

Improving Interagency Coordination in Africa

by Robert Bennett

United States Army Africa (USARAF) executes over 400 activities annually valued at \$2 million. These activities augment activities sponsored by other U.S. government, private charitable foundations, churches, and regional African organizations. The stated goals for these activities are complementary, but coordination among the groups is generally ineffective or nonexistent. Obstacles to activity synchronization in Africa fall into two major categories—administrative and mission command structures and planning procedures. While development and implementation of a system to coordinate all activities is unlikely in the near term, it may be possible for the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (State), and USARAF to design a model for activity synchronization that better focuses the resources available to meet U.S. policy objectives on the continent.

Administrative and Mission Command Structures

State and DoD do not view the continent of Africa the same way. State divides the continent into two major regions under two bureaus (Near Eastern Affairs and Sub Saharan Affairs). DoD, through its geographic combatant command U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), looks at the continent as a whole with the exception of Egypt, which is managed by U.S. Central Command. State Department bureaus manage day-to-day activities on the continent independently through 54 embassies that focus on five regions. These different perspectives often cause miscommunication between the two agencies. State's analyses often demonstrate a great depth and situational understanding of a state or regional need, but are not well linked to activities that could enhance the effectiveness of an activity or operation. DoD's analyses clearly focus on an objective but frequently overlook or fail to account for situational details that either denigrate the effectiveness

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of an activity or cause it to fail. For example, State may identify a capability that a regional state can provide with DoD training; however, providing this capability to one state may negatively impact DoD's plan to deploy a common system across multiple states. State's solution meets the requirements for the state with whom a diplomat is tasked to coordinate but complicates successful execution of a regional DoD objective.

DoD established AFRICOM in 2008 during the height of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, it did not have sufficient forces to dedicate to activities on the African continent. As the force requirements for the campaigns declined between 2011 and 2014, more forces became available, but the administrative systems that designate control of forces did not substantively evolve. Instead, the Services identified forces that were already assigned a primary mission to have a second focus area on Africa. For example, U.S. Naval Forces Europe created a planning cell to meet mission requirements established by AFRICOM with no change in the forces allocated to the fleet, and the commander was also dual-hatted as the commander of U.S. Naval Forces Africa. Similarly, the U.S. Air Forces Europe commander was designated as the commander of U.S. Air Forces Africa.

The Army applied a different solution by dedicating a commander and headquarters to support AFRICOM—U.S. Army Africa/9th Army/Southeast European Task Force in Vicenza, Italy. The headquarters focuses on planning multi-component operations on the continent, including exercises, training, and security cooperation activities; however, the headquarters had no assigned units to execute this range of activities. Instead USARAF relied on a mission-by-mission allocation of forces through the Global Force Management System to meet each individual requirement in 2011 and 2012 (434 activities).

Beginning in fiscal year 2013, the U.S. Army designated the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division as a regionally aligned brigade (RAB) focused on Africa. It serves as an available force for USARAF planners. Also in 2013, USARAF conducted its first synchronization conference with the Adjutants General from the eight states participating in the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program (SPP) aligned with Africa. During 2013, USARAF was able to increase its activity on the continent to 434 activities, including 53 RAB and 93 SPP activities.

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The use of the RAB and improved synchronization with SPP partners did not work as smoothly as envisioned by any of the commanders or staffs involved. The term "aligned" did not fit within the global force management model; consequently, planning assumptions regarding the availability of forces to conduct tasks or activities were often incorrect. It was wrongly assumed the initial alignment of the 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) staff with Africa-led USARAF planners would be responsive to requests for detailed planning or analysis in support of likely contingencies. 1CD staff was focused on its subsequent deployment and preparations for that operation. Similarly, many of the low density/high demand enablers including civil affairs, engineer, and intelligence units that were aligned to Africa were subsequently unaligned by the Department of the Army when USARAF planners identified numerous requirements that committed those units' personnel and made them unavailable to tasks higher in priority than Africa. One impact

of these invalidated planning assumptions for available forces was the delayed issuance of the USARAF 2014 training and engagement plan. A second impact was a significant gap between missions USARAF planned for execution during 2014 and forces available to conduct them. The mission management debacle generated by the federal government's budgeting dysfunction in September/October 2013 further exacerbated the mismatch between missions planned and the ability of the Army to conduct them.

