

## U.S. Boots on Africa's Ground

By Phil Reed

The rumors were true after all. For several years, it has been rumored that the United States was about to create a military command structure for Africa. On February 6, President Bush announced that USAfricom would become a reality.

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Up until then, the northeastern part of Africa had been covered by Centcom, which includes the Middle East and Central Asia. The rest of Africa, except for Madagascar (Pacific Command), was under the European Command. Now, all of Africa, except Egypt (which will remain with the Middle East under Centcom), will be under the new USAfricom. By September 30, 2008, they expect to have the structure in place, first in Stuttgart, Germany and eventually on the continent of Africa, in a site yet to be determined.

At present, the United States has approximately 1500 military personnel stationed in Djibouti. They are already performing the kind of work that is envisioned for the Africom. The recent bombings of 'terrorist' hideouts in Somalia were carried out by this Djibouti-based force. The same soldiers have also participated in humanitarian missions in the region.

Why a command such as this? It's not terribly difficult to guess, but then we don't even have to. The very clearly stated reasons are three. First, there is a concern that terrorist groups are making inroads in Africa, that they benefit from unstable states with remote hiding places. Secondly, Africa's mineral riches, particularly her oil (by 2015, 25% of oil for the US will come from Africa) make her strategically important. Finally, the creeping presence of the Chinese and the Indians present a challenge to what appears to be imperial ambitions of the United States.

Africom has been referred to by "Stars and Stripes" newspaper as the 'first of its kind,' in that "it will include diplomatic, developmental and economic staffers... from the start." The second in command of Africom will be from the Department of State. No other military command has this mix of the Departments of State and Defense. Secre-



US Central Command will cover only Egypt after 2008. The rest of the continent will be under Africom.

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tary of Defense Bob Gates said, in testifying to Congress, that Africom's job will be to "focus on security cooperation, building partnerships, supporting non-military missions and, if directed, military operations on the African continent." The new command will focus on preventing crises rather than fighting wars. Troops specializing in missions such as construction and medical care would be going to the continent on a rotational basis.

Chester Crocker, of the US Institute for Peace (and infamous from his dealings with Liberia and Eritrea in the 1980s), rejects the idea that the US approach to Africa has become militarized. And yet, that is in large part what concerns some Africans who have begun to comment on this dubious gift that is being handed to them. Newspapers in South Africa and Kenya have acknowledged the very real economic benefits that can come from having Africom on the continent. However, they ask, at what expense or at whose expense? From experiences in Asia and South America, it is clear what the social consequences can be of having a large number of military forces, foreign or other, in one place. Prostitution is only one of them.

Nor should the political consequences be negated. One of the jobs of Africom will be to train African soldiers and to help build up the military in many African countries. The danger in this could be the tendency to resort to the use of force for resolving conflicts. Is that what Africa needs as she continues to transition to democratic forms of government, negotiating complicated ethnic and party-affiliated interests? While helping with training may seem like a lofty enterprise, it is well-known that American-trained foreign soldiers (School of the Americas) can violate human rights with the best of them.

Kenya, which is seen as one of the leading candidates for eventually hosting the command, knows what kind of friend in need the United States can be. Any country that accepts to host Africom will undoubtedly become a target of terrorists or those who are opposed to the United States, as happened in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. Even after suffering with the Americans, Kenyans were barely compensated for their injuries and losses. Later, military aid was even withheld from Kenya when it refused to sign an agreement with the US preventing US citizens from being tried by the International Criminal Court.

One might ask why the United States needs boots on the ground to take the pulse of the continent and to be ready to act, if need be? What are the US embassies for? Should 'pulse taking' not rather be the work of diplomats? And wasn't development support and other humanitarian assistance the work of the Peace Corps and US AID? In the past, activists hoped that the US military would come to the aid of innocent Liberians, Rwandans, Congolese and others who were being preyed upon by armed groups. The US was rarely ready to stand up militarily, except in the case of Somalia and only very belatedly in Liberia. Using the logistical support and the force of the US military could be beneficial in certain desperate situations, but is it not dangerous to have soldiers on hand on a permanent basis? The experience of Central America should make Church people shudder.

AFJN would like to hear reactions from members in Africa and in the United States. There is a need for vigilance as this new chapter in American military engagement marches forward on the continent of Africa.

