 21 February 2008. <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-brooks21feb21,0,344142.column>

“Into Africa Without a Map,”
David Ignatius
The Washington Post, 6 January 2008.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/04/AR2008010403562_pf.html

“Why U.S.’s AFRICOM Will Hurt Africa,”
Michele Ruiters.
Business Day (Johannesburg), 14 February 2007. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200702140349.html>

Quotes

“U.S. military involvement in Africa has historically proven inimical to the interests of the African people”

-Ezekiel Pajibo, Director of the Center for Democratic Empowerment in Liberia, in “Critics Target U.S. Africa Command”

“...AFRICOM is yet another example of the Bush administration's policy of unilateralism and its obsession with displays of military power.”

-Najum Mushtaq, a contributor to Right Web in Kenya, in “America’s Africa Misadventure”

“The U.S. now risks awakening a new African nationalism that legitimately doubts the sincerity of American objectives. Emboldened by high primary-commodity prices and accountable to domestic constituencies that still remember the arbitrary oppression of colonialism, Africans are speaking their minds. America should listen.”

-Carl LeVan, Assistant Professor in the School of International Service and Co-Chairman of American University’s Council on African Studies in “Keeping the Baloney Out of Africa”

“Clearly because they are not on African soil to protect our interests, they are on African soil to facilitate the exploitation of our resources for the benefit of the tiny minority that controls the wealth of the American people and who are sitting on top of this world...”

-Kwesi Pratt, Editor of The Insight - a Ghanaian newspaper, in a 2007 interview

“Throughout the continent, Africans are realizing that in a world of finite resources, funds spent on militarism come at the expense of education, healthcare, and housing, the building blocks of stable societies.”

-Emira Woods, Co-Director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies, in “Africa’s Own Needs Should Come First”

“...it looks like [AFRICOM is] going over there to protect oil and fight terrorists, the same misguided way that we fought terrorists in other places.”

-Representative John Tierney (D-MA) in a Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs hearing on AFRICOM.

“Its nation-building goal sounds noble, but so did European imperialism of 150 years ago to its proponents. Before America sends its soldiers marching off to save Africa, we need more discussion about what this mission is all about.”

-David Ignatius, Washington Post Columnist, in “Into Africa Without a Map”

“Promoting African peace, democracy and development are all good things, but the U.S. efforts might be more palatable if the velvet glove handing out foreign aid weren’t stretched so obviously over the iron fist of the world’s most lethal war-fighting machine.”

-Rosa Brooks, Op-Ed Columnist at the LA Times in “Bush’s Africa Burden”

How to talk about AFRICOM with...

Anti-War (Iraq and Afghanistan) Activists:

Just as the Bush administration responded to terrorism and America's oil addiction with the military in the Middle East, the same has been done in Africa. What the U.S. sees as "threats" to its interests are dealt with by pouring more weapons into the continent, not by using diplomacy or development.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan remind us that a military approach to unstable situations only breeds further violence. In the Middle East, civilians have suffered the most, and the same is true when the U.S. uses its military resources in Africa.

The U.S. currently trains and equips militaries in countries like Chad, Uganda, and DR Congo, none of which can claim responsible democratic leaders. During the Cold War, the U.S. armed and trained what is now the Taliban in Afghanistan, and gave weapons to repressive dictators in Africa to the detriment of the people. Instead of approaching the continent with equitable trade policies and development aid, the U.S. has repeatedly undermined efforts at democracy, whether through its own policies or the policies of multinational institutions such as the IMF and World Bank.

Greg Mortensen, co-author of the book "Three Cups of Tea" and founder of the Central Asia Institute has been credited by Nicholas Kristof at the New York Times for doing more for our national security than the entire U.S. military in Afghanistan and Pakistan. His mission is simply to build community-based education systems, particularly for girls, so that they may have a more comprehensive understanding of the world around them. Not only does this decrease Al Qaeda recruits, but it increases prosperity in this largely impoverished region.

Africa is not so different. Schools, fair trade laws, corporate social responsibility, and health care would do far more for the

continent than AFRICOM. And at a fraction of the cost.