The global force management model executed by U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) also contributed to frustration for military planners and operators focused on Africa. Staff officers identified the following methods to fit USARAF's request for RAB forces into the global force management model:

- USARAF developed a request for each specific requirement and requested to use the RAB in one message.
- USARAF provided the message as a draft for AFRICOM to issue to FORSCOM and provided a copy of the draft message to the RAB to support concurrent planning.
- AFRICOM staffed the draft message internally to ensure it was nested inside AFRICOM objectives and subsequently issued the message to FORSCOM.
- FORSCOM staffed the message and generally determined that the RAB would source the identified requirements.
- FORSCOM issued a task order to the RAB to support the requirement.
- USARAF then issued a task order to execute the activity or requirement.
- The RAB executed the activity or requirement.

Fitting the square peg of using an aligned

force into the round hole of the global force management procedure required approximately two weeks to execute because of the staffing procedures at USARAF, AFRICOM, and FORSCOM. On at least two occasions, this caused the Soldiers tasked to execute the mission to delay an activity because they were unable to legally request visas or transportation requests until the last step of the process was complete, despite understanding and planning for the requirement weeks earlier. On one occasion, over 30 Soldiers were mustered for movement at a commercial airport over 100 miles from their unit location, but their tickets were not validated by the airport because the FORSCOM task order had not been approved. The mission was delayed by a week, and an African unit that was to be deployed in support of a UN mission had to adjust its deployment plan and the plans of three other UN units deployed in support of that mission.

Activity Planning Procedures

State activities are not organized and planned with a specific, achievable mission objective. The National Security Strategy organizes Sub-Saharan African policy objectives into four broad pillars: strengthening democratic institutions, supporting African economic growth and development, advancing peace and security, and promoting opportunity and development. State's current strategy lists 21 categories of activities that support these four pillars, including seven that can be effectively sourced by the DoD.¹ The source for most activities is one of the 54 country teams resident in the capital cities of the 54 states on the continent.

One State program that generated eight activities in 2013 and early 2014 was the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program. The program provided African states with tailored training that allows their forces to execute African Union (AU) and

UN peacekeeping missions on the continent. Many of the training missions under this program were executed by private companies on contract to the State Department. However, the Army's regionally-aligned force executed six such training missions. Planning for these missions begins when an African state identifies an AU or UN mission requirement it is willing to fill, which usually occurs 100–200 days prior to execution. State then publishes a request for proposal to interested firms to source a training activity. State concurrently reviews the roster of potential trainees to ensure that they meet human rights standards imposed by Congress. Regulatory guidance requires a request for proposal remain open for 15 days. Therefore, if no qualified commercial firm responds to the proposal, DoD is asked to support the training activity less than four weeks prior to activity initiation. Of the six missions executed by the regionally-aligned force in early 2014, four of them were delayed due to late notification to DoD that the requirement existed.

DoD charges AFRICOM with management of “all U.S. Department of Defense operations, exercises, and security cooperation on the African continent, its island nations and surrounding waters.”² Like State's activities on the continent, AFRICOM activities are organized in support of six key tasks: counter violent extremist organizations and their networks, support defense institution building, strengthen maritime security, support peace support operations, support humanitarian and disaster response, and counter illicit flows. AFRICOM prioritizes activities in support of these key tasks and assigns responsibility to its components for execution in a series of annual task orders that are generally published in May or June prior to their effective date of 1 October. These task orders inform the production of component, annual, planning documents. USARAF's document is titled “Fiscal Year Annual Order.”

While this timeline nominally supports sequential development of goals and objectives, the late production of annual planning documents negatively impacts DoD's ability to plan activities on the continent. In 2013, AFRICOM published its fiscal year 2014 to USARAF on 2 August causing USARAF to delay publishing its “Fiscal Year Annual Order” until 9 September. The late issuance of these documents and lack of an annual budget brought about by the federal government shutdown led USARAF to plan fewer activities in the fourth quarter of 2013. It also generated frustration within State, whose regional experts and planners felt DoD was failing to take advantage of good weather and cultural acceptance of training opportunities during the October/December period.