## Africa Summits in U.S. Regions

An **Africa Summit** is to be held in the Boston/Providence area at the Mission Center of the Xaverian Missionaries in May. Another will be held in Dayton, Ohio in conjunction with the Propagation of the Faith Office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

The Africa Summits were begun in Chicago four years ago as a collaborative venture between the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Offices and Catholic Relief Services to bring together people interested in Africa and issues related to our outreach to the people there. AFJN and CRS are now offering these Summits to other places throughout the US as a way to raise the profile of Africa. If you

would like to host an Africa Summit in your area, please contact the AFJN office.

The first will take place at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, in Holliston Massachusetts on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

On September 29, 2007, in Dayton, Ohio, St. Charles Parish will also host an African Summit.

Call for more details on both programs at AFJN (202) 884 9780 or email [director@afjn.org](mailto:director@afjn.org)

## Preparing for the Second Synod for Africa

The Catholic Task Force on Africa (CTFA), an ad hoc group of Catholic organizations based in Washington, and chaired by AFJN, is preparing for the upcoming Synod for Africa. In their past few monthly meetings, the members have begun brainstorming ideas to tie together the Synod for Africa with the US Catholic Bishops' 2001 pastoral letter on Africa, "A Call to Solidarity with Africa."

Beginning in 2002, the CTFA put together a resource guide for dioceses and parishes in order to help them use the bishops' letter in their ministry. Since that time, the resource guide has been regularly updated and is now online. Called "Walking with the People of Africa," it can be found on the AFJN website.

The Synod for Africa is foreseen for 2009. Therefore, the CTFA is planning to take advantage of that event to educate Americans about issues concerning the Church and the people of Africa, hopefully in collaboration with

schools, parishes and dioceses all over this country and in Africa. As of now, the working theme is, "Together with Africa: Celebrating Hope."

As a first step, the members are studying the lineamenta (the working document) that have been posted on the Vatican website. A link to the lineamenta can also be found on the AFJN website. All those who would like to participate in some way, shape or form are encouraged to contact the AFJN office. Send us your ideas, desires and questions.

The CTFA meets every fourth Tuesday of the month and is comprised of such groups as Catholic Relief Services, Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, the Jesuit Conference, Oblates of Mary Immaculate Office of Justice & Peace/Integrity of Creation, the archdiocese of Washington, DC, the US Catholic Mission Association, Bread for the World, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the US Catholic Bishops Conference.

## Young Missionary of Africa Loses Life in Nairobi

On March 10, Missionary of Africa Martin Addai was gunned down in Nairobi. Since 2005, Fr. Martin had been working as the rector of the Missionaries of Africa Center. His death was the tragic outcome of a possible robbery and car jacking. News of his death spread quickly across the continent from which he hailed and which he had served so well in his forty-six short years.

Martin, eldest of seven children, came from Kumasi Diocese in Ghana, finishing his secondary studies there before joining the Missionaries of Africa in Tamale to study Philosophy. He did the Spiritual Year in Kasama, Zambia and then was appointed to Malawi for the apostolic experience. From 1987-1990 he studied Theology at the Mill Hill Institute in London. After ordination, Martin was sent to Mozambique where he worked in a parish.

His intellect, personality and many talents made him an ideal candidate for formation work. Therefore, after completing studies in Moral Theology in Rome and spirituality

in Canada, he was appointed to Maputo Major Seminary in Mozambique. Following that, the Ghana Province sought his help to serve as rector for the center in Ejisu.



Martin Addai, M.Afr. 1960-2007

Martin contributed much to the last General Chapter of the Missionaries of Africa in 2004 and then headed to Nairobi to take on the important job of rector. Africa has lost an apostle, the Missionaries of Africa a brother and AFJN a member and friend. Our sincere condolences go out to the Missionaries of Africa and to Martin's six brothers and sisters. May the earth be not heavy upon him. May his ever present smile return to the faces of those lucky enough to have known, loved and learned from him.

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, a special Mass was celebrated for Martin at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception's Our Mother of Africa Chapel, at the invitation of the staff of AFJN.