For those of you working to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is important to know that some of the same policies are being applied in Africa. We must consider the movement against AFRICOM as one in the same with the movement against the U.S. military in the Middle East and around the world.

Environmentalists:

As you saw in the film and in many of the articles posted on the Resist AFRICOM website, one of AFRICOM's primary goals is to secure Africa's oil resources. Although military officials will often publicly deny such claims, they have been perfectly clear about their intentions in more private settings. Africa has surpassed the Middle East as a source of foreign oil, with 24% of U.S. oil imports coming from the African continent (15-18% if you exclude north Africa).

Throughout the world, countries which possess vast amounts of fossil fuels are not only plagued by violent conflict but have seen their land, air, and waters destroyed by pollution. Then, such resources are burned in the developed world, thereby contributing to climate change and the further impoverishment of African civilians.

In the Niger Delta, gas flares have polluted the air to such an extent that the people of the Delta cannot be out in the rain, when the toxins are pulled from the air. The film "Sweet Crude" accurately and eloquently shows the struggle of the people of the Delta region to cleanse their environment and to achieve justice. In early-to-mid 2009, the Nigerian military initiated a series of attacks against the people of the Delta. They claimed their mission was to eliminate the numerous rebel militias such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), but

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the real mission to secure oil supplies only resulted in death and displacement of the local population. The U.S. gives millions of dollars a year worth of military training and equipment to Nigeria through AFRICOM.

Rather than relying on the military to secure oil supplies, the U.S. should seek a balanced and equitable approach to the natural resource industry. At the same time, the U.S. must work to decrease its consumption of fossil fuels and invest more in clean energy alternatives. U.S. oil companies and subsidiaries such as Chevron and Shell Oil Company must be held accountable for their destruction and contribute to environmental restoration throughout the continent.

For those of you who are passionate about global warming and the environment, it is important to know that AFRICOM is only contributing to pollution, resource-related human rights abuses, and climate change. We must consider the movement against AFRICOM as part of the effort to achieve a clean world for tomorrow's children.

Peace Activists:

The world's great peace activists have written repeatedly about the need to find solutions to our problems that do not involve the military. Ghandi preached a message of non-violence that resounded throughout the world and is still used today to remind ourselves what true peace means. Too often, world leaders claim that a military option is the only way to achieve peace or to end a violent situation.

AFRICOM is being touted as a tool to help African militaries secure their borders, fight rebel insurgencies, and defend against foreign attacks. War never ends with war. It ends with talking at a negotiating table. It is imperative that peace activists use their knowledge of non-violence to make it clear to the U.S. government that AFRICOM will never make the U.S. or Africa more secure.

Some of AFRICOM's most important programs are to deliver humanitarian aid to communities on the continent. Thus, rather than civilians digging wells, there are soldiers in uniform building bridges and erecting dental clinics. Not only does this militarize the field of foreign aid, it serves as a very poor example to countries that already overuse the military. U.S. soldiers do not build schools in the U.S. and they should not build schools in Africa. The United States government should put more money into its civilian branches and work with local communities to provide services like education and health care. Rather than spending nearly \$4.3 billion on AFRICOM, the U.S. could instead provide schooling to over 17 million street children. Imagine the effect of that education on development, stability, and Africa's prosperity.

For those of you who consider yourself a peace activist, it must be very clear that AFRICOM will not advance peace in Africa but only damage it. We must consider the movement against AFRICOM as an integral part of the struggle to achieve a world of non-violence.

People of Faith:

The Christian community, the Jewish community, the Muslim community, the Buddhist community, and the Ba'hai community, among others, all have one core message in common: love and peace. Most faiths emphasize the importance of loving your neighbor as yourself, of devoting your energy to a peaceful world, and of helping to lift up the poor.

In the Catholic faith, the social teachings of the church tell us to act in solidarity with those who are less fortunate, to treat others with dignity and respect, and to act in the common good rather than the good of the few. AFRICOM is a direct violation of all of these principles and should be seen by Christians as an affront to Jesus' message of peace.

