

America's Role in Central Africa: AFRICOM, the U.S. Africa Command, Rwanda, the Congo

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Global Research, July 08, 2010

[Digital Journal](#) 7 July 2010

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

On July 6, 2010, I spoke with Shanaaz Ebrahim, on Voice of the Cape Drive Time, about Rwanda, eastern Congo, and AFRICOM, the U.S. Africa Command.

I gave particular attention to why I, as an American, feel compelled to study and speak out about this, and to U.S. military industries' dependence on the mineral wealth of southeastern D.R. Congo and northern Zambia to manufacture for war. The world's largest and most densely concentrated cobalt reserves are in the Katanga Copper Belt running from Southeastern D.R. Congo into Zambia.

On [September 7, 1980 a Scripps Howard News report, published in the Pittsburgh Press](#), said:

"The United States has less than half the stockpiled cobalt it would need in wartime.

That's bad news, but the Pentagon has worse. The cobalt on hand isn't pure enough. It would have to be refined for use in its most important military role: as an ingredient in making high-performance jet engines.

The strategic stockpile managers think the nation should have 85 million tons of cobalt squirreled away for an emergency. The nation has 40 million tons.

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There's a similar shortage and quality problem in the U.S. stockpile of titanium, another metal used in aircraft manufacture. There are also shortages of chromium, tantalum, beryllium, and nickel, all of which are expensive and all of which must be imported.

The problem with the cobalt in storage is that it was purchased in the 1950s when purity was not a major factor.

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That was before the design of jet engines so powerful that they allow a fighter like the F-15 to gain speed while flying straight up. The heat generated in the turbine blades of these high-performance engines can only be handled by very pure cobalt."

The world's largest and purest cobalt reserves lie in the Katanga Copper Belt that runs from southeastern Congo into northern Zambia; this has been a key factor shaping U.S. foreign policy and military intervention in East/Central Africa, especially Rwanda and neighboring

D.R. Congo since 1980.

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