## Ecumenical Advocacy Days: The Questions and Perspective of an African Participant

By Jacques Bahati, AFJN intern

Unlike other babies, I think that African babies cry at birth because they know that they are not safe. They are already candidates for armed service and they owe so much money to rich governments and banks in the world. For four days, the Ecumenical Advocacy Days asked the question "...and how are the children?" It was exciting and frustrating to listen to and be with activists who genuinely



Jacques (left) and Rocco (far right) meet with the staff of Congressman Bobby Rush during Ecumenical Advocacy Days in March.

believe in and work for social change. The Africa track, of which I was part, looked at several issues, among them war and peace, debt and HIV/AIDS. In all the talks, the United States of America was named either as a problem or as part of a possible solution. Those of us from African nations, where most of these issues are facts, wonder why we have to turn to North America or to Europe for empowerment, justice and peace. These nations, after all, show clear signs of being powerful to oppress, to wage most of the wars in Africa and to prefer unjust and dysfunctional governments that serve their interests: keeping Africa poor and powerless.

The truth is that as we met at the Advocacy Days, or perhaps after we met, to educate ourselves on what is going on and to think of possible ways to suggest solutions for justice, peace, human rights and improvement, the enemies of those things met or will meet to plan counter efforts to keep their power and influence, to continue to oppress, to kill, to rape and to loot other people's resources. This is the challenge the Ecumenical Advocacy Days faces. Frustrated, one colleague mentioned that the number of attendants has increased from last year, but the issues remain the same or have worsened.

For example, we know how much the arms trade is part of most people's suffering worldwide, particularly in Africa. We know also that some of those who waged genocide (either from near or far) in Rwanda are still free and are

enjoying life after causing the greatest tragedy of the century. The Rwandese war was used also as a means to attain fast and cheap western access to the DRC's minerals and political influence.

This is why it was painful for me to stand before my colleague social activists to remind them of the social, political and economical context of the child soldier phenomenon in the world and particularly in the D.R.C. I know that the child soldier phenomenon in the D.R.C. was a result of a well planned war coordinated by the West and carried out by African nations: Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi to name a few. It was more humiliating to know that the American colleagues went to their representatives to ask for help and support while in some of these very same offices the plan against our people was generated. Many Congolese, like me, have gone to ask for help to the American government, feeling sorry for ourselves. That, indeed, was the result the plan was meant to produce.

This is why I think that the most insightful thought my North American colleagues and all the social activists asked of the United States was to invest their money for peace and not for war. Was this "ask" formulated because the many wars which United States of America is waging for its interests do not help to achieve justice, peace and prosperity in the world?

The question on debt, for example, underlined well the powerful western attitude toward most of the world's issues. They want everything and from everywhere. China, Japan and Russia have joined the race. As participants in the Ecumenical Advocacy Days, I hope we will stay busy trying to challenge those who constantly are doing their best to destroy any positive effort to improve people's lives. People needed peace and justice a long time ago and have yet to get it. Consequently, we will continue to work. Next year we will gather again for the Ecumenical Advocacy Days to challenge, oppose and expose those who think they can get away with causing so much pain to others.

Board member Jo'Ann De Quattro and AFJN staffer Phil Reed examine some of the articles on display during the workshops of the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in early March.



## Celebrations in Ghana

By Kai T. Hill and Jacqueline DeCarlo, CRS

While the world marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ghana's independence in early April, in the tropical region of Mim a different kind of independence story was being lived out.

Mim is home to many of the 20,000 members of Kuapa Kokoo, a cocoa farmers cooperative formed to help farmers gain more power after the Ghanaian government liberalized the cocoa industry. In Mim lives Comfort Kumeah, National Secretary of the Kuapa's farmers union, and beneficiary of the profits and power brought from the Fair Trade model.

While cocoa is one of Ghana's key industries, trade provisions have long overlooked farmers who till in the fields for a meager profit. Comfort, a mother of five adult children, recounts her own father's struggle. "He had a large

farm but couldn't do much," she explains. "He didn't have enough money and his land turned to bush." Today, Comfort exudes a sense of accomplishment as a member of the Kuapa Kokoo cocoa cooperative, Ghana's only cooperative of fair trade cocoa farmers.