African civil society is generally opposed to

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AFRICOM. Instead of valuing and respecting that opinion, the United States has pushed ahead with its military agenda. AFRICOM will not end Africa's cycle of violence nor will it lift people out of poverty - it will only add money to the coffers of wealthy oil companies and military contractors. To truly walk in solidarity with Africa's people, the U.S. must listen to their needs and desires and advance an agenda that works for the common good.

For those of you who consider yourself a person of faith (no matter what your faith may be), it is important to recognize that the U.S. military presence in Africa acts in contradiction to the many of the teachings of the Old Testament, the Bible, the Quran, of prophet Mohammad and of Buddha. We must consider the movement against AFRICOM as a means of putting our faith into action.

Progressive Activists on All Social Justice Issues:

Progressive activists are often passionate about numerous issues - militarism, corporate empire, poverty reduction, wealth redistribution, food security, universal health care, and many more. For you, taking part in the movement against AFRICOM should be a no-brainer. As we know, "a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." (Martin Luther King Jr.)

AFRICOM will not help Africans address their real needs but will instead extend America's political and corporate empire to suit the needs of the U.S. AFRICOM will disproportionately affect the poor, it will sacrifice long-term democratic stability, and it will contribute to environmental degradation by spending money that could otherwise be used for true grassroots development and diplomacy.

For those of you who consider yourself a progressive activist, add AFRICOM to your list of social justice issues and work to raise awareness among your various communities using this toolkit. The movement against AFRICOM is merely one piece in the broader effort to achieve global social justice, but it is an important one. We sincerely hope that you will approach this issue with as much passion as any other, and join us in the struggle against militarism in all its forms!

AFRICOM in Action some examples of militarism's failures on the continent

The Horn of Africa

The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), which has taken the lead in U.S. engagement with Somalia, through intelligence, equipment, and personnel support, helped launch Ethiopia's 2006 invasion and subsequent air raids against Somalia. These military efforts succeeded in their mission of overthrowing the Islamic Courts Union, and but without any mechanism for humanitarian support or re-stabilization, resulted in inflamed anti-US sentiment, a crisis of internal displacement (over 300,000 civilians were displaced by mid-2007), and further destabilization of the national political process.

The CJTF-HOA has often been cited as a model for AFRICOM's operations elsewhere on the continent. Daniel Volman and William Minter instead describe its actions "a textbook case of the negative results of "aggregating" local threats into an undifferentiated concept of global terrorism." And despite its poor human rights record, Ethiopia, for strategic reasons, receives more aid than almost any other African nation.

Nigeria

"Nigeria is the fifth largest source of U.S. oil imports, and disruption of supply from Nigeria would represent a major blow to U.S. oil security strategy," according to the State Department's budget request justification for the 2007 fiscal year. The U.S. has funded and trained soldiers for years, and has requested millions of dollars in increased funding for weapons and training in 2010 .

Instability and attacks by militants of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), has repeatedly interrupted the flow of oil from the Niger Delta. Yet the strong presence of militarism in Nigerian politics throughout its history has caused much bloodshed and hindered political and economic growth, exacerbating regional inequalities and the marginalization of citizens in the Niger Delta. Actions in pursuit of security in the region have usually meant terrible violence against the people of the Niger Delta.

Northern Uganda and "Operation Lightning Thunder"

The US has trained and equipped Ugandan troops for years, and in December 2008, AFRICOM helped plan and supported financially a Ugandan operation targeting the violent and destructive, but notoriously evasive, rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) hiding out in Northern Congo.

Instead disarming and demobilizing LRA commanders, "Operation Lightning Thunder" angered the group and provoked several attacks on civilian towns in the following weeks. As of spring 2009, The UN and Human Rights Watch have estimated over 1000 civilian deaths since December due to the deteriorated security situation. Warlord and criminal wanted by the International Criminal Court Joseph Kony is still at large.

Sources

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Oruh, Chioma. "Militarising Africa: A Guidebook" ResistAFRICOM Working Group. 24 October 2008.

Schomerus, Mareike and Kennedy Tumutegyeireze. "After Operation Lightning Thunder" Conciliation resources. April 2009

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How to advocate against AFRICOM – in Congress

Vote!