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Despite the administrative and mission command and planning obstacles to effectively synchronize activities in Africa, State, AFRICOM, USARAF, and the RAB executed over 1,500 activities during the last four fiscal years. Many of the products required to better synchronize activities exist, but the content of the products or the timing/sequencing of their release can be adjusted to create a new model for mission coordination among the individuals focused on American policy goals in Africa.

An Improved Model

The overarching guidance for U.S. policy in Africa is currently articulated in the June 2012 “U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan

Africa.” This policy has two broad objectives— “strengthening democratic institutions and boosting broad-based economic growth.”³ If the current administration updates its policy objectives for Africa, supporting documents identifying specific objectives should be published in January of the calendar year in which they will take effect. This will provide AFRICOM and State sufficient time to design

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their orders for the following fiscal year in support of those policy objectives.

The majority of activities on the continent executed by AFRICOM or USARAF are first identified and frequently funded by the Department of State. In order to ensure military’s annual orders meet these requirements, State should publish a working first draft of its priorities and identify missions requiring DoD support in the upcoming year no later than mid-March—seven months prior to the fiscal year in which the requirements will be executed.

The ideal tool for identifying these tasks is the Global Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System (G-TSCMIS). This system is designed to centralize the planning and sequencing of security cooperation activities over a three year period—12 months of archived data and 24 months of planned activities. DoD, AFRICOM, USARAF, or State planners rarely adhere to the timelines associated with this system; simply applying discipline to the current system will improve planning and synchronization. While currently a DoD system, interagency use of this tool will

keep task management consistent and provide State Department leaders with an opportunity to monitor the progress of activities during the fiscal year these activities are being executed. Current business rules in Africa enable Defense attaches, AFRICOM and USARAF theater security cooperation planners, and a database manager at each headquarters to enter activities into the database. The first required action is adding State Department planners within the Africa Bureau and members of the embassy country teams designated by ambassadors to the list of individuals authorized to enter activities into the database. Training these individuals will be a low-cost initiative as training classes and modules are available to individuals new to the system.

Under this new model, AFRICOM receives State’s prioritized mission requirements in March and applies them to the production of its annual task order to its subordinate component commands, which in turn publish their annual orders no later than early June. While staffing and developing its task order, AFRICOM would share drafts with their components, enabling parallel planning and quick publication of subordinates’ annual orders. Instead of listing activities for each component’s execution as an annex to the task order, the new model stipulates that AFRICOM planners validate, add, delete (with justification to State), or amend G-TSCMIS entries and refer the components to the G-TSCMIS database. This keeps activity planning consistent in the database and retains a single, authoritative database of record that extends two years into the future. It also enables the AFRICOM staff to conduct strategic and operational-level planning because it is focused sufficiently in the future, where leaders can shape resourcing and major exercise scheduling with African partners.

In addition to overcoming planning obstacles, AFRICOM has the capacity to unilaterally and immediately overcome an

administrative/mission command obstacle at no cost to the government. AFRICOM should delegate to USARAF operational control of Army RAB forces. Current procedures requiring USARAF to request use of these forces through AFRICOM to FORSCOM after publication of its annual order delays mission planning at the unit level and inhibits operational- and tactical-level execution of activities. The perception among Army planners is that neither the AFRICOM commander nor his staff trusts that USARAF is capable of fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as the Army component command and, therefore, withholds control of RAB forces. However, AFRICOM can delegate operational control while exerting ultimate control by tasking USARAF through existing orders processes.

One potential method to overcome both the administrative and planning obstacles available to both USARAF and State is to adjust interagency representation on the USARAF staff. USARAF currently has a senior diplomat serving as the commander's political advisor, which is a remnant of the USARAF organization's time as a sub-component of U.S. Army Europe. Prior to assuming its role as USARAF, U.S. Army forces in Vicenza focused on European contingencies and maintenance of the relationship with Italy. Today as AFRICOM's Army component command, USARAF interacts with 54 African leaders in addition to Italian leaders. A single State Department senior foreign service officer cannot meet the needs of 55 diverse African and European leaders and governments; consequently, military planners have to rely on close working relationships with individual ambassadors and defense attaches.