Fair trade guarantees farmers a fair price for their cocoa while promoting other principles such as women's empowerment and long-term partnerships. Farmers are trained to generate out-of-season income, such as extracting and selling palm oil, making soap, producing tied-dye textiles and growing mushrooms. Like other Fair Trade groups, Kuapa Kokoo invests a social premium into the community. The group has headed projects to install community toilets in villages and built clean-water systems and schools in com-

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## News from the AFJN Office

The last few weeks have been busy ones for the office staff and interns. Beside the numerous briefings, working groups and seminars in which staff participates, it goes without saying that much time and energy were invested in the preparation of the Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Rocco and intern Jen Way deserve special recognition for their part in organizing the Africa Track workshops, the prayer room and many other details.

At the same time, Rocco has continued to chair the Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA) and the Catholic Task Force on Africa (CTFA). As co-chair of ADNA, Rocco has been up to the Hill several times to carry the concerns of ADNA to members of the House and Senate sub committees on Africa. CTFA has begun work on a two-year process which hopes to bring together the efforts of parishes, dioceses and agencies in the US in response to the US Bishops' 2001 letter, "A Call to Solidarity with Africa." The hope is that in 2009, as the second Synod for Africa takes place, the CTFA will be able to coordinate a nation-wide celebration tentatively entitled, "Together with Africa: Celebrating Hope." Rocco has also been called upon to speak to groups of all kinds. See the lists and dates under AFJN events on page seven.

The Congo Global Action Coalition, of which AFJN is a founding member, held its first grassroots conference in Europe March 20th, 21st and 22nd. The second conference is scheduled for October 5th, 6th and 7th in Wash-

ington, DC In 2008, the third conference will be held in Africa. Rocco is a member of the executive committee and concentrates on what they call "Pillar III," which studies the role extractive industries play in contributing to conflict.

Our new administrative assistant, Ezigbonne Nwankwo ("Ezi" for her friends and colleagues), and the interns are helping the staff get a handle on the correspondence, database and website work. Very soon, it will be possible for us to send emails targeted to AFJN members in specific congressional districts when action is needed by their particular members of Congress. We are working together to try and keep the website updated and welcome all input and suggestions from members. Let us know what your congregation is thinking and doing when it comes to working for justice for the people of Africa. Web surfers continue to visit our site and to sign up for our email blasts. As of now, we have nearly 2400 people who have signed up as supporters. If you know of people interested in Africa, sign them up to receive our periodic email blasts and updates.

AFJN remains connected to former associate director, Michael Poffenberger, and his staff at their brand new office, Resolve Uganda. Very soon they will have a website and begin their organizing campaign to support the peace process in northern Uganda and humanitarian assistance for the many people still displaced after twenty years of war.

# Musings on my Internship at AFJN

By Donna Harati, AFJN intern

This internship is part of an “Introduction to Peace and Justice” course at Georgetown University. I am a freshman in the School of Foreign Service. To be frank, I came to AFJN with such little understanding of Africa in comparison to those around me at the office here. I have never had the opportunity to travel to Africa, and the issues we look at may seem overwhelming.

Fr. Rocco Puopolo and Phil Reed have both lived in Africa for extended periods of time and possess a wealth of first-hand knowledge from their experiences. My lack of personal familiarity with the continent motivates me to squeeze everything I possibly can out of this internship. Every Monday, I am fortunate enough to hear Fr. Rocco and Phil casually share anecdotes about their time in Africa and the issues they faced.

Another aspect of my time at AFJN that greatly excites me is the opportunity to observe topics discussed in my Justice and Peace class in direct action. The course aims to teach students how to bring peace and justice to the world while AFJN strives to execute the goal of peace and justice in Africa.

Just last week, we discussed interest groups and NGOs in the course. Throughout the class discussion, I was able to



Donna Harati came to AFJN from Georgetown University

link the abstract ideas we chatted about to the work of AFJN. I realized that AFJN could be considered part of both a social movement and a transnational advocacy network for peace and justice in Africa. AFJN fits all the requirements of a group that binds people together by shared values, relies heavily on information, and is looking to change norms. It is a testament to a growing link between the class and the internship, one that is becoming more and more lucid to me as I continue this service.

I think I am beginning to see the connection between the course and AFJN so clearly because of the parallels between my two “educators”, primarily, their shared commitment to advancing the practice of justice and peace. My classroom professor and Fr. Rocco go about this goal in quite dissimilar ways, but ultimately, they exhibit the same fervor for diffusing the values of justice and peace. As long as genuine passion for peace is present in the educator, students with an authentic desire to learn the practices of peace and justice will easily be able to

so.