As a U.S. citizen, you are given a very special right - the right to cast a ballot! If you don't like what your Representative or Senator is saying on Africa, you can choose not to re-elect that person to office. Make sure they are voting for YOU!

So maybe you voted for the person you thought would be against militarization in Africa, but it turns out that they aren't. Or maybe you're new to these issues and haven't had a chance to vote your ideas onto Capitol Hill, but discovered that your representative doesn't do anything on Africa policy. Don't look at it as a disappointment; look at it as an opportunity! Now it's your turn to educate them about the dangers of militarization and why you think they should work to rebalance our foreign policy away from the military and toward diplomacy.

Or, maybe your representative is already working to downsize our defense system. If that's the case, they need your support! It's not easy for members of Congress to work against the current, so it is important for them to know that they have constituent support.

Whatever the case, it is important that you LET THEM KNOW how you feel about AFRICOM!

Let your representatives know!

First, know who your representatives are. To find out, go to www.congress.org for your senators and www.house.gov for your house representatives.

There is no comprehensive list of all votes placed on African issues for each representative, so you may have to do some searching. A good place to start is with your representatives' website. Explore their stances on issues and see if you can find anything under the headings of "foreign policy" or "humanitarian aid" or something of the sort. This will usually give you a clue as to how they swing on issues relating to developing countries and Africa.

Another great place to start is <http://thomas.loc.gov/>, the Library of Congress website. Here you can type in a keyword (i.e. "Africa" or "defense") and find bills relating to it. Often, the introducers of the bill will be included in the text. OpenCongress.org (www.opencongress.org) runs a similar service and is helpful in finding related bills.

How to contact your representatives:

Once you've discovered their stance, contact them and let them know how they're doing! They won't know to vote differently unless you tell them to, so write, call, and visit. Even if you like their work, be sure to let them know. Visiting shows that this issue is incredibly important to you, so if you have the time, be sure to schedule an appointment at your representative's district office. It's easy, and they always love hearing from constituents! A handwritten letter also shows that you are invested in the issue, but not quite as much as a visit. Calling comes in third, but is still incredibly important.

See the next few pages for advice!

Advocate in Congress: Sample Letter to Representatives

The Honorable Senator/Representative [your Senator or member's name]
United States Senate/House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515/20510

[Date]

Dear Congressman [your Senator or member's name],

As your constituent, I am writing to express my concern over the further militarization of Africa through the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and its missions. As someone who cares deeply about peace, security, and development on the continent, I hope to see a shift away from the U.S. military as a responder to Africa's crises and toward development and diplomacy as the only means of achieving lasting stability.

Throughout history, and particularly during the Cold War, the U.S. armed and trained proxy armies in Africa who then went on to commit terrible crimes against civilians. As I look at the current defense budget and the pattern of military spending, I fear that we are allowing history to repeat itself. The U.S. currently 'trains and equips' many armies in countries whose leaders are undemocratic or have committed human rights abuses. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), U.S.-trained soldiers are raping civilians; in Chad, U.S.-trained soldiers have defected and joined rebel groups; in Nigeria, U.S.-funded and trained soldiers enact terrible violence against the people of the Niger Delta. It is simply inexcusable that the U.S. spends millions of dollars per year on tools of war in Africa and yet the State Department and USAID cannot find the money to adequately do their jobs.

Furthermore, AFRICOM has proven to be disastrous in places like the DRC where the U.S.-backed "Operation Lightning Thunder" not only failed to complete its mission of disarming and demobilizing high commanders in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), but also left a trail of death and displacement in its wake.

Considering AFRICOM's missions thus far and their locations on the continent, it is clear that AFRICOM is designed to meet U.S. needs - oil and counterterrorism. Although it is legitimate that the U.S. acts to protect its citizens, I could never condone such action if it put other people's lives at risk. An increased U.S. military presence in Africa clearly puts the lives of Africa's civilians in jeopardy.

