

AFRICOM Prepares for More Conflicts in Mali, Nigeria and Somalia

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Global Research, May 10, 2014

[Silent Crow News](#)

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

This incisive text first published by GR in March 2013 sheds light on the hidden agenda behind Washington's R2P military intervention in Nigeria.

Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Northern Mali is a direct threat to US national security interests according to Major General Carter F. Ham during a House Armed Services Committee hearing on March 15th, 2013. Ham said that although there have been progress in AFRICOM's mission; new threats have emerged this year that is a strategic importance to the United States and its allies. According to *American Forces Press Service* of the U.S. Department of Defense:

"The general said three violent extremist organizations are of particular concern in Africa: al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM, active in northern and western Africa; Boko Haram in Nigeria; and al-Shabaab in Somalia."

Ham's main concern however was in Northern Mali because it threatens U.S. national security interests directly. With France's invasion back in January 2013 to stop al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has not been a military success obviously since AFRICOM's leadership is concerned. AQIM is tied to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) the same group France intervened with in Libya during NATO's invasion of Libya that provided weapons, aircraft and Special Forces to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi's government. Now AFRICOM who supported NATO's intervention in Libya is now fighting AQIM in Mali. A convenient excuse for AFRICOM to expand its military operations in Africa to fight terrorists:

"The growing collaboration of these organizations heightens the danger they collectively represent," he said. "Of the three organizations, AQIM, which exploited the instability that followed the coup d'état in Mali and seeks to establish an Islamic state in northern Mali, is currently the most likely to directly threaten U.S. national security interests in the near-term."



Ham admitted that AFRICOM is aiding the French and African military against AQIM and other affiliated terrorist organizations in northern Mali with drone operations operating in Niger.

"We are supporting French efforts with information, airlift, and refueling, and are working with the Department of State to support the deployment of West African forces

to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali,” he said. “Recently, we began unarmed, remotely piloted aircraft operations from Niger in support of intelligence gathering efforts in the region.”

Ham said that AQIM is spread across the Sahel region of north-central Africa south of the Sahara Desert and that it requires a regional effort to challenge the threat with AFRICOM, the State Department and USAID under the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership. Ham said that *“The partnership involves 10 northern and western African nations and the United States, he said, and aims to develop partner militaries’ counter-terrorism capabilities and build regional cooperation against AQIM and related extremist groups.”* Expect AFRICOM to expand its footprint throughout Africa since terrorist groups are still considered a formidable threat.

However, the real threat to “US national security interests” in Africa is not AQIM, Boko Haram or al-Shabaab, it is China’s demand for natural resources for their growing economy. The US and France plan to counter the threat along with Africa’s puppet government’s that will pose a challenge to China’s economic and diplomatic influence in the region. The new Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang will have to confront this reality in the near future.

The US and French governments want to assure themselves that the new Chinese leadership will not continue its beneficial relationships with resource-rich African nations that have been a success in the past. Therefore, the ‘War on Terror’ will create instability and will disrupt China’s economic growth. AFRICOM mission is to create war in the name of fighting terrorism and that is what *“US national security interests”* in Africa is really about.

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