My responsibility is to keep my ardor for peace going, to fight the urge to view it as a hopeless cause in a hopeless world, to refuse to succumb to the temptation of being a “jaded cynic”, and to integrate all the lessons I learn both in class and at work into my very being.

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munities so children would no longer have to walk miles each day to attend class.

Comfort's own story is one of success. The extra income from cocoa sales allowed her to pay her children's school fees. They have all gone to college and have embarked on professional careers. While Comfort stays involved in the cocoa industry, she has increased in her responsibilities and influence. She recently traveled to the United States to celebrate the launch of Divine Chocolate USA, a farmer-owned Fair Trade chocolate company.

Catholic Relief Services promotes the Divine brand as a way to help Catholics live in solidarity with their brothers and sisters overseas. As part of the CRS Economic Justice program, Catholics can buy, sell, give and advocate for Fair Trade chocolate. Not only are the five flavors of chocolate tasty and fairly priced, but a portion of all sales goes into the CRS fund, which recycles revenues by providing small, high impact grants to help build the Fair Trade market. CRS also makes coffee and crafts available through a network of 100% Fair Trade partners. For more information about Fair Trade and how it promotes farmer independence, please visit [www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org).

## AFJN Happenings in Brief...

### Sign-on Letters:

- To Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice with the Congo Global Action Coalition asking for renewal of US support for MONUC
- To the President of the World Bank, the government of the DRC and the partner countries of the DRC asking for a review of the mining contracts for the DRC that the people may benefit more from their natural resources

### AFJN Events:

- February: Hosted group from St. John Prep School, Danvers, MA at AFJN office
- Feb 9-12: AFJN exhibit at Catholic Social Ministries Gathering in Washington
- Feb 22: Trinity University: Rocco presents, "Blood Diamonds and Child Soldiers"
- March 2: Presentation to Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish's Justice and Peace Group
- March 5: University of Maryland: "Uganda Rising" film and discussion
- March 9-12: Ecumenical Advocacy Days/AFJN Board meeting and meeting of the members, Washington

- March 15: Trinity University, co-sponsorship of a brown bag lunch with Ms Emily Sikazwe, Executive Director, Women for Change of Zambia
- March 15: Presentation to Principals, Presidents and Campus Ministers of the 8 sponsored schools of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary on "Globalization in Catholic Secondary School Education Today: Think Global, Act Global"
- March 29: LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Rocco lectured in the Economics Department on "African Priorities vs American Priorities for Africa: How to Bridge the Gap"
- April 5: Howard University, Washington: Rocco was part of a panel discussing, "The Political and Material Underpinnings of War and Violence: Examining the Interconnections of Resources, Arms and Child Soldiers"

### Working Group Meetings:

- DR Congo Coalition
- Advocacy Network for Africa
- Water working group
- Catholic Task Force on Africa

## AFJN 25th Anniversary or Bust

The stage is being set for AFJN's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in 2008. Come celebrate with us in Washington, DC in the spring of 2008. The Planning Committee of the AFJN Board of Directors, along with staff, have been meeting regularly by conference call to plan the events commemorating AFJN's first 25 years of education and advocacy. Check the AFJN website for the specific dates in April 2008.

The working theme is, "AFJN Celebrates Africa: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." Mark



Ezi Nwankwo (left), AFJN administrative assistant, and Jen Way (right), AFJN intern, work with Rocco on AFJN 2007 annual conference logistics.

your calendars now. The meeting will take place in the Washington, DC area and conclude with a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill. Anyone wishing to help in some way is invited to contact Sr. Ann Oestreich through the AFJN office.

One creative way to celebrate the 25 years of AFJN would be for each AFJN member to invite 25 friends or associates to become members as well! The AFJN Board and staff have committed themselves to inviting 25 new organizational members to be a part of our network by the time of our Jubilee. We have already welcomed 5 new organizational members in the past three months. We have 20 more to go to meet our challenge.

Please take up your challenge for our Jubilee!

The **Africa Faith and Justice Network**, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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*Advocacy for justice and peace in Africa doesn't just happen. AFJN needs your help and participation! Thank you for your financial support.*