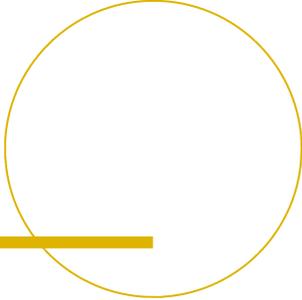
In short, I ask that you vote to decrease military spending in Africa and around the globe, accompanied by an increase in spending for development and diplomacy. Train and equip programs should be prohibited in undemocratic countries such as Uganda and Nigeria, and the U.S. should seek to expand its green energy options so as to reduce our reliance on foreign fuel.

I will continue to follow this issue and hope that you will act in favor of peace, development, and true stability in Africa.

Thank you,

[your name]

Advocate in Congress: Calling and Visiting



Call your representatives!

Each Senator and Member of Congress has a website with contact information for your district as well as Washington, DC. In Washington, your elected officials can be reached through the Capitol Switchboard at 202.224.3121. When calling:

- Introduce yourself and mention that you are a constituent. You will most likely speak with a desk attendant.
- State your request and supporting reasons. (If applicable, cite the specific bill number.)
- Ask specifically, “Can I count on Senator/Representative _____ to support this bill/issue?”
- Remember to express your thanks and follow up with emails or phone calls for updates.

Visit your representatives!

The most effective way to get your message across to policymakers is to schedule a face-to-face visit with them or their staff members in their home district offices. These visits are incredibly important in establishing relationships and ensuring that your voice is heard.

- When making an appointment, indicate the issue you plan to discuss. Prepare yourself and your group by researching the lawmaker’s voting record and organizing an effective presentation with facts to back up your argument.
- During the visit, deliver a clear and concise message. Personalize the issue by letting them know why it is so important to you. Offer solutions that are doable and be specific about the ideal outcome. Be patient and passionate; don’t react angrily even if you don’t get the response you want to hear. Always remain polite.
- After your visit, continue to build a relationship by sending a thank-you letter or email to the legislator or staffer for spending time with you. Let them know that you will be following the legislator’s actions to ensure that your concerns are upheld in Washington.

How to advocate against AFRICOM – Take Action!

Advocate with the White House

Because the President is also the Commander in Chief, it is important that President Obama hears your concerns about the militarization of Africa. Although Congress votes on funding, the major decisions stem from the White House.

So, just as you do with Congress, write and call! It is more difficult to visit with someone in the Executive Branch, so be sure to get a letter in to President Obama.

Get involved!

- Consider **donating** to peace groups such as Africa Faith and Justice Network (www.afjn.org), the Institute for Policy Studies (www.ips-dc.org), Friends of the Congo (www.friendsofthecongo.org), Africa Action (www.africaction.org), TransAfrica Forum (www.transafricaforum.org), and the American Friends Service Committee (www.afsc.org) all of whom work on AFRICOM issues. Donations to these groups go a long way to support efforts to resist AFRICOM. Or, many organizations have email-alert systems that let you know when your voice can join with those of many other concerned individuals to let policymakers know what they can do. get plugged in to their e-mail networks to learn about ways you can help.
- **Boycott** oil companies who have been involved in abuses in Africa, often requiring military intervention. Don't buy gas from Shell or Chevron and send letters to their corporate executives telling them why you are boycotting their industry.
- **Write letters** to the editor of newspapers or magazines that publish pro-AFRICOM voices to express a dissenting view. See advice for how to get your letter to the editor published at <http://www.bread.org/get-involved/in-the-media/how-to-write-a-letter-to-the-ed.html>.

Stage an Event!

- **Host a forum, lecture, teach-in, or panel discussion** for your community, church or school that addresses AFRICOM. You can look for knowledgeable individuals with insights and experience related to foreign policy and Africa within your community, or you can bring an outside speaker, recommended to you by others or found through your research. Be sure to extend your invitations to many different groups and churches. If you are interested in hosting a speaker, feel free to contact AFJN and we will do our best to recommend someone.
- **Stage a protest.** Choose a relevant location, such as outside policymakers offices, and time your protest around a relevant event or key upcoming policy decisions, or in response to a harmful military operation.
- **Organize a vigil:** Bring members of your church or community together to call attention to the impact of a militarized US foreign policy.
- *See the following page for more information on organizing a successful event!*

Staging a public event!