In lieu of the senior diplomat, State should assign two junior foreign service officers to serve in the plans and current operations cells at USARAF. Their experiences, ability to communicate with U.S. embassies in the region, and contacts with other State Department

entities will enhance USARAF's understanding of State Department activities and objectives on the continent and facilitate coordination. The addition of extra staff members from the State Department will enable USARAF to dedicate a uniformed member to serve in Washington, DC, as a member of the Africa Bureau to facilitate mission planning and synchronization at that planning node. These personnel realignments better distribute planning and operational expertise across the organizations tasked with

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accomplishing U.S. policy objectives in Africa.

USARAF currently has adequate planning procedures in place to plan, synchronize, and execute activities effectively on the continent, but the failure to apply these procedures is the largest obstacle to achieving its yearly mission. USARAF planning procedures stipulate that its annual order be published in July and distributed to AFRICOM, FORSCOM, the regionally aligned forces, and State Partnership Program partners; however, in fiscal years 2013 and 2014 the order was not published until late September. Late production of the order caused State and military planners to delay execution of activities until funds became available, which resulted in many countries having no productive interaction with the U.S. until November. The delay also limited many American multi-component units' capacities to support activities in Africa because they commit to a training plan well before the beginning of the first quarter of a fiscal year. The order should serve as a synchronizing tool for DoD's database of record, G-TSCMIS, but the system of record is frequently inaccurate because planners wait to

update the database until the order is published. G-TSCMIS data has not been updated for Africa until well into the first quarter for the last four fiscal years. While the USARAF staff does a good job of planning, the failure to publish an order within a window of time in which it can be executed renders the order ineffective.

A technique to mitigate the negative impacts of late orders production is to publish the order, at whatever level of fidelity in which it exists, by 15 July—a full 75 days prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year. Quarterly fragmentary order (FRAGO) production to add, delete, or edit activities or their sequencing can then be produced in August, December, March, and June as per USARAF’s published policy. Using the FRAGOs to meet emerging opportunities or command initiatives would more effectively enable the commander to synchronize his staff and adjust priorities throughout the fiscal year and enable the team to better react as situations on the continent evolve.

Conclusion

USARAF executes over 400 activities annually on the continent in coordination with the Department of State, AFRICOM, and other planning entities. Many of these activities support the commander’s intent to facilitate positive change in Africa, but administrative and mission command and planning obstacles are preventing USARAF from maximizing the change it can make. Assigning State planners instead of senior diplomats will better mitigate the issues resulting from the different lenses through which the departments see Africa and provide more robust interagency opportunities for foreign service officers early in their careers.

Additionally, current Army force allocation policies unnecessarily insert FORSCOM into the mission planning and execution cycle between USARAF and its one allocated RAB, which has resulted in several delayed missions and created tensions between country teams and their hosts on the continent. It also negatively impacts the mission planning and preparation for Soldiers from the RAB. A simple reallocation of the force to USARAF will solve this issue, but it will require the Army and FORSCOM to trust the theater army commander.

Finally, USARAF can do a better job by executing its planning procedures in a timely manner instead of waiting for a perfectly coordinated interagency solution that is dependent on a DoD-level synchronization process with the State Department. Initiating action with mutually supporting activities will make both departments more effective throughout the entire fiscal year while Congress, DoD, and the State Department finalize departmental coordination through the end of September of any given year.

USARAF is an effective laboratory for operational-level interagency planning and coordination. The organization is small enough to observe issues and challenges and make adjustments as required, but it is large enough to have an impact that can be measured. Departmental-level attention to these issues and commitment to solve them may provide data that can inform future interagency coordination discussions. **IAJ**

NOTES

- 1 Barack Obama, “U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa,” The White House, Washington, June 14, 2012.
- 2 U.S. Africa Command Fact Sheet, U.S. Africa Command, May 2012.
- 3 Barack Obama.