Thanks to Sojourners (www.Sojo.net) for providing this informative text, also published in AFJN's Northern Uganda Faith and Action kit

Here are some steps for how to organize a successful and effective event:

- **Establish a small planning committee.** This committee can work within an existing organization, like a local social action or public witness committee.
- **Reach out and network** with other organizations, school groups, communities, churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship in the area to organize and participate. An email and a phone call can go a long way. If you decide to organize an interfaith vigil, invite people of each faith to read and pray from their own tradition and talk among the groups about how to be respectful of each tradition.
- **Location, location!** For a protest or a vigil, we recommend looking for sites near offices for your Senator and Representative - to see these locations, go to www.senate.gov and www.house.gov. It is useful to walk through the space where you intend to hold the event. You may need to apply for and secure a permit in advance . You should begin that process as soon as possible. Call your local police department for more information on obtaining permits.
- **Create a list of necessary equipment:** sound systems, megaphones or microphones, candles, programs, sign-in sheets, podium, and signs. You'll need to find someone who can provide these.
- **Publicize, publicize, publicize!** Consider taking out an advertisement in a local paper or other news source, writing a letter to the editor announcing the event, and listing it in bulletins of local houses of worship. Post and pass out fliers in public spaces like bus stops, subway stations, Laundromats, stores, restaurants, and community centers. Ask permission where necessary. Write a press release to local media outlets (TV, newspapers, and radio stations) and follow up with appropriate reporters (see the next sheet on "Publicizing Your Event in the Media" section for details).
- E-mail or telephone friends, colleagues, and local leaders the day before the event to remind them to attend.

Publicizing your event

Thanks to Sojourners (www.Sojo.net) for providing much of this informative text, also published in AFJN's Northern Uganda Faith and Action kit

The media are allies in our work to raise attention to injustice around the world. Here are a few ideas for how to best work with the media to ensure maximal coverage if you choose to host public events.

- **Conduct Media Research:** You will want to find out if your local media outlets have printed stories on Africa. A quick and easy way to find lists of media in your city is to go to Congress.org and type in your zip code under "Browse Media Guide."
- **Assemble a Media List:** The next step is to identify specific reporters, producers, and columnists. There are several ways to do this. Visit their Web site and see what past stories and columns have been written. You can also call the newspaper's main switchboard and ask the operator for information. It is good to emphasize that this is a community event, especially if they give little coverage to foreign affairs. Once you have names and contact information, use a spreadsheet tool like Microsoft Excel to compile a list. Be sure to include the reporter's name, media outlet, e-mail address, and telephone number.
- **Using the Media List:** Once you have a list compiled, you can use the *mail merge* feature to send press releases, media advisories, or other information
- **Writing a Press Release:** Press advisories should be succinct—about a half a page—and be marked clearly with the words "Press Release." The first paragraph should include who, what, where, why, and when of the vigil. The second paragraph should include a description of the purpose of the event and how it was organized. You might want to include a quote from a spokesperson of the organization in charge of the event. Make it

clear and to the point. Make sure to include two contact names with phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

- **Follow-Up Calls:** A few days after you send the release, call the reporter to follow up. Ask for the reporter by name, and then tell them who you are and why you're calling. After the reporter answers, ask if he or she has a few minutes to discuss it. Don't assume a reporter has time to talk as they may be on deadline and will appreciate you asking. Offer to call back.

Planning a Media Event: With a media list of local reporters, talk show hosts, editors, and producers, you have a critical tool for generating media at your event. Events should be planned and executed with a goal of catching the media's attention. We have learned two basic rules for planning a media event.

- **Frame your Message.** Without a clear, concise message, you are challenged to make reporters see your event as newsworthy. Review the included talking points and prep for media interviews.
- **Keep it Simple.** TV crews and photographers will make a decision to cover an event based on the compelling images they are likely to capture. Think visually and plan for an action to be captured on camera. Make sure your event is short with just the right amount of speakers. A press conference should generally last no longer than 30 minutes. And, you may just plan a short photo opportunity, such as the delivery of petitions to a congressional office or religious leaders meeting with the Senator in his or her local office. By all means, be creative, keep it simple and stay on message.